

Walking in Faith

[Genesis 15:1-6](#)

[Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16](#)

[Luke 12:32-40](#)

Today's short Old Testament reading is an important one in Christian theology. In Paul's writing, the last sentence of that passage is foundational. "And [Abraham] believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness."

As you know, the Jewish religion of Jesus' day had many laws. The ten commandments, as we call them, form the backbone of the law of Moses but there are many other laws which range from civil law to religious law. The Pharisees spent much of their time interpreting the law of Moses for the 1st century and were overly law-bound. Jesus criticized them for getting caught up in the little details of legal interpretation and losing sight of the main purpose – to love and serve God. That was the purpose of the law, to live in a way that demonstrated or even manifested their relationship with the one wild and amazing God.

There were two problems with thinking that obeying the law was the path of righteousness, or the path of right relationship with God. One was that it was very hard - Paul even suggested that the law itself caused people to sin. The other problem was what about people who lived before the law was established? People like Abraham. Abraham did not know the law of Moses because it didn't exist back then, but "he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness." So Abraham was brought into right relationship with God just because he believed God's promises.

Of course, the law was only part of the full Jewish religion. The other part was temple worship. The project of the writer to the Hebrews, who wrote our second lesson today, was to interpret the work of Jesus Christ within the context of the temple religion. It is from Hebrews that we get metaphors of Jesus as our great High Priest whose sacrifice once for all

does away with the necessity of temple sacrifices. In today's passage, which comes toward the end of Hebrews, the writer is exhorting their readers to stay faithful. A few verses before this passage they write, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for [the one] who has promised is faithful." (Heb 10:23)

It is because God is faithful that we too are able to be faithful and faith-filled.

In the chapter from which our reading is taken, Chapter 11, the writer to the Hebrews mentions 17 Old Testament heroes who lived their lives "by faith".

But faith is something of a slippery concept for us.

Sometimes we think of faith as believing impossible and unprovable things. Or we think of it as believing a system or a list of statements such as the Nicene creed. There's a great rousing hymn "Faith of our Fathers" with the refrain "Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to thee to death." We will not be singing it. Not just because it ignores our mothers, aunts and uncles, but because it implies that "the faith" is a thing that can be identified and guarded and kept safe from intruders.

On the other hand, in the New Testament writings, we read statements like "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom. 10:9) This may make it seem that all that is required to walk in right relationship with God is that we give intellectual assent to the idea that Jesus is Lord and was raised from the dead.

That kind of faith is like the faith I have in Ecuador. I have heard that there is a place called Ecuador. I know people who have been there. I see it in the atlas. I have no reason not to believe that Ecuador exists, though in these days of fake news, it might not be true. But my belief in

the existence of Ecuador has no impact on my day to day life. In fact, I rarely even think about Ecuador.

That my friends, is *not* the kind of faith that today's lessons are talking about.

The faith that was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness, the faith that led Abraham to set out on a journey to who knew where, the faith that "is the assurance of things hoped for" is much, much more. It is a faith that grows and changes. It is a faith that impacts every part of our hearts and minds. It is a faith that gives hope and life.

As the writer to the Hebrews says, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for [the one] who has promised is faithful."

God is faithful. That is our hope. Our faith is in response to God's faithfulness, God's love.

We are called, individually, and as the people of God, to walk with God in mutual love and faithfulness; and every step we take, every God-moment that we recognize, increases our faith. God is calling us all into covenant with Godself. That's what we are doing here this morning. We are reminding ourselves that God is faithful, and in the Eucharist we are responding to God's love and faithfulness by renewing the covenant made at our baptism, by renewing our covenant to walk faithfully with our God.

Remember the verse from Micah, sometimes called the Micah Mandate? "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

That is what faith is about. Believing in Jesus is a way of life. It is living in the reign of God, always ready and expecting to see God in every moment. "Like those, as Jesus said, "who are waiting for their master to return [any moment] from the wedding banquet."

Today, Ecuador seems irrelevant to my life. But if I were to move there, it would suddenly become incredibly relevant. I would see the landscape, live in the environment, eat the food, come to know the people, and learn the civic discourse.

The faith to which we are called moves us into the reign of God, in such a way that our faith is as integral to us as our breath. This is not going to happen overnight with a quick airplane ride. We journey into the reign of God more slowly, just as Abraham travelled from Ur of the Chaldeas to Egypt and his descendants went north into the Promised Land. Our journey requires commitment and faith that the one who has called us is faithful, because there are detours and times of discouragement along the way.

Which is why we journey together. After they say, “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for [the one] who has promised is faithful,” the writer to the Hebrews continues, “and let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” Hope is reinforced, faith develops as we journey together, sharing not only our hopes and our fears but our God-moments, our inklings, and our understandings.

People of God, when we walk in faith God does not expect us to believe things that seem incredible, God expects us to walk with her in faithfulness; in the faith that sees God in all things and which leads us to live our lives as if the God in all things *really matters*.

For “She has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

“And Jesus said to his disciples, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kin-dom [of God].