

## This I Believe

I am so glad to be here this morning and want you all to know I am honored that Seth asked me to speak today....and let me reassure you his faithfulness in all matters is intact, as no draft to be screened was required. He only made sure I knew he was there for anything I needed several times, and it was at that point I decided to take this much more seriously, and of course the last time the Pastor asked me, he added the tag line “it will be good”...I have been worried ever since, but the Lord’s will this morning, via Pastor Seth, be done.

I believe... we are nothing without our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and all that we do no matter how grand or trivial leaves an imprint on those closest to us and to those very distant from our daily lives.

I believe with all my heart, based on many instances, that I can prove this true, and I will share a strong case to support my argument this morning. I have for many years been involved with the financing of higher education, starting with my alma mater of USC, to a law school in Manhattan, New York and to several other colleges. I have met with thousands of parents and students over the years and helped them understand the complexities of the financial aid application processes for Federal Government/State/Institutional aid, possible third party resources, and the means to investigate top prospects for money. Of course, now as opposed to years ago, there are multiple computer search engines to help in this endeavor.

I was especially good at working with students and parents to assimilate the various information into an “action plan” as it were. As with many processes there are deadlines and completion dates for multiple activities involving the financing of “DREAMS” as we used to say. And it is indeed a “dream” for many; especially today, if they can attend schools of their choice or desire.

I have also seen more tears and raised voices over the years surrounding these issues related to financing this “dream” and it is expected and commendable to most that adversity brings a real sense of accomplishment when you see things through. Is it not most satisfying to prevail and succeed when you had to work so very hard to meet your goals? But alas there is always a problem, even when there should be none...and I am not sure about the law of averages, but it seems that many times the person crying on the other side of my desk was the same one that had been crying last month.

It matters not; you just see the problems through and get across that finish line and that student often never forgets the time taken and concern shown about that family’s particular set of problems. It was often at this point a sense of fulfillment could, if it were going to, creep in, as it was often not an instant problem fixed, and may have involved corrections to an application filed with the government which tells you what you can receive in monies, loans and must be received back correctly to have your particular problem resolved. It seems impossible but I

once had a student who had 11 transactions, meaning they had already gone back and forth 11 times correcting some information with the federal government, before I even saw them. I knew because we collected information to review briefly before an appointment if warranted; I was not sure what would walk in. I was thinking in my head as the student sat in front of me. I am not going to possibly enjoy working with this student the next few years. I should mention that many students almost never had a problem with various processes and consequently are rarely seen.

As this student and his friend took a seat, they almost immediately took an interest and asked a question about me I was surprised to hear in our politically correct culture. “Are you sealed by the blood of Jesus?” Well I had not brought the subject up in a work setting, so I thought it was okay to answer. So I enthusiastically answered why Yes I am! And they answered back that they were so glad and they could tell by a Palm Sunday Cross made out of reeds we distribute here that I had clipped to a calendar on a wall behind me. The student explained that he had no parents, and the grandmother who had raised him, had passed away in the previous Fall. It was now a few days before the start of Fall semester; a hot August day; phones ringing off the hook; a low rumble of people clattering about and chatting while waiting to be seen next. But somehow, time seemed to stop as he explained that his grandmother had told him to always look for Jesus and the cross no matter where you go. I was indeed humbled by his simple observation and forthrightness. Indeed, hundreds of people may have passed through my office, but certainly never mentioned

and certainly never asked a question like that! The student explained how hard the process had been for him. He had moved around a lot, he didn't have transportation, and the only computer access he had was at the public library. All of his problems were addressed and worked out over the next few weeks.

The student had so many problems because he didn't see how he fit into the definition of "family" as prescribed by the federal government. He never knew his parents, and now the grandmother who was his sole support was gone. But he had somehow remembered that one pearl of wisdom from her, "always seek the Christ and you will find your way". This student, I am glad to say, went on to become an academic and athletic success and more importantly looked for Christ every day and tried to help others find the cross and the joy of salvation.

So...starting from a "small cross from reeds" clipped to a mundane calendar on an office wall, we became family through Christ; and he became a smiling face I would often see as he called out in hello around the campus. I believe the "imprint" of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is on all of us who have been sealed through the supreme birth; tribulations and trials; and the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour.

So how do I know that I am making a difference in my spiritual life if I believe we are all imprinted, as it were, and sealed in our Saviour's sacrifice on the cross, a cross which led to death, but also a resurrection call to those of us who believe without seeing? I have learned that the love and

concern of our heavenly father is like water which reaches into every pore and crack of our spiritual foundations to firm us up and sustain us.

We, as followers of the “Christ”, which is the all-enveloping grasp of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must not be timid or reserved in our affections for our Lord or the work and tasks before us no matter how trivial they seem. Now is not an age to be tempestuous, but resolved and joyful in our conviction, to acknowledge and share in the feast of heavenly opportunities of service, and to acknowledge the saving grace provided to us with the least amount of paperwork or steps to complete. It is truly miraculous that God’s “amazing grace” is something so attainable and fool proof, no matter what our condition or the circumstances we may find ourselves in.

So let’s be clear that the love we multiply along with HIS work is God’s intention for us all, but our very life itself should be a witness for the Saviour’s life given for us. We never need to shrink away from the interpretation of the “criteria” required to live in Jesus. No need to worry if you’ll miss the big deadline for an application into heaven. No need to worry if your email address, or your Social Security number was off a letter or a digit.

God knows our “address” and lives inside each of us; so don’t be timid or shy about this “great news”, but in all ways very small or large, let the mustard seed of Jesus grow as in the New Testament parable. And finally, this

may seem a little non-Presbyterian, but can I have an  
“Amen”? Great! One more time and a little louder,  
“Amen”. I have always wanted to do that and this was my  
chance! Peace be with you!