

Hebrews 11-12: Life Together – Walking by Faith

Good morning church. So good as always to be with you for those that are here in person. And for those watching online due to travels of COVID related issues – welcome. Today we're continuing in kind of a short 3-week or so series within a series called Life Together. And really what we've looked at over the last few weeks has been this thing called a church – the gathering of people united by the Gospel of Jesus Christ – how we live together, how we worship together, how we humbly serve and honor one another. We could go on and on about this, but you get the point where we've been anyway. And today, we're specifically considering the role of faith in both the life of an individual follower of Jesus but in the larger family of God as a church. Kind of the Big Idea for today is "The priority of faith".

Faith though, is one of those words that gets thrown around a lot, both in and out of the church.

- We are at the start of football season. Faith in a kicker, coach, QB – until at least that kicker misses the game winning kick, or the coach makes a bone-head call (b/c you and I would make a much better call) at the end of a game, or the QB makes a bad throw or whatever.
- We hear, or even we throw out the line of "well we just have to have faith" almost as if some people are trying to have faith in faith.
- Like, it seems so many of us if we're not careful, many of us have boiled down faith to just a spiritualized version of wishful thinking. That's not Biblical faith. That's not life-changing faith. That's not life-giving faith.
- Biblical faith also, doesn't equate our picture of God to a cosmic grandpa-like Santa Claus type of guy just waiting to say yes to us every time we want a cookie.
 - My parents decided to move up here in 2014 when they retired – they wanted to be near and actively involved with their grandkids. And one of the biggest things that Victoria and I had to teach them was this little, powerful word called NO. See when you see granny and grandad for a handful of weekends each year, they can say yes to everything.
 - Ice cream for breakfast? Sure. Want some MnM's to go with it? No problem, how about a cupcake too? All before 7AM
 - But if our picture of God isn't more than a cosmic grandpa waiting to say yes to ice cream and cookies, that's not much to have faith in.
- Biblical faith also ISN'T perfection. Doesn't mean we will be perfect, or that everything that we want to happen will workout perfectly

So if that's what faith ISN'T, then what is Biblical faith? Great Question. Here's what our Bibles say faith is. Turn to Hebrews 11:1. And please go ahead and use your Table of Contents, that's why it's there if you're using a paper Bible.

"Faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen."

PRAY.

As we consider the Life Together that we are called to live, It is a life of faith. The reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. I want us to together hone in on these 3 words: REALITY – HOPE – PROOF.

I. The Reality

Faith is a reality – we have faith in real things. Our faith is informed. Informed about what? I believe it must be informed about the object of our faith.

- Character of God – It is informed around the character of God. Not just some idea of God, but what the scriptures have shown us about God, and how we have seen the character of God on display in our own lives.
 - Absolute faithfulness
 - Holy (and because he is holy, he is also trustworthy)
 - Consistent to His promises
 - Covenantal
 - Good
 - Glorious
- The Absolute Reality of who God is. Not who we want him to be, but who He has proven to be time, and time, and time again.

And there is no greater display of the character of God than Jesus – His Life, His Work, His Ways. The offer of salvation to unworthy people like me and like you, received by FAITH and available to all who believe in Him. To all who turn from their sin and trust in Jesus. To all who find life in His name.

We are called to an informed faith, a reasoned faith, a thoughtful faith → One that learns to take God at His Word.

Illustration: Kids and parents → use both sides of the equation.

And, based on the Reality of who God is, we see the guaranty of what is hoped for.

II. What is Hoped For

We use this word Hope a lot in the church, and in our everyday lives. And when I use it here, specifically at RCM, we talk about the guaranty of Scripture. That our hope is certain. That it is rooted in the Person, Work and Ways of Jesus. He will return. HE will come back and bring us to be with him forever – to all who believe.

And we live our lives right here and right now in the reality of what is hoped for.

- The belief that every single promise of God will one day come true.
- The absolute belief Jesus is with you, every moment of every day if you are a Christian.
- That we know that God is absolutely faithful, and there is a certainty of the reward that is waiting for us, AND the certainty of His life with us today.

III. The Proof

The proof of what is not seen. The assurance that God gives, this unspeakable assurance and confidence that is a gift from God. And then, with this confident assurance, what we do with it. Do we believe in God? But more than that, do we believe God? Do we take God at His Word, and does it show in how we live? Not that we live a way to gain God's favor – that's been settled on the Cross.

But do we live in a way, living by faith, that says to each other, and the watching world that "Yes, God is trustworthy. Yes, his ways are good. And yes, I will obey even when I don't understand all of the particulars."

IV. The Pudding

These next few +30 or so verse show us the proof is in the pudding so to speak – as we see here in these next verses the Hall of Fame of faithful saints of God

- By Faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice

- By Faith Enoch was taken away
- By faith Noah
 - The brother built a boat for 120 years. And you thought it was tough being a Christian in 21st century American culture!
- By faith Abraham
 - Brother was 100 and his wife was 99 – yet their faith was rooted in the character of God
 - EVEN when God told him to sacrifice his 1 son. Abraham believed God to be able to raise him from the dead
- By faith Moses
- By faith the walls of Jericho
 - Like if I'm in a military battle, I'm not going to call the marching band. But they marched, and then someone played a high C and the walls came crashing down
- By faith Rahab welcomed the spies
- By faith so many others
 - Conquered kingdoms
 - Administered justice
 - Obtained Promises
 - Shut the mouths of lions
 - Quenched the ragin of fire
 - Were tortured
 - Experienced mocking, scourgings, and imprisonment
 - Stoned, sawed in two, died by the sword

By faith. Because the proof really is in the pudding as the saying goes. To walk by faith, to live each day by faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God.

So we are called to live by faith. We see the incredible lives of faith – people that BELIEVED God. So what do we do? How do we live by faith?

V. By keeping running, and race to win.

So after the writer of this book, the book of Hebrews, has given us this listing of people, flawed people, but people that lived by faith, walking by faith, believing God, taking God at his word, here's what he has to write to us next. Listen to the words of Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, ^[a] keeping our eyes on Jesus, ^[b] the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, ^[c] he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

(1) Lay aside every hindrance. → Picture of an athlete

Some of you know I like to ride a bicycle. I love to ride a bicycle. And when I have time to ride, I like to ride really long distances. And here's the thing, when I ride I only carry exactly what I need. Enough equipment to repair a flat tire, some fluids, maybe a snack bar and my phone. I don't even carry a wallet. I have my credit card info memorized so I don't need it. And there's the UBER app on my phone if I really get stuck. That's it. Because anything else I may bring with me is going to slow me down.

And just like I like to ride my bicycle, hindrance free, the life of faith is only going to be lived well if we empty our bags and run.

(2) The race before US

And we should run our race. I have a race to run, you have a race to run. There are some ve

(3) Eyes on the Prize

Keeping our eyes on Jesus. Laser like focus on Jesus, the greatness of Jesus, and His mission in the world.

And lastly, this isn't directly stated in these verses, but I think we need to say it here – as we run this life of faith, this believing God, taking God at his word – we help each other finish well.

Illustration: Carrying Dean the last +/-40 miles on our 100 mile ride

CLOSING.

The natural flow of a life changed by the Gospel

The natural flow of a family, living together on mission