

## For the Journey

Jan. 30, 26 - Rev. Dave Crawford



“...Lay hold upon our faith, we pray. Faith can be the victory that overcomes the world. Yet see how we put our faith in small unworthy things. Lift our faith on high. May we believe afresh in thee, in the eternal purpose which thou didst purpose in Christ, in the infinite value of the human soul and in thy coming kingdom.”

*(From a prayer (1959) by Harry Emerson Fosdick, first minister at the interdenominational church of Riverside Church in Manhattan, which opened in October, 1930)*

The infinite value of the human soul. Fosdick was known for his preaching in an age of great preachers, but also known for his writing, often creating powerful phrases of inspiration, memorable, quotable phrases like “the infinite value of the human soul.”

Yes his style of composition is certainly tied to his era. The only time we come across thou's and thee's in our daily life is through hearing the King James version of the 23rd Psalm at a memorial service. Yet that phrase of Fosdick's I think resonates with a kind of deep assurance for any who believe in any age or era, or for those seeking some connection with God. The infinite value of the human soul.

There are times when we reflect on the world around us and question the value of particular world leaders, celebrities, athletes, those prominent public figures of society who live in fishbowl and are therefore constantly open to criticism, judgement, ridicule, as well as praise of course. Closer to home it's quite easy to question our own personal worth and value, we with our broken relationships, our personal setbacks, our aging mental acuity, our financial stresses. Of what enduring value are we?

The gospel of Christ declares our value to be infinite; not our mortal bodies or our worldly accomplishments, not our flawed life choices or our financial net worth (or lack thereof), but our true selves, our souls. That's part of why Christ came, isn't it? God's act of staking out territory in our lives, partly to teach us to be better people, partly to assure us that even before we better ourselves (or commit to bettering ourselves) and bettering the world around us, our inherent worth is beyond measure in the eyes of God.

Isn't that what happened to Moses, the reluctant rescuer of an enslaved people who had killed a man with his own hands? Isn't that what happened to Paul, the Pharisee who hunted down Christians, took part in the stoning to death of the Apostle Stephen, but was then abruptly called out by the risen Christ to become his missionary to the Gentiles and ultimately the writer of most of the New Testament? Our imperfections are of lesser severity yet we have them, all of us. Fosdick reminds us of the gospel's promise - in our imperfection, "while we were sinners" (Romans 5:8), God valued and values us - infinitely!

Remember that, friends, for the tough days, the frail moments, the regretful encounters that are a part of our lives. Your soul. My soul. The infinite value of the human soul. Thanks be to God!

Grace and Peace, Rev. Dave.