

There are so many sad and evil things going on in the world today. They challenge our belief and trust in and our loyalty to God. In other words, they challenge our faith.

This week we ushered in a new administration in the Whitehouse. You can love it or you can hate it. You have the opportunity to embrace it or rebuke it. The bottom line is that it is here for four years and we face the changes in the world.

On top of our list for changes has to be the Covid virus. I have faith that this year will be a time for change. Not only with the virus, but with our lives as we adjust to the new normal. We can hardly turn tv on, especially the news without hearing sad news.

The only hope that's available is in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said that He is the only way to eternal life. He said that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that nobody can enter into the Father's presence without Him, John 14:6.

Now, I'm not here to tell you that everything is going to be peaches and cream when you come to faith in Jesus Christ. I'm not going to spout false doctrines that say God wants us healthy and wealthy. And I'm certainly not going to speak the positive feel good messages that seem to inundate Christian media.

Instead, I'm going to tell you the truth, that no one is immune from life's problems. That stuff happens and there's little if anything we can do in the natural realm to counter it. Jesus tells us this very thing, but also gives us the way by which we can handle life's hardships and overcome them.

This world is filled with violence and terror, and while the world can offer nothing that resembles any lasting peace, Jesus gives us a way by which we can have peace. And that's through a personal relationship with Him. And when this happens, we'll have a peace that's going to make a difference, a peace that will overcome any violence or terror that comes our way, and that is peace with God.

We are Twenty years past that fateful day in 2001, when two airliners hit the twin towers, one airliner hit the Pentagon and one hijacked airliner was brought down by passengers in the jet and while we have memorials around the nation to remember, I wonder if we truly understand its significance. I often wonder where our faith is. Do we have faith? Do we believe that things will get better in our lives? Have things gotten better since the terrorist attack of 2001? What truths can we take from this event that will help us live fruitful and effective lives in the midst of such violence that attacks us from every side.

God has a plan and a purpose for each one of us, which means that He has a purpose for you. God has a destiny for your life, and often times it includes these very things that literally scare us to death.

After their release from over 400 years of slavery the Jews found themselves between a rock and a hard place. The Red Sea was before them, and they had absolutely no natural means by which to cross it. And to make matters worse, Pharaoh and the Egyptian army, the most powerful army in the world, were coming up from behind.

What were they to do? Did they have faith in God that he would take care of them. Did they trust God! . Now I know that we don't have to cross a sea like the Israelites did, but there are other things that come up in our lives that test our faith.

There is a story about the Empty chair that reminds us that faith should be first and foremost in our lives.

Mandy Marie asked her pastor, to come and pray with her father. When the minister arrived, he found Bob lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows. And there was an empty chair sitting beside his bed. The minister assumed that the old fellow had been informed

of his visit. "I guess you were expecting me Bob," he said. "No. I was not expecting you," said Bob. "Who are you?"

"I'm the new minister at your church," he replied. "When I saw the empty chair, I figured you knew I was going to show up." "Oh yeah, the chair," said the bedridden man.

"I have never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man. "But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it went right over my head. I abandoned any attempt at prayer," the old man continued, "until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, 'Bob, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus.'

'Here is what I suggest. Sit down in a chair; place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised, 'I'll be with you always.' Then just speak to him and listen in the same way you're doing with me right now.' So, I tried it and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm."

The pastor was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old guy to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with Bob, anointed him with oil, and returned to the church.

Two nights later the daughter called to tell the pastor that her daddy had died that afternoon. "Did he die in peace?" he asked.

"Yes, when I left the house about two o'clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me he loved me and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange about his death. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on the chair beside the bed.

For Bob, Jesus was sitting in that empty chair and through his faith, he knew that Jesus was with him when he died. Proof that we live by faith, not by sight.

