

Genesis 15:1-6, Psalm 33, Hebrews 11:1-16, Luke 12:22-40

The Assurance of Faith

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the convictions of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

In our baptisms we been brought into the life of the Triune God, connected to Jesus’ death and resurrection, made members of the household of faith here on earth. Along with that comes the sure and certain hope of eternal life in God’s eternal presence after we die. Do you believe that? Do you trust God’s promise given to you through your baptism and through His Word?

This is the faith you have been baptized into. And if think about this faith we have been baptized into it is quite extraordinary. Think of the Creeds we confess when gather. “Born of the virgin Mary.” “Crucified, died, and buried, and on the third day rose from the dead.” We stand up here and confess things that we believe that are quite unbelieve to the human rational mind. Yet we say, “I believe.” Right?

Good. With this we would like to think as we confess this, we believe that God is on our side we have it made in this world. And we do, but Having it made in the sense of no troubles. But our faith experience tells otherwise. It so turns out we all go through troubles, difficulties, crises, and trials. These are the events that can cause us to doubt, lose trust in God’s promises for a period of time, and question God’s love for you. If that has happened in your life you are in good company with a whole host of believers.

Take Abraham for instance. Abram is his name at this point in our first reading for the day is shown to be the prime example of someone who trusted God’s promises. “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” How shall that be Abram responds, for I am still childless. The Lord answers, go outside and look up at the stars and count them if you can. So shall your descents be. “And he believed the Lord, and the Lord counted it as righteousness.”

Hebrews 11 puts Abraham in the honor of faith. For He went by faith, leaving the security of his native land to go to a Land that God would show him, the promised land, the promise of multiple descendants. When Abram received this there was a

lot working against his faith. Abram was 75 years old, and his wife Sarah well beyond childbearing years when this all took place. This certainly does not sound like the makings and a great nation or the Father of many nations, let alone starting a family of his own. Then Abram/Abraham went through the trial of waiting for a long time. He got impatient. Tried to take things into his own hands and tried to have a descendant through his wife's servant girl. Nope, Ishmael is not he one. And there were other times to when Abraham faltered, doubted the promise, but each and every time the Lord God search Him out as Abraham's shield and restored him, always reminding him of the promise and Abraham always believed. Though his faith at times faltered God set it.

Even after the promised child was born and named Isaac, the Lord called Abraham to go to a mountain to sacrifice him, his one and only son of promise from whom God would come many descendants. When they gat to the mountain Young Isaac asked Abraham, "We have the wood, but where is the lamb?" And Abraham responded by faith, "God will provide." By faith Abraham knew somehow, someway, in this impossible time and trial, that God would make it good and right. Abraham's faith relationship with His Lord had told him so. God making possible the impossible. Birthing a child in great age to name one. And God here did stop Abraham and did provide the ram for the sacrifice at Mt Moriah.

The point here is that being a person of faith, a child of God, and having faith in God is not easy. In fact it can be downright difficult and even dangerous. Many Christian missionaries are doing that difficult work through the world in places hostile to Christianity, or the Christian faith. Yet they persevere proclaiming the love of God in Christ Jesus, loving their enemies, and praying for them.

Even in our own lives we faithful run into many cultural obstacles to our faith. We are discouraged to speak of our faith. There is the attack on marriage and family coming from outside the faith which have received. Our moral compass is continually being reset. What we thought was wrong yesterday is considered today.

The Church and her faith are challenged as childish and not progressive. Then we run into difficulties just as Abraham did and Isaac and Jacob. We have our difficulties and worries and concerns. We go through grief in times of loss,

especially of loved ones, at times we struggle financially wonder if there will be enough at the end of the pay period. And you could name others. But we are not left alone in all this.

God did provide the sacrifice great that the ram that took Isaac's place on that altar on Mt Moriah. He would be the God's only begotten Son, Jesus the Messiah, who is teaching disciples in our gospel and too, not to worry and be anxious about what we will eat and or wear. He points to birds of the air and lilies of the field to shows us how God takes care of them and provides for them. And If God takes care of them, these creatures of the air and flowers of the field, how much will God see us through our anxieties and worries that His children whom He loves.

And through God's Son Jesus the Christ, and death on the cross and His resurrection for the dead gives the hope that does not disappoint. This is not the hope of a getting the gift you so longed for under the Christmas tree. OK you that gift on Christmas morning, and that hope was fulfilled and now what. That present you got was here today and later put away and maybe forgotten.

But the Hope that our faith brings is the hope of eternal life won for us through Jesus. Though we do not see it today, we believe it because is the promise that comes from God. This hope which comes from the gift of faith that God gives us by His grace will see us through the challenges, discouragements, adversities, setbacks, and let-downs. In in spite all this stuff your faith in God's goodness will not be destroyed. God is with you and God is for you. And the ultimate proof is the cross of Christ. It is the one thing we can hold on to. Christ will see through.

One last thing before closing. In our baptism into this Triune God we were baptized into a family of faith. We gather here each week as God's family to worship God, and give thanks to God. This week I would like to challenge each of you to chose three or four members. They can be strong in faith because see their witness, they may be wavering some, or they may be members of our church family we have not seen for some time. I ask you to pray for them every day. Pray that God will keep their faith strong through the difficult times that may challenge their faith. I would like to see this congregation, and everyone present or hears this sermon line to pray for each other.

And also pray that God will keep you strong and steadfast in your faith too.