

"Judas(Thadddaeus) The Steady Layman"

OT Scripture - Psalms 37 / 24th Verse and 25th verse
NT Scripture-1st Corinthians 15/1. 2 and 58

A magazine ad for an insurance company had an illustration of an empty desk chair...comfortable and imposing behind a massive executive-size desk. Behind the chair, up on the wall, a chart graphically showed how well business had surged upward. A black dot appeared and the top of the graph followed by a disasterous , jagged line plunging downward off the graph from the dot. The black dot, and the jagged plunging line explained the empty executive's chair, as well as the reason for the downward plunge of business volume...These words were penciled in near the dot..." THIS IS WHERE THE KEY MAN DIED! "

IN A LESS SEVERE INSTANCE THIS CAN

~~Not only can this happen when a key person of any organization leaves unexpectedly, but~~ It happens almost every time a person who is counted on fades out of the picture...every time a person shrugs off responsibility...every time a Christian quits, ~~that can happen all too often. Many walk in the company of Jesus, and then for some reason decide they have worked hard enough, and step aside hoping that others will fill the void.~~

But, one layman, particularly noted for his steadfastness, his stick-with-it-ness was Thaddaeus. He is called Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddaeus in Mathews gospel. In Mark he is called Thaddaeus. And, in Luke and John he is called Judas, brother of James

The loss because he appears in the

same position in the listing of the twelve apostles, and is named in connection with James The Less.

Now, Thaddaeus was a steady layman. He did not quit **I** matter how rough the going. Through it all he remained loyal, steadfast and constant. However, once, and only once did this steady layman Thaddaeus appear in the spotlight...and what an occasion he chose to speak out.

9/13/

one of the most remembered, and impressive sections of the New Testament.

The scene - the Last Supper. The hour: after the meal. The occasion: While Jesus was issuing His last instructions to His loyal band of laymen. The problem:- How to convey what will be happening in the future to these laymen...the new teaching after His resurrection. Jesus is telling ~~us~~ ^{THEM} that He will send the Holy Spirit to be with them...not in person as He was, but in spirit. Not physically, but yet in reality.

Thaddaeus had been listening intently. For three years he had ~~trudged~~ ^{TRUDGED} steadily along with the group,,, faithful. silent, ever-willing, hard-working. Now, if there is to be a change he wants to understand it thoroughly before he gives it his usual solid support. He wants to know how this change Jesus is talking about will take place. What will it mean to them when Jesus is gone? How will they know Him?

So, Thaddaeus turns to Jesus and asks, "Lord, how is it that you are going to make yourself known to us, but not to the world?"

Jesus did not try to explain how. All He said was,
 " When a man loves me, he follows my teaching. Then my
 Father will love him, and we will come to that man and
 make our home with him." What is this but an answer
 encouraging steadfastness? You have loved me, keep on
 loving me. Keep on doing my word, and as you keep on ,
fixed in purpose, persevering in faith, not quitting,
 the Father and the Son will make their dwelling place
 in your heart...You will be comforted and guided by the
 Holy Spirit.

The Bible speaks much about steadfastness. It is the
 main point in the letter of Jude written by the
 namesake of the steady layman...Thaddaeus. It is
 addressd to Christians then as well as now. Listen to
 these steadying words from Jude...

" Do not go astray...Do not be overcome by false
 teaching...Do not be moved away from the gospel...
Hold steadfast to the faith which was delivered
 unto you...Earnestly contend for the faith...
Remember the words which were spoken before by
 the apostles of our Lord, Jesus Christ...Build up
yourselves in your most Holy Faith...Keep yourselves
 in the love of God."

But, how do we, today continue steadfastly? We must
 be willing to fulfill the condition to continue our
 devotion to Jesus Christ's Good News as Thaddaeus did.
 Everything hinges on the instructions Jesus gave to
 Thaddaeus...You loved me...keep on loving me. That's
 easy to understand, but we seem to forget it sometimes.

We must be steadfast in our faith. We must desire to follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus. Then He will come with the Father God and dwell in us. The Holy Spirit will comfort us. Steadfastness encourages the love of God. Steadfastness produces the weekly habit of corporate worship among the saints such as we are doing here this morning. Steadfastness produces the daily habit of of Bible reading, Bible study and prayer. Now, I must confess this is at times difficult. The fast-paced activity of our daily living is sometimes not very conducive to this habit, but it's not at all impossible. " The secret of success is constancy of purpose." Disraeli said that.

