

WD May 3, 2021
Pastor Matthew Woods

“Little by Little”

For this week’s reading I ask you to consider the words of 2 Peter 1:3-8. “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Drip...Drip...Drip

I have in my house a faucet in my shower that has been dripping for years. The shower is all tiled and has a composite one piece floor that prevents any leaks. The Faucet has been dripping at a rate of couple drops an hour for year. Over time a limescale discolored path has formed where the drops of water have hit the floor and run into the drain. It didn’t happen over night but over many years and thousands of single drops of water—drip....drip...drip. The impact of this dripping has left a mark on the floor that seems impossible to remove. We have tried bleach, Limeaway, and host of other things but that discolored limescale path stubbornly remains. I’m not sure that I will ever be able to undo the impact of the dripping water.

Something similar happened at church. A valve was leaking in the room where Pastor and I put our robes on for church (The Sacristy). Unbeknownst to us our former Janitor had put a tinfoil tray in the drop ceiling to catch the drips that were falling from a leaking valve—a large one at that. Frank had been retired for at least a decade by the time it had revealed itself. None of us knew it was there. But over time the drips kept adding up until the tray got so heavy that it collapsed the drop ceiling tile and fell to the floor. It was a huge surprise. I’m glad I was not standing under it when it fell. But again, over time the drips added up and made an impact.

Jesus Left His Mark On Me.

In a similar fashion I can look back and see the accumulating effects of practicing the Christian faith. For example, I can remember back to my early days in the church. I did not grow up in the church but came in at about 15. I couldn’t tell you what a creed was back then or remember all the words of the Lord’s Prayer. I didn’t know what many others had know for years about worship, the Bible, communion, and a bunch of other things.

In college I was in the pre-seminary program at Concordia Ann Arbor. While taking a theology class in my Junior year our professor decided to offer us a chance at extra credit. It was simple Catechism memory work like the meaning of the first article of the Creed. I failed these miserably. The Professor asked what the deal was and I told him. I informed him that I had never read a catechism before—I was given one years before but never really studied it before, let alone memorized anything. He was shocked. But I wasn’t raised with the Catechism as the other class members—who had memorized it years before. So, the extra credit quizzes stopped. The Point I am driving at is that I’ve come a long way since those early days.

For years I have poured over the scriptures. Like the water drips, reading one passage at time doesn't seem like it has an impact but reading the scriptures over and over again and studying them has added up. Taking time to pray one morning doesn't sound like much. But practicing prayer for years and years makes prayer more natural and meaningful. It adds up. Going to church one or two Sundays doesn't have the same staying power as going over and over. It adds up. Reading my catechism and teaching it for years and years to 7th and 8th graders has helped make those memory passages very familiar. Each time has added up.

It Adds Up

This is what Peter means when he says, --make every effort to add to your faith..." One drop doesn't seem like anything but many drops, repeatedly, consistently, adds up to make its mark and bring weight to our ability to grow in Jesus. I can say that I am much more equipped than I was when I started as a Christian to discern where the word applies to life. Hebrews 4:12 says that "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." When the Word gets into us little by little it brings alive more our conscience, our thinking, and our approach to problems.

What we gain is spelled out in the following verses. ..."goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Drip...Goodness...Drip....Perseverance....Drip....self-control... Who couldn't use a little more of what Peter is referring to here? I know I can. Over time these things build and build so that more goodness, perseverance, self-control, godliness and so on are filling us up and leaving a mark on the way we think and do life as a Christian.

As I look back on my life I can how significant that trickling effect of the Holy Spirit has done me much good. I am certainly not the same person I was back when. I am also grateful that the Lord gave me drips rather than firehoses of grace and understanding. Too much at one time might have drown me rather than filled me up with faith.

Again as Peter says, here this morning "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." Everything we need is in those droplet moments of faith. I can certainly say I Know Jesus more because of them. So, if you are a little discouraged because of a lack of understanding of God's Word; if you have faith questions; if you struggle with prayer; or are a little slow to worship then hear again Peter's Words. "5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith..." Keep trying and don't underestimate the little victories of faith. Little by little the Lord will equip you and teach you and help you. This is my prayer for you. May the Lord rain upon you with His grace.

And now may the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30