

Have you ever tried to teach another person something? Maybe you've taught a friend a concept for school or you've had to train another employee in their new job. If you're a parent, you've potty trained your kids—I hope—and that process can be exhausting. Or if you're a grown kid, you may have tried to teach your parents something about technology—that can be equally exhausting.

When you're teaching another person, quite often, unless they're a genius, they run into a wall and they don't get it. No matter how you approach the lesson, no matter how many times you demonstrate the skill, they just cannot get it. Whether it's remembering how to access the Facebook in order to send a message or remembering to lift up the toilet seat before your son take aim or which safety stops must be removed before equipment can work properly, we can only explain it so many times before we throw our hands up in frustration.

*We* get frustrated with seemingly insignificant things, so I cannot imagine how frustrated I would have been if I were Jesus, trying to get it through the crowds' thick skull who He is and what He was here to do. Last week, they didn't get it. They thought He was just a great miracle worker, able to provide meals to fill their stomachs. Some of them seem to grasp His point, but this week Jesus points out that they haven't believed yet and then they grumble when He claims to be from heaven. "Didn't he grow up down the block?" They whisper to Louise beside them. "Absolutely. Mary and Joseph, in house 33. Those are His parents. He was born in Bethlehem—definitely not heaven."

Jesus didn't attempt to stop their grumbling and set their understanding straight with a good, logical little step by step lecture. But reteaching the lesson in order for people to grasp every little detail in a rational order is not His way of operating. Jesus places His trust solely in the power of the Gospel to convince people of the goodness of God, of the person of Christ, and of the

salvation offered to all. (*That people will believe in him?*)

Just as we are called to proclaim the Gospel in order to convert the unconverted, to save the unsaved, Jesus too worked this way. He trusted that the Father was working to draw His own people to Himself. Certainly Jesus taught people—He proclaimed His Law and His promises, but this wasn't mere informational facts—this was the message for each person He came across. He proclaimed His Law in order to convict real people of their real sin and then preached the promise of the Gospel to heal, to comfort, to restore real people from their particular sin and all too real pain.

When the people are grumbling, especially in today's text, He essentially says "Be quiet! Don't worry about it. You aren't going to figure it out and get it by grumbling! Instead, hear the Gospel once more!"

He proclaimed the love of God for each person He came across, and His method hasn't changed one bit. During His time on earth, He was the mouthpiece of the Gospel that the Father used to draw people to Himself. Today He is that same mouthpiece—the only difference is that His body here on earth is doing the proclamation of the Gospel.

We are called to be faithful in the proclamation of the Gospel, yet all too frequently it is us who grumble.

We grumble because people are leaving the church or because no one is coming in. We grumble because our faith seems boring or underwhelming to us or because God doesn't seem to be working in our lives—not according to our own timing at least. Sometimes what we grumble about is legitimate—why have our children left the Church, we ask; why does my back feel like it's on fire every day?

Other days, we grumble because that's what we do. Why does our neighbour mow his lawn at 5:30? Why am I friends with so and so when these days they just seem to bug me?

But no matter what our grumbling is about, it is we who are not getting it—we are forgetting the fullness of the Gospel, the promise of God to us that we are not alone and that we are supposed to trust Him and ask Him for help—we are supposed to believe and be content rather than grumble.

But when we are the grumblers, Christ meets us with His patience, acting the same way as always—We are usually met with the Law, getting ourselves to turn from our actions, our moaning and groaning and grumbling, and He pours out His Gospel—He speaks to us words of comfort and hope to us again and again.

Each time that you hear the Gospel for you, each time the gift of Christ crucified is proclaimed for you, each time the hope of the resurrection is pronounced for you, each time you are reminded that your sins are forgiven and you are assured of everlasting life, Christ who was incarnate in history in flesh and blood and came down for the sake of us, He comes down again in order to draw you to the Father and to strengthen your faith.

This process is so certain because of He who works behind it all. When Christ delivers salvation by faith, He does not trust in the strength of you to believe or understand or persevere, He does not hope in your ability to retain this faith against the devil and the world and your own sinful being. He trusts in the strength of the hands of the Triune God to hold you steady in the faith, to fulfill the will of the Father that you be drawn to God through the Gospel and kept until life everlasting. No one can come to the Father unless they are drawn, and so Christ simply trusts that, as He proclaims the Gospel, people will be drawn. And those who come, He holds close, He

sustains, He gives His gifts, He constantly reminds His own of His promises.

Christ trusts in the promise of the Father, that those who are drawn to Him through Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit will be kept. He will keep you and I through this life, past death whenever that comes to us, and into life everlasting when we will be resurrected in order to live eternally with Him among the new heaven and on the new earth.

Jesus, in this text, seems to really focus on the end of life—some might read it as if the only gift of faith were life everlasting, but really, the gift of faith and all the other gifts of God come altogether—life everlasting is simply the conclusion of His gifts. Where there is life everlasting, there must already be forgiveness of sins. Where there is forgiveness of sins, it is because the Holy Spirit has worked faith and given salvation and brought close His gifts. And where forgiveness of sins is worked, the Old Adam is drowned continually and everlasting life begins—now. Thus good works, the fruits of faith, flow forth of this eternal life as a gift of God. The way Christ emphasizes being kept until forever isn't neglecting the rest of His promises, but is instead giving you and I the sure hope that His gifts, which we have now, are not going to end, but instead He will keep us, through whatever life may throw at us.

In promising life everlasting, Christ is promising that there are not conditions on your “being kept.” He will always work to keep faith alive in you—even when you grumble or doubt. And He will work against all that the devil and the world and your own sinful flesh may throw at you. All of the gifts depend on Him—they flow from His cross and passion, which you cling to by faith which you received as a gift—this is the Father's drawing. And it is the Father's will that all are kept and none are lost.

And even those who seem to have slipped away, those who have seemingly gone astray,

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John 56:35-51

Pastor Scott Brayall

Christ promises that He hasn't forgotten them, He hasn't forsaken them. Their grumbling—or whatever they have done—has not caused Christ to give up in despair and leave them behind. No, this apparent failure is not a cause for Christ to despair and lose hope, but instead to proclaim His Gospel anew, to demonstrate the extravagance of His love, the boundlessness of His mercy and grace. He has already gone from the heights of heaven to the depths of the earth to proclaim love to the world, that each individual may be drawn to the Father—nothing we do or say is going to make Christ give up on us now.

Drawing all nations to Himself and keeping them in His care is the Father's will that Christ was faithful to perform in history, on earth, on the cross. And He remains faithful to perform this eternal-life-giving act of drawing us to the Father by the proclamation of the Good News. He is your living bread who comes to you, to feed you with His body and blood and precious Word that you may have eternal life, today and forever. Amen.