

“Lived Faith - Spencer Stone”

September 19, 2021
York United Ministries
Worship Service at New Hope United Church
Rev. Andrew K. Lee

Prayer for Illumination

Your Word is our wisdom; it gives us insight, strength, and courage. Open our hearts and our minds on this day, that we might receive what you want to give. Speak, Lord! Your people listen! **Amen.**

Scripture Reading

Romans 10:16-17

¹⁶ But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

James 2:14-17,22

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works.

This is the Witness of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

<Child in All of Us>

Hello, my friends! How are your first two weeks in the new school? Are you doing well at school? I presume you have challenging times in classrooms and recess times, and breathing with masks can't be comfortable. But let's keep it up and keep



practicing the regulations until we overcome it. I am proud of you that you are doing that very well.

Today, I brought a video clip; it is a movie trailer. The movie is – oh, it's not a Marvel Series! The film I want to introduce is titled "THE 15:17 TO PARIS." Have you watched it? If so, please recall the story. If not, let's watch the short trailer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETcx4R4-3Bo>

The director is Clint Eastwood, maybe your father would know about him very well. It is a true story, and the main three actors of the film are the real people who were actually on that train. When a train bounded to Paris, France, was attacked by a terrorist, the three brave men decided to barge towards the fully armed man. He triggered his AK-47 rifle toward Spencer Stone, but the first bullet was miraculously misfired, so they took him down and saved 500 passengers on board. It is an incredible true

story. The three brave men instantly decided to sacrifice themselves to save others.

The most intriguing part is when Spencer Stone exposed his inner reflection to his friends. He says,
“I don’t know, man, you ever just feel like life is just pushing us towards something... like some greater purpose?”
His thinking was kindled from the well-known prayer by Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

Are you familiar with this prayer? While repeating this prayer, Spencer Stone gradually notices that he is serving not only his country but also the greater purpose and has tremendous courage. Today’s Bible passage from James 2:14 in the New Testament also supports our Christian act and true faith.

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? ... So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”

Like the teaching from James and the true faithful men in the film, I hope you become a great person to do great work in your life. Have a vision of great work to serve God and serve others. Then God will help you out always. James says,

“You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works.”

May God be with you and your vision, my friends. We, Christians, have been chosen for great works. God bless you!

<Reflection>

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The film “THE 15:17 TO PARIS” is based on the story of Spencer Stone, Alex Skarlatos, and Anthony Sadler. And Spencer Stone repeatedly prays St. Francis’ prayer, hoping to dedicate himself to do God’s work. And in the train from Amsterdam to Paris at 3:17 p.m., Spencer Stone and his two friends were

confronted with a Moroccan man armed with an AK-47, a pistol, a box cutter and heavy ammunition. Spencer Stone rushed towards the terrorist and took him down. He got the back of his neck and his hand sliced while taking the terrorist down. Other people helped Spencer and were able to stop the terrorist. We praise his courage and brave heart; however, we feel the explanation that it was only because of a man's brave heart is somewhat insufficient. Throughout his spiritual journey, he believes that it was a faithful act under the emergent situation.

What is faith, how is faith "generated," and how is it fruitful in human life? In most cases, our faith in God starts from listening to the Gospel in special contexts such as worship services, faithful gatherings, or educational sessions. The Bible Romans chapter 10 verse 17 confirms that "17 So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ."

We know the saying that "The pen is mightier than the sword." Obviously, that doesn't mean that this plastic pen is physically harder than a steel sword. That is, words can influence people more than physical violence.

Words are powerful. Words can encourage people, and words can also destroy people. When we are encouraged to do something good by words, those words can change our mind and

action; therefore, words are very powerful. If someone says you are pretty, then you may feel great and would do something good for the person. On the contrary, if someone attacked you with bad words, you may get hurt and would try to seek revenge on the person. This is because words are powerful.

How about vain words? Vain words that have empty meaning without actions, aren't fruitful. Let's suppose there is a poor guy who doesn't have anything to eat and anywhere to live in. And somebody approaches to the poor guy and says like,

"Go and find a house to live in. Eat something and keep warm in your home."

No one can possibly think these words are powerful and meaningful. This is because these words cannot help the poor guy at all.

Certainly, our faith comes from what we've heard from someone who has talked about the Gospel! And from that faith, we gradually confess our sins and get forgiveness from God. But that is not what the Christian faith is all about. Christian faith needs our fruitful dedication to God. Christian faith is not just a soothing slush on a hot summer day. Yes, we say God's grace is amazing; however, we cannot deny that the Christian faith requires our actual dedication and acts which is totally related to that grace.

Christian faith is like this. From the beginning to the end of Sunday worship service, we are filled with words. Generally, the words are powerful because they are Gospel, but in specific cases, words need purposeful action that may bring good results. And sometimes, it could be God who called us to do so. Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. And faith was brought to completion by the works. We must understand this seriously. When we try to make our faith concrete, our dedicated hearts can find the realm of lived faith in our lives.

Now we knew the brave act of Spencer Stone and recalled the teaching about Christian faith from James. Faith is both invisible and visible activity as if words are invisible but also is powerful. Words are meaningful and powerful, and actions are fruitful. What kind of words do you bear, and what kind of actions are you going to do? God calls us to walk and work with God and is calling us to complete our faith by works.

What is your word of faith, and what is your work with God? How can you attend his calling? Sisters and brothers, if you are spiritually awake, God will let you know what your works are. Let's make our faith alive and fruitful. Let us pray together. When we have a silent moment now, let's ask God to show the divine planning, the divine Providence for you and for your family today. Let us pray silently.