



## **FAITHFUL IS HE**

By Rev. Will Nelken

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I celebrated my second birthday in Marin County, twenty-two years after the founding of the First Pentecostal Church of San Rafael. Thirty years later, I became the pastor of that congregation, which had by then become Trinity Community Church. Here's a summary of our ninety years as a witness of the grace and power of Jesus Christ to Marin County and the world:

Trinity Community Church began in 1931 as a home Bible study led by Edith Erickson, a recent graduate of Glad Tidings Bible Institute in San Francisco. Having outgrown the home meeting, in 1937, the group organized as the First Pentecostal Church. Five years later, in 1942, they affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God, as San Rafael Assembly of God.

In 1952, they purchased their own building on D Street and continued ministry there for twenty years. In 1970, the church purchased a 4-acre parcel at 1675 Grand Avenue and, after two years of remodeling, relocated once more, changing their name to Trinity Community Church. In January, 1984, Will Nelken became the fifteenth pastor to serve the community. In 2014, they began a major remodel of their aging buildings, which was completed in early 2020.

Trinity has become a cheerful, multi-generational, multi-ethnic congregation of Christ-followers, with a vision for Gospel ministry that spans the globe. For all that God has done for us, among us, and through us over the last 90 years (for which we give Him thanks and praise), the church must continually reinvent itself to meet the needs of a shifting culture and a changing world, following the model of the Early Church described in the Book of Acts, especially chapter 2. This we are committed to do. (Printed copies of a more detailed historical summary are available upon request.)

*Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)*

Your response to a calling may depend greatly on who it is that calls you. Or, at least, on how you perceive the one who calls you.

When my mother or father called me... I (usually) perked up and paid attention.

When my teacher called me... I wanted to please and I stood up.

When my best friend called me... I ran to his side.

When a stranger calls me, or an enemy... well, my response may be different.

Let me share a story which Jesus told about two sons—both were faithless, but one was faithful...

Matthew 21:28-32

<sup>28</sup> *“But what do you think about this? A man with two sons told the older boy, ‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’ <sup>29</sup> The son answered, ‘No, I won’t go,’ but later he changed his mind and went anyway. <sup>30</sup> Then the father told the other son, ‘You go,’ and he said, ‘Yes, sir, I will.’ But he didn’t go.*

<sup>31</sup> *“Which of the two obeyed his father?”*

*They replied, “The first.”*

*Then Jesus explained his meaning: “I tell you the truth, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do. <sup>32</sup> For John the Baptist came and showed you the right way to live, but you didn’t believe him, while tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even when you saw this happening, you refused to believe him and repent of your sins.*

Both were faithless, but one was faithful. How can that be? Because faithfulness is not a condition or a status, but a response. One said “No” at the start; the other said “No” in the end. Sometimes, those who seem least faithful at the start, may prove to be faithful in the end. The Father understands this. What will your answer be?

Jesus told another story about two other sons—one was faithful, but faithless; the other was faithless, but faithful.

Luke 15:11-32

<sup>11</sup> *Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.*

<sup>13</sup> *“A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. <sup>14</sup> About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. <sup>15</sup> He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.*

<sup>17</sup> *“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, <sup>19</sup> and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”’*

<sup>20</sup> *“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.*

<sup>21</sup> His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

<sup>22</sup> "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. <sup>23</sup> And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, <sup>26</sup> and he asked one of the servants what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'

<sup>28</sup> "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, <sup>29</sup> but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. <sup>30</sup> Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

<sup>31</sup> "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!' "

One son—the elder—was faithful, yet faithless. He remained with his father all those years and never once refused to do anything his father asked. Yet he had no faith at all for the redemption of his wandering brother. He had become so bitter that his service was as a slave, not a son—out of obligation, not out of love. What motivates your service to God?

The younger son was faithless—taking his share of his father's wealth and wasting it on his own pleasures—yet, in the end, he became faithful, returning to his father in hope of his compassion. We have all been unfaithful to God in various ways—this is not news—but what matters most is this: Do you still hope in His mercy? If not, then your unfaithfulness has made you blind and bitter. But if so, then He will embrace you again and celebrate your return!

*Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)*

Your response to God's calling depends on how you perceive Him.

And, without question, you have been called by God. He first called you "from your mother's womb." Although it's been done, literally, billions of times, the birth of a child remains an anxiety-laden process. 10%-20% of known pregnancies end in miscarriage or still birth; the percentage nearly doubles for in vitro fertilizations. The pain of such loss is immeasurable and persistent, and often compounded by guilt, even if only imagined. My heart goes out to those who bear it.

You are here today, because God called you “from your mother’s womb.” That was no accident; that was divine intent. While many things about the path of your life were unknown then, and may still be obscure, this much is clear: God has a plan for your life.

Furthermore, if you have been born again and the Holy Spirit lives in you, then your calling by God has been further clarified, for He has called you to trust in Christ, who said:  
*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.* (John 6:44)

How do you perceive the One who has called you?

King David sang:

*To the pure You show Yourself pure, but to the crooked You show Yourself shrewd.* (Psalm 18:26)

Paul, the apostle of Christ, applied that truth as follows:

*Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their minds and consciences are corrupted. Such people claim they know God, but they deny Him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.* (Titus 1:15-16)

*Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.* (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

What will your response be? Think about WHO has called you.

*Philippians 3:13* *No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which **God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.***

*2 Timothy 1:9* **He is the One who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not based on our works but on His own purpose and grace, granted to us in Christ Jesus before time began.**

*Ephesians 1:18* *I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope He has given to those **He called**—His holy people who are His rich and glorious inheritance.*

*Ephesians 4:1* *Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been **called by God.***

*2 Thessalonians 1:11* *So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of **His call.** May He give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.*

*Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)*

He will bring it to pass—but listen, God is not faithful to fulfill YOUR calling; YOU must be faithful to fulfill your calling. And when you are faithful, He will bring it to pass.

It is true for the individual, and it is true for the local church. We have been called by God, and we have a calling yet to fulfill, for when it is complete, we will be going home to Heaven.

Until then, church, RISE UP! Lead a life that is worthy of a heavenly calling.

It will be a life that requires Heaven's help. (You will not succeed on your own.)

And it will be a life that warrants Heaven's joyful applause. (Your trusting obedience will win God's smile.)

I APPLAUD YOU TODAY, you who have been called by God. And I urge you to pause with gratitude right now and applaud one another's faithful pursuit of Christ.

Let's do this!