If we do not desire to resist evil, we will not resist it. If we do not seek to endure to the end as Thaddaeus did, then we shall surely meet with failure. It's easy to quit. It's tough to keep going at a productive pace...And, how to keep on going? There is no easy answer...no new answer...just keep on keeping on. Fixed in purpose...keeping ourselves in the steadfast love of God. We must keep our eyes on Jesus...the object of our love.

There is a story about Leonardo DiVinci...as he was painting "The Last Supper". A crowd had gathered and was watching over his shoulder. He was working on a bowl of fruit on the table. The crowd was following every brush stroke. Suddenly, with one angry broad sweep of the brush he obliterated the bowl of fruit, and pointing up to the face of Jesus he shouted, " Don't look down here at the **FRUIT ON THE TABLE!** *Look up here! Look to Jesus at all times in your life!*

The Westminster Confession of Faith contains a masterful definition of steadfastness. I quote. "This perseverance of the saints depends ^{not on} ~~on~~ their own free will, but ~~not~~ upon election flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God The Father, upon the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, upon the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them." UNQUOTE "It depends upon God The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit."

So, our desire should be to remain steadfast. It is necessary. Steadfast to God, to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit within us. Steadfast to the church that Jesus formed 2,000 years ago...steadfast to this church and what it stands for in this community. And, God alone can help us do that. We must be steadfast in our Father's business. We must rely on God to keep us steadfast.

We rely on the electric company, the gas company and the telephone company to be there when we turn on the light, turn up the heat, or pick up the phone. But, they are man-made utilities, and sometimes they don't always work when we want them to. They're not totally steadfast, but we rely on them just the same even though we know from past experience that they have been known to fail...but we use them daily confident that they will work when we want them to. So, we must rely on God and His power even more. We must trust, expect, be confident, believe, have faith in His presence in our lives... that His goodness surrounds us...that He is totally steadfast toward us.

That was the message Jesus gave to Thaddaeus. His answer for steadfastness. And, if we can say little else about Thaddaeus... he did remain a steadfast layman. Toward the end of his life he preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the regions of Edessa, Armenia and Persia. Some say he died a martyr's death in Persia. He remained stalwardly steadfast to the end of his days.

PEOPLE

You've heard stories about dieing in blizzards only a few feet from shelter. They were beaten in body, disheartened and distressed in spirit, and at the end of their courage. They could not see one more step ahead. They quit, and they perished.

One person can't be expected to do it all. But, the work of the Kingdom of God, the church that Jesus began 2000years ago...yes, and this church keeps asking us all - challenging us to take one more step in service where our talents are best suited and sorely needed.

Even when we feel we have reached the end of our endurance...when everything is spent...we can take one more step. We can plan one more meeting or Bible study with our friends and neighbors in the various senior housing residences near our church. We can attend one more planning session, one more meeting, teach one more Sunday School lesson, prepare one more meal for hungry people, prepare for one more communion service, usher one more service, sing one more anthem, go to one more Bible study group, invite one more person to church, help teach our little ones about Jesus one more time, visit one more of our home friends, yes, and preach one more sermon.

We will do well to think about steadfast Thaddaeus. He kept his eyes on Jesus. He knew the power of Jesus Christ to the end of his days. Surely he had days when the call to service was heard, but ^{VERY} weakly...when he was tired, hungry, ^{LOW} ~~was~~ of spirit. But he rose up, ^{ONE MORE TIME} ~~again,~~ and followed Jesus. He treasured the words Jesus had spoken so personally to him...and to us today. " When a man (or any person) loves me, he follows my teaching, then my Father will come to him, and we will come to ~~him~~ make our home with him... Let us pray.

**CLOSING PRAYER
AFTER SERMON**



Father, we want to be known as steadfast Christian laypersons. We want to love you, to follow your Son's teachings, to feel the indwelling and goodness of the Holy Spirit within us. Sometimes it becomes difficult to be steadfast. Sometimes we would rather rest a bit...to sit back and let our Christian brothers and sisters pinch hit for us for a while.

We ask that You, Your Son and Your Holy Spirit uplift us to the point of responsible, continued service to your church...to this church. Help us to serve willingly, steadfastly as our individual talents permit. In Jesus name we pray...Amen.

We cannot separate Christ's
commandments from his love.

If he is our Savior, he is also our Lord.

It's an all-or-nothing choice that
includes obedience (as well as
blessing -