

Half-Full Faith?

Genesis 9⁸⁻¹⁷; Psalm 25¹⁻⁹; 1 Peter 3^{18-end}; Mark 1⁹⁻¹⁵

*When the bow is in the clouds I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.
[Genesis 9¹⁶]*

How easily we fall into the trap of seeing things as being half-empty.

That can be especially true of the Church as Lent begins and the temptation is to focus on the negatives: of how we have failed to keep up our Lenten discipline (yes, just 5 days in); how our sinfulness needs to be dealt with; of general misery in a penitential season.

I am not convinced that should even be talking about half-full faith: if faith is anything at all, it is full-full faith!

It is a matter of approach and what you see in the text:

- ✦ What is the emphasis in the reading from Genesis? Is it the flood that destroyed? No, it is the covenant that is renewed. God has pressed the restart button on the human race - and then promises never to do it again! Every time we see the rainbow the promise is renewed!
- ✦ In the Psalm, did you hear the negative words: **shame; enemies; wanton; sins of my youth; transgressions**? I hope not! Much more in keeping with the Psalm to focus on the positive words: **trust; lead me in your truth; teach me; salvation; mercy; steadfast love; remember me!**
- ✦ In the letter of Peter do we focus on sin? No we focus on the fact that sin has been dealt with in the death of Christ. The executioners managed to kill the body but not the spirit. So, do we then see the fact that Jesus visits hell? No we focus on the fact that **he made a proclamation to the spirits in prison**. This is a second chance for those who'd died from the time of Moses on. I don't imagine that there were many who did not take the second chance!

- ✦ In the water of baptism do we see the death symbolised by the immersion? No! We see the new life made possible by the resurrection of Jesus and so our resurrection too!
- ✦ In the Gospel do focus on the temptation of Jesus? No! We focus on the affirmation of Jesus by his Father - **You are my son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased!**
- ✦ In the message of Jesus do we linger on the call to **repent**? No! That is not the emphasis. It is a necessary - and ongoing - part of our Christian life but the focus is on the statement **the time is fulfilled** and we become part of the **Kingdom of God**.

We have been trusted with and incorporated into the **Good News**. Our challenge this Lent is to stop beating ourselves up with what we cannot achieve, but to relax into the thrill of what we have already received - in that way we take seriously why Jesus died and the necessity of his passion while we prepare for the joy of Easter.