

Pentecost 9, August 11, 2019
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

1Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. 3By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

8By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he

was going. 9By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. 12Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

13All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, 14for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

15If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. 16But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

Luke 12:32-40

Jesus said:] 32“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

35“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 37Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. 38If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

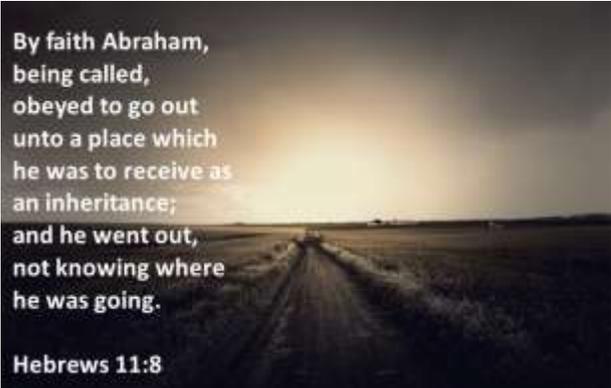
39“But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

“By Faith” - Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”.

By now many of you know what to listen for in my sermons. Most often you will hear the gospel delivered near the end of the sermon. When I say, Now hear the good news, the organist can move to the bench to get ready for the hymn of the day. Usually what all comes before this gospel word is a word telling what you have to do or that you have failed to accomplish. Then you hear the good news or the gospel which tells what Jesus has done for you. But this scripture that you just heard has flipped how a sermon should go on its head. These words from Jesus begin with the gospel and then leaves you with a list of things for you to go home and do. So today I am tempted to simply repeat the first words of Jesus again, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” and then tell you to go home. Maybe we could at least sing the sending hymn “On Our Way Rejoicing” and send you out the door. But of course



By faith Abraham,
being called,
obeyed to go out
unto a place which
he was to receive as
an inheritance;
and he went out,
not knowing where
he was going.

Hebrews 11:8

that's not what I am going to do. So just stay sitting where you are.

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That indeed is the gospel, the good news for today. The rest of this scripture sounds like work. And it doesn't sound very fun. Sell your possessions. Give alms. Make purses that don't wear out. Be dressed ready for action. Make sure your lamps are lit. Be ready to open the door for the master when he returns to the wedding banquet. You can get tired just thinking about all of these things that Jesus tells us to do. I don't think you'll have time for dinner when you get home. Well, that's one way of looking at this list of things to do. It sounds like a busy unhappy business. Or as we heard last week the writer of Ecclesiastes declare, "It is vanity or a chasing after the wind."

Pastor Denise Broveak from Christ Lutheran in Hartford has joined our little band of preachers that meet each week on Tuesdays to discuss these scriptures. She is an early graduate of the Luther House program before there was a Kairos program. She has some fun with the name of the church, "Christ Lutheran" she serves especially when they receive new members. She sometimes welcomes them (in a very non-Lutheran way) by saying, "We are glad that these people have finally found Christ." This week, Denise told us about a great memory she had growing up on their family farm in Iowa in the 1960's. She recalled several hot summer days when her father would come in from the field and announce that they would all go swimming in the nearby lake later that day. She remembered being thrilled hearing this good news from her father. She said her family had as much pleasure spending the day in anticipation of going swimming as they did actually swimming. Her mother got busy preparing a picnic lunch to take along to the lake. Each of her siblings dug in their dressers to find their favorite bathing suit. They got busy with the chores they had to do, but gladly did them remembering the promise that her dad had made. And most of all she remembered the pleasure that she saw in her father's face when he delivered this good news to his family. So maybe this is another way of looking at this long list of things to do when our Heavenly Father is pleased to give us the kingdom. We can be like Denise's family enjoying getting ready for what is promised just as much as receiving the promise itself. Our second lesson for today from Hebrews tells how Abraham lived his life from the time he received the promise from God that he would be the father of many nations and would receive the gift of land and when it was given to him. Abraham lived each day by faith. Faith is defined as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. It is only by faith that Abraham did the things that he did. Abraham believed in what God promised him. He had confidence that when God promised him something, he always delivered. This is why Denise said she always got ready to go swimming when her dad told said they were going swimming. Her dad never came in the house when his work was done and disappointed them. The things she had to do to get ready weren't a chore because her father always kept his promise. Many things in the life of Abraham might have seemed to conflict with the promise that was given to Abraham. Abraham was told that he would receive an inheritance of a promised land, but he wasn't told where it was or given a map of where to go. By faith, Abraham set out on his way not knowing where he was going. Abraham was promised a home, but he lived in foreign lands and slept in tents. By faith, he did what God told him to do. Abraham was promised the inheritance of descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky or as grains of sand on the seashore. Abraham began to question this promise and had to have this promise repeated to him since he believed that he and his wife Sarah were too old to have children. But by faith, Sarah conceived and bore a son named Isaac. Abraham never received everything completely that was promised him in this life. He never saw a large family reunion like he was promised. He never lived in a mansion on the property that was promised to him. But by faith, Abraham never doubted the promise. By faith, Abraham remembered the joy in his Father's voice when he delivered the promise. The promised land that was promised to Abraham was not of this world. Abraham trusted in what he couldn't see and by faith lived his life in joy doing a list of things getting ready for his heavenly home. There are days that seem discouraging to us. Days that we forget or question the promises that our Heavenly Father takes pleasure in giving to us. I was at two funerals yesterday. Funerals for people that died too soon. It is only by faith that these families will not be afraid and will trust in the promise that their Heavenly Father takes pleasure

in giving them, even if it isn't what they expected. So maybe this is a good way to hear this sermon today. To begin with the good news that you are not to be afraid. To begin by hearing that our heavenly father takes great joy in giving you his kingdom. Then the list of things that you have to do are no longer a chore, but by faith will be done as a joyful response to what we have to look forward to. Pastor Denise never was sure what time her father would come and they would get to go swimming, but she was always ready because her father never let them down. We too have nothing to fear. You have been made ready simply by hearing and believing in the promise. The promise that your Heavenly Father takes joy in giving to you his kingdom and watching you be ready. Amen.