

“We walk by faith, not by sight”

August 15, 2017

Grace and peace to you from the One who is, and was, and is to come. Amen.

Please pray with me: Lord, I am insufficient for this task, but you are all-sufficient. Open our eyes and ears, our hearts and minds, so that we might hear your voice, and be encouraged, and you might be glorified. Amen.

At the end of July, I began to think about what I wanted to share with you this morning. I had decided to talk about the importance of faith and faithfulness in our personal lives, our corporate lives, and our work lives here at school. I had already sketched out a first draft of my comments.

Then the explosion happened, and I was forced to consider whether I should alter my plan. But in numerous conversations with colleagues and with people from the community, and after hearing how the story was being reported in the media, I became even more convinced that talking about faith was the right choice.

Because faith makes all the difference.

Faith is living for something beyond what we can know with certainty. Faith is trusting that there's more than what we see. Faith is like wearing a set of glasses that allows us to see the world differently.

As Paul says in 2 Corinthians, “we walk by faith, not by sight.” We live according to what we see with the eyes of faith, not what we see with our physical eyes.

Faith makes all the difference in how we think, and live, and act, and react. Yes, we are grieving right now, and it is very important that we allow ourselves the permission to walk through the process of grieving, but as Paul says in his letters, we grieve differently – because of faith we grieve with hope. Grieving and grieving with hope are different. The difference is faith.

Faith is much more than simple belief, or intellectual assent: saying in our minds, “yes, I think that is true; I agree to that proposition.”

Faith is about trust, relationship, commitment; it's about the core of our lives, the source and basis for who we are and what we think and do. It's a basic orientation and perspective that illuminates everything else. Faith changes how we view the events in our lives, the people in our lives, our jobs here at Minnehaha.

Many of you know about the medical history of my wife and children. I have spent thousands of hours – not an exaggeration – thousand of hours in hospitals sitting by the bedsides of my wife and my son, much of that in the last 13 months. And I can state with complete confidence that my only hope and my only refuge, the way I have made it through with my joy and my hope and most of my sanity, is faith. It wasn't just me in those hospital

rooms; God was there. God is present in every room, in every situation, with redeeming grace.

Faith is not quantitative – I know that my fellow educators might not like to hear this, but there is no rubric for measuring results when evaluating our faith.

I don't know if the same is true for you, but I used to be really bothered by what Jesus said in Matthew 17 and Luke 17 about faith the size of a mustard seed. If you will recall, Jesus said that if we have faith the size of a mustard seed, we could move trees or even mountains. I used to interpret these sayings as condemnation of the weakness or insufficiency of my faith – I don't have that much faith; no trees or mountains have moved because of me. But then the light bulb turned on, and I saw that it's not about how much or how little faith we have; it's about choosing to use the faith God has given us. It's about choosing to trust in more than what we can see.

When we stop trying to quantify our faith, I think we also stop worrying about doubt. Just as courage is not the absence of fear, but the choice to continue despite our fear, faith is not the absence of doubt – it's choosing to be faithful even in the presence of doubt.

And so our challenge is to live the faith we have, no matter how strong or weak we think it is. Even the tiniest faith, when lived, can change our world.

Faith makes all the difference.

Faith means that we live as if God is in control, even when it may not seem that way.

Faith means trusting that God really is at work in every situation for our good. In every situation.

Faith means having joy and hope in the midst of our sorrow, for God is faithful and God is good. All the time.

Faith means seeing God's presence in our offices, in our classrooms, in our performance venues of athletics and arts. Because God is there.

Faith means seeing our students and colleagues as God sees them, for there is much more to people than what we can see.

Faith means seeing with God's eyes rather than with ours.

Let me conclude by sharing with you two stories from the Scriptures that illustrate and inspire us to see with the eyes of faith.

In Daniel chapter 3 is the amazing story of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. As you might recall, these 3 young men were exiles in the land of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar had given them a clear ultimatum – either they bow down and worship the Babylonian gods, or

they would be executed. These young men refused. So Nebuchadnezzar had them thrown into a fiery furnace to die. But when the king looked into that furnace, he saw something astonishing. He asked his servants, "didn't we put 3 people in the fire?" They said, "yes, 3." Nebuchadnezzar responded, "then why do I see 4?" God was there with them. God is always there, even in the fire.

The second story comes from 2 Kings chapter 6. Elisha the prophet was being threatened by the king of the Arameans. The king discovered where Elisha was, and sent his armies to surround and capture him. Elisha's servant got up early the next morning, went outside, and saw that the Aramean armies had surrounded the town where they were staying. He hurried into the house and told Elisha. But Elisha said, "Don't be afraid! For there are more on our side than on theirs!" Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" The LORD opened the servant's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillsides were filled with horses and chariots of fire – the armies of God.

My heartfelt prayer for us this year is that God might open our eyes to see the 4<sup>th</sup> person in the fire, that he might grant us the grace to see that we are surrounded by chariots of fire, that he might give us the gift of seeing the possibilities for what Minnehaha Academy might become because of this tragedy.

My prayer for us this year is that we might see God in our classrooms, in the lunchroom and the hallways, in our offices, in the ruins of the North Campus buildings, and in the new buildings that will arise from the ruins.

I don't know the future, but I know the One who does.  
God is here. God is present. God is at work in every situation for our good.

May our loving Heavenly Father grant us the grace this school year to see with His eyes, not with ours. Amen.