

## Sermon for Pentecost 10

Jeremiah 23:16-29, Psalm 119:81-88, Hebrews 11:17-12:3, Luke 12:49-6

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witness, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith... Hebrews 12:1 ff.*

In our Baptisms we have been brought into the life of the triune God, connected to Jesus' death and resurrection, given the new life of faith, brought into the faith family, the body of Christ, the Church. Through this Holy Baptism you have been initiated into this grand mega narrative, which we call 'God's Story.' It is the story of how God has used people like you and me to accomplish His purposes for creation and the church in setting up His Kingdom. Many of these people are remembered in Hebrews 11's 'Honor Roll of Faith.'

Last Sunday we heard how God called Abraham by His grace, called him to separate from the comfort of his family and native land, gave promises which to the human mind were quite incredible, yet Abraham believed God's promise despite the overwhelming evidence against that promise being fulfilled. Abraham believed and God reckoned it to him as righteousness. Though Abraham's faith journey was not without its setbacks and trials, God's promise was kept, and he and his wife Sarah had a child in their old age and called him Isaac. Abraham died without seeing the descendants as numerous as the stars of the heaven, yet he believed and trusted God. So, Abraham's faith is highlighted in this chapter's 'honor roll of faith.' Isaac of course made it as well as his sons Jacob and Esau who received future blessings. Joseph, Jacob's favorite son is there too.. All these called by God and had their unique faith journey's. Interestingly enough, Jacob and Joseph had to be separated from their families for a while for God to work out His purpose.

Were they perfect? Were they without sin. Of course not! Each went through their various individual trials and difficulties and setbacks and disappointments and poor decisions as we all do. Still, they are this on 'Honor Roll of Faith' not so much because of their goodness or worthiness, but because of God's grace and how He called them and worked His promises through them despite their weak moments. Yet all these died faithful without seeing the full fulfillment of these

promises. Even Joseph who foresaw the Exodus did not know that God's people would need to wait 430 years for God to get the ball rolling. By that time of fulfillment the children of Israel are now in slavery.

The unnamed parents of Moses are on this honor roll of faith. I went back to Exodus 2 where the birth of Moses is recorded, and the parents are not named there either. Yet, they are there in Hebrews 11, two ordinary parents after giving birth to this beautiful child and hiding him from the Egyptians who were under orders from Pharaoh to throw the Hebrew baby boys in the Nile to be drowned. By faith Moses' mother puts him in basket which she has made leak proof by covering it with pitch and tar and placing it along the banks of the Nile River among the reeds. She steps back and sees what will happen to him. Maybe God has big plans for this child. Soon Pharaoh's daughter finds him and arranges to raise Moses in Pharaoh's house. The parents are commended for their faith trusting that God would work this situation out to His purpose. And God does and has big plans for Moses. This is the beginning of mighty work of God which will bring about the victory Pharaoh at the Red Sea. But that is getting ahead of the story. In fact, about 80 years will need to pass before all this takes place.

Next, Moses' faith is commended. Although He has it made living the lavish life in Pharaoh's house, He notices the misery of his people's bondage and is drawn to his people. He leaves the pleasures of sin, the fleshy desires, the richness of the royal court to share in the suffering of the Hebrews. After killing an Egyptian Slave master abusing a fellow Hebrew he has to flee away from Egypt to the Land of Midian. There in Midian Moses marries and becomes a father of two children. Though Hebrews commends Moses for his faith, it does not come easy. He questions and doubts and wonders whether he is worthy of the call that Lord calls Him to. This comes evident at the burning bush. "The Lord called Moses to go back the Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let my People go." Moses tries to get out of this task. I cannot speak. I stutter. I do not know your name. Yet for every excuse God equips Moses for the task. He gives him a spokesman. Gives a staff to perform signs. Gives him a name. Gives Him most of all His abiding presence. When has you He will not let you go. By Faith Moses goes and little by little Moses discovers the power of God. Moses does lead the people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. Witness the defeat of Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Receives the law of God. Leads them for Forty years to the Promised Land, the Land Flowing

with Milk and Honey. He puts up with rebellion, and an unfaithful people while trusting in God's Promises all along the way. Moses like the other before died before the total fulfillment of the Promised Land. That would be taken up by Joshua. Commended for their faith not because they were perfect, but faithful trust in God to work out His promises in His way.

Many of these names in the Honor roll of Faith were separated from their families to follow God's call.

And so, the Son of God, Jesus who is speaking in our gospel for this morning about the baptism is about to go through. He speaks how His ministry will cause division in families, because to follow Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith would cause division indeed for a good Jewish family.

Yet in the baptism that Jesus is speaking of would require that He would be separated from His Father, forsaken, in the mystery of the cross. Jesus did this to separate you and I from our sins, bring you and me back to God through this forgiveness. In the work of the cross Christ has created a new a divine family. Through His resurrection, through forgiveness, and by grace through faith. This was the joy that Jesus' Father set before Jesus our Lord to fulfill God's promise and bring us in.

And what a wonderous family that God has created and made us a part of. Not only us who are gathered here this morning, but our loved ones who gone before us and completed their course on earth. And not only our loved ones who kept the faith, included are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and Rahab, Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel, and countless others. What a great "Cloud of Witnesses," to the life that God called them to. Their lives were not easy, they all struggled with hardship and doubt.

And we who are redeemed and baptized are part of this great family and surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses. We are still on our journey of faith, ordinary people of God, but incredibly gifted with faith. When we get tired, when we get weary, discouraged, we look to Jesus Christ who went this journey. When we get off the trail or path or when we get weighed down by the things of the world, namely sin, come to the aid station of the church. Lay aside the sin in confession. Get fed and strengthened by God's Word for this journey of faith.

And remember this too, we are not alone in this journey. True Christianity is not a company of Lone Rangers. Not only do we have the assurance of God's presence and the great cloud of witnesses looking down and cheering us on, but we also have one another gathered here. To encourage, to support one another in this life.

We made a beginning last Sunday to begin praying for each other. Some of you prayed for four people last week every day. For this week we continue this. Pick four others for which you have not prayed. Pray that they may have faith to get through this life.

So, there it is. This is what our baptisms have done for us. Joined us to a gracious Savior, Brought us into a great family of faith, though not perfect, but redeemed and faithful, and what a story to be part of. Relish it, enjoy it, for there no other faith that gives us the blessings than this Christian Life.

May this give us the peace that passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.