What I've learned over all these years is that God doesn't act in accordance to what we want, but rather God acts in accordance to His ultimate plan and purpose,

When we're faced with these times when terror and grief seem to grip our hearts, and that which happens makes little if any sense what so ever, we wonder, where's the fairness of it all. Why do such things have to happen? Why do bad things happen to good people?

These questions are not easily answered, if they are answered at all, because in our finite minds, along with emotions that take over rational thought, we'll never understand an infinite God who says He loves us and yet allows such things to happen.

God not only has made great and precious promises, He has the ability to follow through on every single one of them. God is faithful and therefore faithful to His promises. What we're being told is that God has promised and has given to us everything we need for life and godliness, that is, both physical and spiritual life.

In Matthew, Jesus Himself promised that He will be with us even to the very end saying, "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Jesus told us to expect trials and tribulations. He said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.

But this was not the first time Jesus promised His peace. Earlier Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Now there's one more promise that God gives us. A promise that should fill our hearts and lives with hope, knowing that all of God's promises, especially this one is true and will be fulfilled. And that is: Jesus Is Coming Back

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And whenever I hear this passage and this promise," My faith becomes stronger because I know that Jesus is preparing a place for us and will come again.

No matter what life throws our direction, no matter what terror awaits, our trust is in the Lord, because He is our refuge and safety. Even when you find yourself over your head, or

when you feel the heat of the fiery trials, we don't need to worry because God is with us through it all.

When we find ourselves in these impossible circumstances, when the enemy has us surrounded, when the obstacles seem too great, remember we have a faithful God that we can trust.

No matter what may come our way, we can always trust God at His word, that He not only has a purpose and a destiny for our lives, which will almost always include troubles, trials, and tribulations, but that His promises are true and that He will never leave us nor forsake us,

So how is your faith today? There are so many questions in my life and so many unanswered questions. You can't see faith. You can't feel faith but it is a substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen just as I read in Hebrews 11:1 this morning.

I have a bag full of things I don't understand. but I know it works!

I don't understand how He did it, but God put a song in my heart. When I am sad, there is a song to cheer me up, and when I am happy, there is a song to praise Him. I don't understand how He did it, but in my faith, I know it's there.

When I reach for the telephone, I don't understand how I can pick up a telephone and talk to someone hundreds of miles away from me and they can talk to me. Oh, I know about telephone lines and fiber optics, but I still don't understand how it works, but I know it does!

I don't understand prayer. I don't know how I can talk to God in Heaven and He can talk to me. I don't understand it, my faith makes me know that it works.

And every day I don't understand how medicine works. When I take a pill, how does it know where to go and what to do when it gets there? I don't know how it works, but I know it does!

I don't understand how God can heal the deepest hurt and pain in my life. I don't know how He does it, but through faith I know I will heal and the pain in my life will subside.

And if I pick up a calculator, I don't understand how I can push some buttons on a calculator and it will give me the answer to a problem. I don't understand it, but it works!

I don't understand how God has all the answers to the problems of my life. I don't understand it, but my faith tells me He is there to help me with my problems.

A flashlight seems pretty simple, but I don't understand them. I know there is a bulb and batteries, but I still don't understand why it works, but I know it does!

I don't understand how, but I know that in the darkest days of my life, God is my light. I don't know how He does it, but my faith is in God and He lights every path I take!

I don't understand how I can sit in my easy chair and control my TV or VCR all the way across the room with a remote control. I can change channels, adjust the volume, fast-forward, or reverse. I don't understand it, but I am in complete control!

I don't understand how God can sit on His throne in Heaven and control everything here on earth. I don't understand it, but I know that my faith is in God and he is in control of my life!

We don't have to know or understand how things work as long as we have Faith, Trust, and Hope. God is in control. He takes care of us during the darkest periods of our life. He is our refuge and our safety. We who believe have a personal relationship with Jesus and he has a personal relationship with us.

God has a plan and a purpose for each one of us. God has a destiny for your life, and for mine. We may have a lot of questions, but let our Faith remain strong and all questions will be answered. Amen and Amen.