



AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

THE POWER OF FAITHFULNESS

"All we have to do is decide what to do with the time that has been given to us"

- Gandalf, The Fellowship of the Rings

After three weeks of learning about the "one ring" and the negative impact that its powers have upon the lives of everyone who comes into possession of it, we have finally gotten to a point where we see that there is another way. This Sunday, we heard that even in the face of failure and destruction, it is still possible for good to prevail.

One of the most powerful images of faithfulness that runs throughout the entirety of Tolkien's novels is seen in the relationship between Sam and Frodo. Time and time again, Sam is willing to selflessly put the weight of his friend (and in many ways, the entirety of Middle Earth) on his shoulders in order to make sure that hope and light triumph over darkness. It would have certainly been easier and much less painful for Sam to give up rather than trekking across endless mountains, bogs, and planes, and yet his faithfulness to the community and the cause ends in the eventual destruction of the Dark Lord and his "one ring."

In this day and age, it can be hard to hold onto that faithfulness and live in a way that embraces the Gospel message. When someone wrongs us, it is incredibly difficult to hold onto our vision of hope and love him or her back. When we experience senseless loss at the hand of another, our desire for retribution can seem almost insurmountable.

And what we see in Tolkien's tale as well as in the Scriptures is that that's ok. There are times in the book when our heroes do falter and fall. There are times in the scriptures where Jesus' very own disciples reject his teachings in favor of cultural norms of violence and retributive justice. The beautiful reality is that our invitation to be faithful to a

different truth, a new reality, is never lost.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

This week, reflect on the people or ideals that you are faithful to. It may be a spouse or a loved one; or it may be a faith or a creed. Ask yourself, "Why have I remained faithful to this person/ideal? What has kept me coming back, in spite of the troubles that I have encountered in life?"

Then, I want to invite you to reflect on the quote at the start of this devotional. Ask yourselves, "What can I do with the time that has been given to me?"

Additional Resources: [HTTP://VIMEO.COM/57940938](http://vimeo.com/57940938)

In this story, we hear a tale of forgiveness that finds its roots in a deep faithfulness to a different way of living in light of the Gospel.

Proverbs 3:3-8: ³Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them round your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴So you will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and of people. ⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. ⁸It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.

Romans 12:17-21: ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' ²⁰No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- Scriptures from the New Revised Standard Version -

REFLECTIONS