

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Proper 14
Year C

Genesis 15:1-6
Psalm 33:12-22
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
Luke 12:32-40

If I were to ask any of you for a definition of “faith”, many of you would probably answer with some variation of the first verse of this chapter from the Letter to the Hebrews. Maybe not word for word, but something close to this. Why? Because we have heard this since we were children in Sunday school.

As we have seen in other cases, there is one complication in our definition of the word faith. Frequently, we use the term faith in another sense - because of my faith I do good deeds. In this sense, the word is synonymous with church or religion. Because I am a Christian, I do good deeds. This is not the sense of the word faith used in this Letter to the Hebrews. As we shall see, faith in this setting is similar to trust or faithfulness.

Therefore, we see, in the example of Abraham, he sets out from his home town of Ur because God has instructed him to do so. He has faith that God has a plan for his life, so Abraham packs up and moves. When I moved to Springfield, I may not have been commanded by God to move here, but I knew it was the right decision. Like Abraham, I did not have a place to live in my new home and didn’t even have a job, but I trusted God to lead the way. I did know that there was a reasonable chance I could find employment here and then a place to live.

Abraham became a nomad, leaving in a tent while driving his livestock to good pastures. He knew God had a plan and he was willing to trust God. God had promised Abraham a land that he would inherit for his offspring, and Abraham acted in faith on that promise. Further complicating the decision for Abraham was that this promise was for him and his offspring. Yet, Abraham was an old man, his wife was well beyond child-bearing age, and they had no children. But, Abraham believed God. Abraham believed that God was faithful to fulfill the promise.

Looking back at the first verse of this chapter, we see that definition of faith as “the conviction of things not seen.” All Abraham needed to do was look in a mirror and see that God’s promise was not based on what Abraham could see. A quick look at Sarah would confirm that observation. However, Abraham had the conviction that God would fulfill the promise. He only needed to look at the world around him to see that God could make what is seen from what is unseen. He knew the story of creation how God spoke the world and all we see into existence out of nothing. Even modern scientists will testify that the universe, all that we can see, is made up of things we cannot see. The visible is made from the invisible.

Each day, we act by faith. We believe that God is interested in us, so we pray for health, we pray for our needs, we pray for our friends and family. We act on faith because we believe the God to whom we pray will act on our faith. We also call on our church community to join us in prayer

because we know God does not work in isolation. Our faith in the Holy Trinity tells us that God works in community within God and with us. Our faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, giving us the confidence that God will see us through; that God will fulfill the promises made to us. Faith gives us that assurance.