



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
*Pastor Terry's Thoughts of the Week*

## **Faith and Faithfulness**

Most of us know that you don't just get oranges off an orange tree! Essentially all of the commercial oranges are grafted onto sour roots. Somewhere along the line, somebody figured out how to do it and now we are enjoying the end result.

Occasionally there will be a "volunteer" tree that produces good fruit. At one home we had such a tree - it was a "Parson Brown". The story is that the tree came up by the back door of one Parson Brown in Sumter County. It had a wonderfully sweet fruit and a thin skin - and that was its "problem". The fruit couldn't take the harsh treatment in the factories, so it couldn't be used commercially. But today many people graft that tree to another because of the sweetness of its fruit.

Then comes the faithfulness. We can plant all the fruit trees we want, but if we don't take care of them, if we are not faithful in the tending, in fertilizing, in trimming off deadwood, we will not be experiencing good results, that is, what we wanted when we started out.

The same goes for our religion. We are, by the grace of God, citizens of God's kingdom. We entered that kingdom when we were baptized. The prayers of our family and the particular family of God we were in, "tended" us as we grew physically and in faith. There were people around us who gave us good guidance and helped us grow in the Word.

But then came the time when we affirmed our faith - we entered confirmation and at the end of that time promised that we would continue to be faithful to God and live in his world. Some of us were faithful to that promise,

some of us fell away completely, and some of us had our ups and downs in faith.

What has held me together is that when things got confusing or mixed up, there was a person of faith who seemed to steady me and guide me. There were also times when I felt I was in the right place at the right time to hold another person up. In fact, that has happened so many times in my life that I realize it is no longer “coincidence” but the guidance of God. Somehow we get the message that the time is right to go here or there or see this person or that one.

How’s your faith? If you are like me, there are days I just give it all to God because I just can’t deal with one more thing. There are also days when everything just goes wonderfully and I fly on like I never had a worry in the world. But most days are in between. We just move along, doing what has to be done and we don’t realize that God is moving along beside us. Those are often the times when we meet someone we can support.

How are you doing today? Is it an “up” day or a “down and confusing” day? If you are reading this at the time of worship, you have come to the right place to share your current faith with others or to pray for peace from God as you struggle with what’s going on in your life.

Our community of faith is our “kingdom” of help and wonder. Don’t miss out on the strength we have together.

*TMK*

*-- Week of February 21, 2010*