

Sermon – August 17, 2025 – 7th Pentecost – Year C

Psalms 19:14 “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”
Please be seated.

Last Sunday Kristi Philip presented us with a thought I had not considered in a meaningful way. A “go to” verse, one that I might make a card and carry it in my wallet or stick on my bathroom mirror. A “go to” verse. The verse was Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Another translation, from the New International Version, reads: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see.”

The Bible book following Hebrews is the letter of James. Verse 2:26 reads “faith apart from works is dead.” You and I have to work towards what we believe for it to become part of who we are.

We are reminded in today’s scripture from Hebrews of several “faith-**full** stories and faith-**full** heroes” of the Old Testament. The Israelites passing through the Red Sea as if it were dry land. Gideon – a fleece. Samson – great strength. David – the king. These stories are there for us to consider as we build our faith day by day.

At times, maybe all the time, faith is a mysterious concept. We are to believe in what we do not see. We are to consider living our lives **AS IF** what we believe really matters. Loving our neighbors. “What’s in it for me?” is a question that we **MIGHT** want to have answered. 3 weeks ago, we visited the concept of prayer – WE HEARD that part of the concept of prayer was telling God what we want, when, how, all about me. Well faith can be an extension of that want – I believe that I **DESERVE** the goodness that I am praying for, and I will pout, hold my breath until I turn blue, until I get what I want. However, I have to remember that I am not God, nor can I honestly aspire to be God. I do not have any answers to world issues, such as poverty, homelessness,

illness. I am a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom, created in the image of God, and called to a life dependent on the Creator.

I am to have faith in God, that HE will remember me, never forsake me, and, as I confess and repent of my sin, will forgive me and separate me from my sin as far as the east is from the west. This is faith – that you and I believe these and all the promises of God. Do we believe these today? Do we?

Once upon a time there was a woman, Rahab. She was a prostitute, possibly an innkeeper, living in Jericho. Like you and me, at times she wondered about her life from time to time. Rahab may have wondered if her life would always be as it was any day. She may have had dreams of blessings beyond measure, traveling to far places, meeting famous people. Recently she had heard stories of “the Lord giving the land in which she lived to the Israelites”.

One day two men came to stay at Rahab’s place. Unknown to her, they were spies sent by Joshua to scope out the land for a coming invasion by the Israelites. The story goes that she hid these men, lied to those sent by the King of Jericho to take these men away, and led the men to a safe way out of the country.

The men told her to hang a scarlet cord out of a window to designate her home as a safe place. She was told to bring her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all her family, to this place and they would be safe when the Israelites came to take over the land. She believed and obeyed and was left unharmed when the walls came tumbling down.

There was a “lot of faith” in and around in this story. Joshua believed God when he was told what to do – six days to walk around the city of Jericho, playing trumpets and showing themselves to the people. On the seventh day more of the same, ending with the entire congregation of the Israelites shouting with all they had, and the walls of Jericho collapsed.

My life, your life, is also full of this faith in God. We are called to believe in the God of our Fathers and Mothers, the God of our friends and neighbors. We are to act “**as if**” “what we proclaim to believe is the truth. “**As if**” we, our family, our friends, our church will be healed from whatever it is we pray to be healed. One challenge in our prayer of faith is to remember that we are to pray that God’s will be done. Do I understand what the will of God is? Maybe – sometimes – most of the time I really do not have a clue.

I seek the peace of God in my heart, and I pray that is your prayer as well. I pray for what I want, and what I see is that I feel needs to be done. Yet it is only the God of love, the God of faith and hope, the God Who created me, loves me, provides for me, cares for me, forgives me – it is this God who alone knows what my future is.

Again - James 2:26 “Faith without works is dead.”

Recently I was given a prayer, and I read it often. “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.” Faith causes me to pray these words and believe in my heart of hearts that I will live INTO the concepts of serenity, courage and wisdom that I seek.

Faith. We are called to believe God is good. God calls you and me to a life of blessings beyond measure. We are called to listen and love. We are blessed. Praise to the Lord today and forever.

Let us pray. Thank you, God, for today, a brand-new day in our life with You. Thank you for the opportunity to learn anew of the mystery of Your love in our lives. Thank you, God, for the Faith of the Saints of God who have gone before and who sit here today in this Holy Place. Guide us, Great Jehovah, in all we are about all the days of our lives. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus. Amen. God bless you. Shalom. Amen.

Ray Rosch 8-17-2025