

“Life in the Real World”

1 Kings 8:22-43

Last week, I spoke of how faith, hope, and trust play such important roles in our lives. Faith is putting trust in something that we have not seen or do not understand. When pondering the complexities of and the incomprehensible nature of the Trinity as we did last week on the Sunday of the Holy Trinity, sitting here in God’s house, of course we recognize that we are people of faith, hope, and trust.

We have the fullness of the Gospel on display. The Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ is heard in Scripture, is spoken and sung in our liturgy, is received as we eat and drink the very flesh and blood of the Son of God Himself. The name of God is called upon in prayer and praise. There is no cursing or swearing among us. We are filled with the joyful anticipation of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

We are perfectly comfortable speaking about our faith when we are here, but then we get this misguided, sinful attitude that out there is the “real world,” out there we need to be different than when we are here. We need

to be guarded in what we say about our faith. We need to blend in. Blending in often means using vocabulary that would seem shocking within the walls of the church. For some odd reason, Christians imagine that such vocabulary doesn't seem shocking when used outside these walls.

There is only one Law of God. There is only one Gospel. If you know that using certain words would offend God here, it should be evident that using those same words would offend God out there.

The issue comes down to what we actually believe about God and His Law and His Gospel. Is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit truly your God – that is, is He your highest priority? On this Memorial Day weekend, I am reminded of an old saying, “There are no atheists in foxholes.” While that is not a universal truth, and the fear of death and hope in some vague God is not the Gospel, the point of the statement is that when bullets and bombs are all around you, your highest priority is what would happen to you if you would die.

It has been said, “The business of every Christian is every day being prepared to die.” This is why we sing the Nunc Dimmitis – the Song of Simeon – after receiving the flesh and blood of Christ in Holy Communion: “Lord now let your servant depart in peace . . .” Simeon is not talking about departing so that he can make it home to catch the first pitch of the

Cardinals game (which starts at 6:15 on Sat. and 12:35 on Sunday). He is boldly stating that because his eyes have seen the Christ child, he is now prepared to die. His confidence in the Gospel is unwavering.

I think about our recent high school graduates. As children of God, they are entering the most hostile environment in the Western world – the college campus. There is no more spiritually hostile environment for a child of God. Remember who you are when you are in here, and be unwavering in who you are when you are out there.

But I hear it said, but it's different out there in the real world. We heard last week from King David, "You have made known to me the paths of life." Participation in the Kingdom of God is the real life. This is the real world. And David continued, "you will make me full of gladness with your presence."

No matter where we go in this world, we only experience the "real world" when we experience the presence of God. He is the architect of this world, and He is the One governing and guiding our lives and everything around us. Those who avoid Him, deny Him, or outright mock Him have no idea what the "real world" is all about.

The reality of the "real world" is that we are always to be professing our faith. God is present and active everywhere, not just here. Solomon said, "heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this

house that I have built?" You are a child of God no matter where you go, not just when you are here.

The centurion in our Gospel reading understood the present and active nature of God and His Word. He didn't need to see it to believe it. He demonstrates what real faith is – the Word and will of God is fulfilled even if I don't see it with my own eyes. The Word and will of God is present and active everywhere.

The sinful, misguided attitude of the world outside the church being the "real world" comes from the sinful, misguided attitude that outside of these walls I need to exercise more authority, I need to take more control of my life, because faith and hope don't get you too far in the "real world".

Life in the Kingdom of God, life in the presence of God is the "real world." It is where we live each day of our lives. The "real world" is where God loves His children whom He has created. The "real world" is the world which God loved so much that He sent His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Therefore, the "real world" is a world filled with faith, hope, and trust.
Amen.