

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Something really remarkable happened this past week. The NASA rover called Perseverance or “Percy” as they call it, landed on Mars and, for the first time sent back sounds and color pictures from Mars. Now, I learned that NASA has five rovers on the planet Mars. They are Sojourner, Spirit and Opportunity, Curiosity, and Perseverance. Curiosity was the only rover still operational until Perseverance landed. The landing of Perseverance is historic because of the ability to send sounds and panoramic pictures from Mars’ surface. Until now, that has not been possible. Perseverance has 23 cameras on it with audio, zooming, and color capabilities. It has already sent back the first video of a rover landing on Mars. As I read about this historic event I thought about how far scientists have come in the exploration of other planets. I also thought about what a 1960 scientist would say to a 2021 scientist if he were told that one day we would see and hear video of a rover landing on Mars just by doing a Google search. First, he might say, what is a Google search? She would tell him about the ability to type a word into a small computer that could access millions of pieces of information stored in a cloud and he would say, what? You see, science could not even imagine what has been accomplished today and yet, someone, imagined it and then went after it, one day at a time. If science had stopped imagining what could be, “Percy” would never have happened. I submit to you that science is just another word for God-inspired and God-inspired leads to faith in what can be.

God inspires daily and faith makes us believe in what can be. We know from scripture that faith is the substance of those things hoped for and the evidence of those things we cannot see. God inspired Abraham to believe that he would be the father of many nations, and, ultimately, Abraham believed this to be true. However, initially, Abraham had given up on having children with his wife, Sarah. When God showed Abraham what he was truly purposed to become, he initially had some difficulty seeing it. After all, he was 99 years old and his wife, Sarah, was 90 and she had not been pregnant once. He couldn’t really see how him becoming the father of nations was going to happen. If he trusted his own vision and what he believed about his wife, it was impossible. But God showed Abraham what his future would look like and reminded Abraham that nothing is impossible for God. The scripture tells us that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to God’s purpose. We know from scripture that Abraham loved God and we know that God’s purpose for Abraham was made clear to him when God made the promise to Abraham that he would be the father of nations. Paul explained to the church in Rome that, even though Abraham couldn’t see what God promised coming to fruition, he chose not to focus on what he couldn’t do and instead focused on what God said He would do. Paul explains that Abraham’s decision to believe the impossible was possible because of the One who made the promise is the reason God declared Abraham to be fit; Abraham trusted God to do what God promised to do. Paul tells us that when we trust God to do what God promises then we will also be considered fit before God even if we cannot see God’s plan clearly or we feel inadequate for the task God set before us. God may have a job, a promotion, or a ministry designed just for you but you feel that you are not the right

person or there is no way they would choose you so you pass it up. I must admit there has been more than once that the Spirit has directed me to throw my name in the hat for a position and I questioned whether or not I was the right person but I went for it and was pleasantly surprised to be chosen for the job. If God told you to go for it, Abraham would tell you not to focus on what you believe you can't do and instead focus on what God said He would do. Have you ever heard the saying, if God brings you to it, then God will bring you through it? If God opens doors we need to walk through them.

I carry this calendar with me almost everywhere and I plan out each day. At night before I go to bed I plan what I am going to do the next day. Then my husband will ask me when he gets home how my day went. More often than not, I will say, well, I didn't get everything I hoped to accomplish done today. Maybe I wasn't supposed to get everything I wanted to accomplish done that day but maybe I got what Jesus wanted done accomplished. Everyone has a divine purpose in life, a purpose established by God. The discovery of that purpose depends on the willingness to see beyond one's single vision of what is in front of us and focus on God's panoramic view of all that is possible. To trust God with each day given and place that day's thoughts, words, and actions in God's hands without hesitation believing that everything that happens will be for good. Jesus said that anyone that desires to go with Him must let Him lead. That we must be willing to sacrifice our desires and plans in order to become the true person that we were created to be. Once we become our true selves only then can we fulfill the divine purpose set before us, for that day. You see, Jesus said we must intentionally choose to let Him lead every single day of our lives. We must intentionally choose to put aside what we think or want, and choose to put on the mind of Christ and want what He wants every single day. Walking with Jesus is a daily endeavor. When I think of this, the part of the Lord's prayer that says "Give us this day our daily bread" takes on a whole new meaning. Now when I pray the Lord's prayer I think that when we say "Give us this day our daily bread", we are saying, Jesus take the lead and help us to be the true person you created us to be for this day. We are saying that it doesn't matter what we want to happen today, only that it happens according to what Christ purposes because we know that if we love Jesus and follow the purpose Jesus set before us, it will be good. Jesus promised to never leave or forsake us, to be with us always so we can trust Jesus to lead. In order to walk into the purpose for which we were created, we must trust in the promises of Jesus. One translation of today's Gospel says that we should deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Jesus. That means we set aside our agenda and focus on what Jesus would have us to do that day. We can't allow this world to consume us with worrying about what we can and cannot do. We simply wake up in the morning and pray "Lord, I know that there is nothing that will happen today that you and I together cannot handle" and then get out of bed. Martin Luther put it this way, "if we don't believe God will answer prayer, then why pray?" We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, we just need to put Jesus in charge and follow the leader. Trusting Jesus with our day and our lives is something we must intentionally choose every single day. It's not always easy but it is always necessary.