

# **"No Fear"**

## **Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 & Luke 12:32-40**

**August 8, 2010**

**The scriptures this morning hold incredible sentiments for us to ponder. And ponder them we must because these things are at the heart of life itself. How will we live our lives? What forces and understanding shape our life? Will our lives be dominated and shaped by anxieties or confidence; by fear or faith?**

**The second lesson and Gospel texts both begin with familiar lines. Have no fear, little flock ..... It is a sentiment that is echoed over and over throughout scripture. God sends messengers to people as diverse as Mary [to announce her choosiness to give birth to the savior] and John [on the Island of Patmos in a time of great struggle] ..... The opening greeting calls them to have not fear ..... Yet so often we are afraid of so much in our world.**

**Have no fear, little flock. It is a lifestyle that we are called into. .... And in Hebrews: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith is often so terribly difficult. How can we trust that which we can not see or experience in some personal human way. How is it that we can live without fear in a world that we can not figure out or control? Faith is such a powerful force .... And yet to truly have faith is such a difficult thing. Have no fear ... Have faith. These two opening thoughts from 2 of our scriptures lift for us the heart of the call that God places on our lives - - to trust God and live that life of faith boldly without fear.**

**Abram certainly had much to fear and had plenty of reason to question the God in whom he had come to believe. Certainly they faced many difficult things. One, though was that he and his wife lived in a time when the understanding was that the only way for your life to have meaning .... The only way that your life could continue after death was through your offspring. There was a sense of immortality in knowing that your genetic line would continue through your children. But they had no children and they were getting to be too old to imagine that they would ever have a family no matter what the promise of God might be. The reasonable assumption was that what God had promised would not come to pass. They tried to figure it out - they took matters into their own hands. Yet God called them to faith .... God called them to not be afraid for the future - it was in God's hands. And with reassurance they turned again to God. Have no fear - trust God!**

**It is familiar stuff to talk about faith in the church. It is a core value that is at the center of the very existence of any religious group - faith in something or someone. As Christians we claim faith in Jesus Christ. The words "I believe" are the mantra that begin each article of**

**the Apostles Creed that we confess. Yet no matter how often we utter the word faith, or believe, or trust, it is still a concept that is hard for us to really get a handle on.**

**"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen." They are nice words .... Words that, it true would grant us a lot of comfort in a fear filled world. But does our faith give us the assurance of all that we hope for? If we have faith, how does that play out in our lives?**

**One article that I ran across stressed how important it was to remind people that having faith is not the end of all questions and doubt. Nor does faith does not mean the end of all struggle. I love the end of the chapter in Hebrews from which our 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson comes. In the chapter the author has mention many of the big names of faith but ends by saying that he does not have time to talk about so many people he would like to mention. He lists some names but then just says: *[Implied] {and then there are all those others} "33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented ..."***

The darkness of the world did not go away because of the presence of faith but faith changed the people who walked through very human times. Faith allowed them to face the darkness without fear.

How does faith play out in your life? Does the fear that the world can so easily instill become dimmed because of faith? By faith, don't you know that it is God's good pleasure not only to provide for our daily needs but also to give you the kingdom? If we do not believe that we had better be busy trying to secure everything we need for ourselves. If we do not have faith, we better get to work get everything we want and need for ourselves. But if we do know that God in His love chooses to give you the kingdom and watches over our daily needs I can't help but think that we will want to get busy serving that God and sharing the life changing news with one another. Do you have faith? Do you live fear free? It seems to me that too often we talk about faith but we fail to let that faith transform our lives. We say that we believe and trust in God .... but then rush around trying to take care of everything on our own because we do not really believe that God has any part of my life. I ran into a dramatic example this week in a newsletter that I receive periodically. The newsletter had the picture of a sign that had recently appeared in both New Jersey and San Francisco. In bold letters the sign simply proclaimed: "My Life - My Death - My Choice". The group sponsoring the add is called the Final Exit Network and they advocate for a variety of assisted suicide methods. In a related article it suggested that those who lean toward those means of ending life just want to be in control of their own destiny. 'They just want to be in control .....'. And it seems to me that such is often the case in our lives. We are afraid we will not get everything we want in the way we want it - so we try to take control of everything. People just want to be in control. And certainly, when it come to preempting our normal end of life as it would happen in the hands of God by choosing our own means, method

and timing, we are certainly struggling with faith that would entrust life into God's hands. It was a frightening article that would be interesting to discuss at another time in a different setting. I read the article and asked myself if we really trust God anymore for anything.

A couple of weeks ago Paul Berge spoke about prayer in his message and referred to the childhood prayer "Now I lay me down to sleep." It is a shortened version of an Old English prayer, which goes like this:

***Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, bless the bed that I lie on. Before I lay me down to sleep, I give my soul to Christ to keep. Four corners to my bed, four angels there aspread, two to foot, and two to head, and two to carry me when I'm dead. I go by sea, I go by land, the Lord made me by his right hand. If any danger comes to me, Sweet Jesus Christ, deliver me. He's the branch, and I'm the flower, pray God send me a happy hour. And if I die before I wake, I pray that Christ my soul will take."***

How wonderful it would be to place our whole life in God's hands without fear. AMEN