

Sunday Sermon: September 1, 2019

Sermon Text: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Sermon Theme: Faith is.....

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. <sup>2</sup>This is what the ancients were commended for.

<sup>3</sup>By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

<sup>11</sup>By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. <sup>12</sup>And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

<sup>13</sup>All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. <sup>14</sup>People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup>If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup>Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

The man had asked if the ice was safe to walk on. All of the old-timers at the diner had told him that it would be at least a month before the ice would be too dangerous to walk on.

He was pretty confident as he stepped onto the lake because of what the men said with each crack and crunch he became less confident. He was too far across to go back but walking on didn't seem like a good idea. He decided the safest thing he could do was lay down on the ice and start to crawl. That way if the ice broke he wouldn't fall into the freezing water.

As the crawled across the ice, he man and his son approached him. They were walking hand-in-hand. The son was looking at his father with a smile on his face, eating his snacks. They were singing the song together without a worry in the world.

Which picture is the one that shows faith and trust? I think we see that best in the little boy, don't we? That little boy was not worried about the ice because he trusted his father. He trusted that his father knew what was best and if his father took him across the ice, he had nothing to worry about. That little boy trusted his father.

We contrast that to the man who was crawling. He didn't trust what the old-timers said, he didn't trust the ice. Instead of trusting what the old men said, he did what he thought was right and he ended up being cold, wet and miserable.

Faith is something that we often take for granted. We have it, we talk about it, but we don't think about it too much. This morning we are going to take a look at faith. We will see that faith is more than facts. Faith trusts in something and faith follows something.

Hebrews is one of the books of the Bible that is very unique. It is not an Old Testament book of history or prophecy, it is not a Gospel, it is not a letter written by Paul to one of the New Testament churches. The book of Hebrews is closer to a Bible Information class that looks at the important teachings of Jesus. It is a Bible Information class for Jewish people who were converting to Christianity. The writer to the Hebrews uses Old Testament customs, rituals and Bible lessons to teach how Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament prophecies.

The section before us this morning is the section on how we are saved. This section on salvation centers on faith. The Jews believed that they would be saved because of their works. The writer to the Hebrews teaches them that it was not their works that saved them, it was their faith in their Messiah and Savior that did that.

The writer uses Abraham as an example of someone who had faith and put that faith into action. **Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** <sup>2</sup> **This is what the ancients were commended for.**

<sup>3</sup> **By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.** <sup>8</sup> **By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.** <sup>9</sup> **By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.** <sup>10</sup> **For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

Faith holds on and trusts something. There different kinds of things that we can put our faith in. There is faith that my team will do well this year, faith that I will not get into an accident when I am driving home, or faith I will live another 10 years.

The problem is, if we put our faith in the wrong thing, we can be let down. Yet, those kinds of faith all have their drawbacks. don't they. These kind of faith can be broken. We can be let down. The team doesn't do well, I get into an accident, or the doctor calls with bad news.

Faith holds on to something, but if it is the wrong thing then it will let us down.

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Saving faith holds to the strongest thing, our Lord and Savior Jesus. Faith is being sure and certain that when Jesus has died on the cross and has completed the work of salvation that he has said he has done. Faith believes that what Jesus has done, he has done for me. Faith believes that this good news of Jesus affects every part of life, from comfort and peace to thanks and praise.

Faith that saves is more than facts, it is more than a head knowledge, or going through the motions. I can know a lot about a religion and not believe in it. I can know that there is a guy named Buddha or Mohammed. I can know the rituals and customs of a religion and still not believe in it. Faith is more than a collection of facts about Jesus. Saving Faith is a trust in something, often without facts or proof.

Faith is sure and certain that although we have not seen Jesus die on the cross, we did not see creation, we have not experienced heaven yet, yet we are certain that all these happened as God said they did. . Faith that holds to the promises of God believes that that promise is all the proof we need.

This faith that trusts in God for what we need, is given to us as a gift. It is God who sends his Holy Spirit, to light the flame of faith and to feed that flame of faith through the Word. It is the Holy Spirit who makes that a faith which clings to Jesus for the forgiveness and eternal life we need.

We have faith that looks backwards and believes that what the Bible says Jesus has done, he has done. Abraham and those in the Old Testament had faith that looked forward. Their faith believed that everything God promised would happen just as he said it would happen.

This faith that holds to our Savior and believes and trusts in him is also a faith that will move us to be active, to follow what our God asks us to do.

It is very easy to see the people of the Bible put their faith and trust in their Savior into action. Here in our sermon text we get just a small picture of Abraham's faith in action. At God's command, Abraham gathered up his family and began to move, without knowing where it was he was going. At God's command Abraham moved far from the familiarity of his family and homelands to a foreign land. At God's command, Abraham believed that he would have an heir. He held to that promise of God for many years. Then, finally, when he was too old for that to happen, he took God at his word that he would have that son in his old age.

Faith is not afraid to follow where God leads and to do what God asks.

Although, we know that we should trust in God with all our heart, soul and mind, we don't always have the faith to follow God. Sometimes we are just going through the motions of faith. We say and do the right things, but our heart is not really in it. We want to live our faith, as long as it is convenient and doesn't make a lot of waves with the people around us. We want to live our faith as long as it won't cause us any trouble.

As we look at Abraham and the believers of the Old Testament, we have to ask ourselves what drove them to have a faith that was willing to follow where God led? The answer is also in our sermon text.

**All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.** <sup>14</sup> **People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.** <sup>15</sup>

**If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.**

The answer is simple, they had faith in God and they were secure in his promises. These Old Testament believers never experienced the joy of hearing the name Jesus. Yet, they believed and trusted in that promise of a Savior as something that God had already completed for them.

They did this because they always had their eyes on something that was so much better than this earth. They had their eyes on the joys of heaven. They lived their life with their eyes on that Messiah that they had never seen because they believed that through that Messiah heaven was theirs.

This is our same path. Like the little boy in our story, we look to our heavenly Father for all we need. We walk believing and trusting that our heavenly Father knows what is best for us. With this faith and trust we can face every day without fear and worry, knowing that God has everything under control.

Our greatest joy and comfort is having that faith which believes that our place in the city of heaven is already secure through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Because the last chapter, the chapter of heaven has been written, we can be assured that all of these chapters here on earth are also secure in our God. We can look to him in faith and trust.

Faith is not something that we do, it is one of the great gifts that Jesus has given to us. As we continue to walk this road of life, may God strengthen our faith in those times when we find worry and doubt have us crawling through life. May we look to our father, like the little boy, always trusting that he is in control and we will make it to our destination, safely.