

Second Sunday after Pentecost
Proper 5
Year A

Hosea 5:15 - 6:6
Psalm 50:7-15
Romans 4:13-25
Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Abraham has long been lifted up as a model of righteousness. Paul makes the assertion that this righteousness was not a result of the law, because the law had not yet been given to the Israelites. Neither could it be the result of Abraham's compliance with the concept of circumcision, because that has not yet demanded of him when God stated that he was righteous. What was the root of this claim?

Paul claims that this righteousness was the result of faith in God. God made several promises to Abraham which seemed outlandish, yet Abraham believed that God could make them happen. These promises included the fact that Abraham would be the father of many nations, even though he had no children and both he and his wife, Sarah, were very old. His descendants were to be as numerous as the sands of the sea. Another promise was that he would inherit the land of the Canaanites and Hittites, even though they were powerful nations. Even Egypt could not conquer the Hittites. Abraham trusted God.

Later, when God asked him to sacrifice his only son, Abraham complied, knowing God was able to fulfill the promise that it was through this son that Abraham would have many descendants. Abraham had total faith that God would fulfill all the promises he received.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, people flocked to Him believing He could heal them or even raise their loved ones from the dead. We see that in our gospel reading today. Whether they were the elite of society or cast outs, Jesus did not discriminate. The fact that each of these actions would make Him ritually unclean by the standards of the Jewish religion did not deter Him from acting. What was this activity based on?

As with Abraham, the notion of faith was not based on anything within themselves. When Abraham looked at his own body and that of his wife, he had no faith in that these bodies were the source of the solution. His faith was totally on God. In like manner, the leader of the synagogue and the woman with the issue of blood both had faith in Jesus – that He could fulfill their needs.

We can look around this morning and see the results of this type of faith. It is never a question of whether we have enough faith or not. This faith does not rely on us at all, but on what we believe God is able to do. Too often, we hear people being told they need more faith. Paul tells us that it is not within us, but within our trust that God is faithful to fulfill the promises to us that our faith should rest.

Jesus said that the tiniest faith could work wonders. Therefore, faith is not a quantity issue but an issue of placement of that faith.

People bemoan the death of the church, as if there was no hope. We can look at bank accounts and empty pews and bewail the end. But, Abraham looked at an ancient body and believed God could raise up a great nation. Jesus went to the cross knowing He would die but believed that God would raise Him from the dead. If God can do that, why can God not raise what we might perceive as a dying church from rising up again? Our faith need not be in our own abilities. Our faith needs to rest in the assurance that God has a work for us to do here and God has a plan to make it happen. We only need to have faith that God is able to use us in the work of the Kingdom of God in Christian County.