

Sunday, January 28, 2018 – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Sermon: Faith

Read Hebrews 11:1-6



The key characteristic to who disciples are is that they are people of faith. It is by faith that we are made new creations. It is by faith that we are the body of Christ. It is by faith that we are the family of God. Faith is our connection with God who is the source of our power. The writer of Hebrews tells us that faith is the evidence of things not seen. In Ephesians we read that faith is not from us, but faith itself is a gift from God. We are given faith so that we can believe. The Gospels have many accounts of people who showed faith, or on the other hand some who did not believe.



In thinking about those who do not believe one of the first people I think of is Thomas. Thomas is known as Doubting Thomas. This was because He did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. When the ten apostles who had seen Jesus alive told Thomas about it, Thomas would not believe. Thomas may have been a pessimist. Earlier when Jesus had talked about going to raise Lazarus we have a comment from Thomas about going with Jesus to die with Him. It seems that Thomas always wanted to look at the dark side and fought believing. There is the idea that in being a pessimist you prevent yourself from being disappointed, but it keeps us from seeing the power of God.



Another instance of a lack of faith was when Jesus came back to Nazareth, where He had grown up we read that Jesus did not do many miracles because the people there did not believe. Here is a case when because people would not believe Jesus did not do much. Jesus can do anything He wants to do, but He has chosen to act in response to our faith. It seems there are times that we have been able to keep Jesus from acting in our lives because we will not believe in Him. What kind of blessings have we missed in our lives because we have not believed.



One miracle that I keep coming back to when I think about all of this is the time a man came to Jesus looking for healing for his son. He had taken the boy to Jesus while Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration. The disciples were not able to help the boy. When Jesus came down from the mountain He found the man with a crowd of people coming to Jesus for help. The man told Jesus what had happened, and Jesus told the man if he believed his son would be healed. The man said he did believe, but also that he had unbelief. Our faith does not have to be complete. Our faith grows. When the disciples asked why they could not do it, Jesus told them it was because they did not have faith. He told them all they needed was faith the size of a mustard seed, but apparently, they did not have that much faith. We cannot use the excuse that our faith is not big enough, but do we have faith the size of a mustard seed.



When Jesus went to see Lazarus after he died his sister Martha was upset that Jesus did not get there soon enough to heal their brother. Jesus told her that her brother would live again. Martha said she believed that Jesus is the Messiah and then Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Experience tells us that not everything we pray for will happen. I had a friend in seminary who had a

lot of guilt because he had a pastor who died of cancer. He felt that if he had believed enough then the pastor would not have died. We do not understand why there are times that God works in miraculous ways and why sometimes we do not see that. We do know that God can act, and we believe that He knows best. We pray expecting the best. Too often we pray in a way similar to “Lord if it is all the same to You, would You please do what we are asking.” We are told we can pray with confidence.