

Sermon for Candlelight Feb. 16, 2020

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Text: [Hebrews 11](#)

NOTE: The text of this sermon is drawn from an audio recording of the sermon given Feb. 16, 2020.

Reflections on faith. That was the instruction from my fabulous team. And I thought, oh boy, reflections on faith. Sometimes when I reflect on faith, I can beat myself up because I start reflecting on where my faith seems to have faltered a little bit, where I didn't feel like I was living up to what a faithful woman should look like, a faithful person.

Faith. I think of all these strong people in my life, these people of faith that seemed to trust God fully, seemed to be happy all the time. Oftentimes, the faith that I thought I was aspiring to as a child was also very much tied to the type of way I was supposed to make sure I always lived my life, always had the Sunday school answer, and always felt deeply connected to God.

The truth is, if I reflect on my faith, that hasn't always been the case. You see, my journey of faith has been one that has been filled with moments where I am angry at God, moments where I say, "How can there be a God if this is happening? What kind of a God would allow war to happen? What kind of a God would allow this person that I love dearly to have been sexually assaulted? What kind of a God ..."fill in the blank""?

What I appreciate about the scripture we heard tonight is the way that faith is tied to hope. Now, hope is not just that optimism, which Christians like to turn it into, right? We are human beings. So we want cause and effect. We want that equation. That's what we actually want our faith to be, in this perfect equation that if that if my faith does this, and I act this way, then everything good will happen in my life. So we say things like, "Well, everything happens for a reason." One of my friend's favorite responses, "Everything happens for a reason, because humans make stupid mistakes. That's the reason." Oftentimes, it has cycled on Facebook once where then people created their own. Everything happens for a reason, because I had privilege. Everything happens for a reason because I had access. Everything happens for a reason, because generations ago didn't care about the environment. But we so badly want it to be this perfect map and equation, yet our scripture today reminds us that hope and faith are tied to those things we don't see. They call us back to that moment where God created. And notice it wasn't like God created out of stuff that was already there. In fact, in our scripture, the story of creation is tied to that of water. Water, which is a symbol of chaos as Earth was a void, that somehow in the midst of that space, where we feel like nothing, where we feel like life and the world is in complete chaos, where we feel like nothing can come from this space. God says, "Wait a moment, I'm the God of life."

You see, hope is something that we hold in one hand, while also clinging fully to the honesty and reality of the brokenness in this world. Hope is about claiming that not everything happens for a reason. But that no matter what happens, we see it through the lens that's shaped like across, a lens that reminds us of a God that says no matter what is happening, no matter the brokenness that you're facing, no matter

the pain or the questions, I'm willing to go there with you. I'm willing to, to sit there with you. Feels like you're in a living hell? Jesus says, been there three days, willing to go there again, willing to be with you in this moment until you know that even in this, I'm a God of life. I'm a God that weeps at the tomb with you.

What I also love about Hebrews is, one, biblical scholars cannot figure out who wrote it, which drives them a bit crazy. (So FYI, side fact.) Two, what they do know clearly is that this group that it's being written to is a community of people that feel like they're in the wilderness that feel like they're losing their faith, that are struggling to even meet together with each other to support one another. That this, this group of people are needing to be reminded that God is walking with them. The thing is, it goes on to give this list of people that have gone before us. Hebrew starts that way. And after this section about hope, and faith, continues to, like, make this explanation of all these different people, some that you might expect, right? We always hear about Abraham, cool. We always hear about Noah, that takes faith in the world is like, what are you doing? But we also hear these names like Rahab; we hear about those that were stoned to death. You see, it's so interesting, right? Because Jesus says, if you want to be my disciple, follow me, pick up your cross. And yet somehow the world has told us that to have faith is to create this equation that means now everything is going to be perfect and happy and wonderful. And when it's not perfect, and happy and wonderful, we think we're doing our faith wrong. We think somehow, we've messed up the equation, when in fact faith is about saying this isn't what defines me, that in fact, when I'm wandering in the wilderness God wanders with me. When I'm feeling weighed down by expectations, by failures, by dropped balls, God meets me in that space. The list of those saints that have gone before include lots and lots of people that the world says were outsiders, not good enough, not worthy enough, not touchable, not lovable. The hope we have is in a God that says no, life abundance comes from relationship with Me and relationship with one another as brothers and sisters and siblings in Christ. Frankly, I think communities of faith start to fall apart and forget how to walk together with one another because the world's idea of what faith should look like, that equation, is what we think we're supposed to bring into these spaces. My perfect, happy, wonderful Christian self that does everything right, that gets exhausting, about you. But when we get to bring our full self into these spaces, to walk with one another and, more importantly, to stand before God instead of fighting and trying to cover up and bury in the ground, our shame and our pain. We lay it at the cross, and we cling to that hope of forgiveness. We have faith in that thing called grace. We cling to the hope of a God that loves each and every one of you and meets you fully.

Dear people, my prayer is that as the community of Hebrews, as we struggle to figure out how to walk with another, how we sometimes feel like we're losing our faith, we can be reminded that faith isn't about not having questions or not having doubts, or not being sad, but that faith is being reminded that even when the world seems cold and barren and lifeless, that God says "Give me a minute. Let me show you what can sprout up from this. Let me show you what happens when you allow the hope that can only be found in Me to guide you, as you then begin to see one another as children of God."

Amen.