

**11 PENTECOST (LECTIONARY 19) AUGUST 8, 2010 CYCLE "C"**

**TITLE: THE WORLD IS DESPERATE FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH.**

**READINGS: Gen. 15:1-6, Ps. 33:12-22, Heb. 11:1-3,8-16, Luke 12:32-40**

Once a pastor, after preaching what he felt was one of his very best sermons, asked his wife, "Tell me, honey, how many really great preachers do you think there are in the world?" Her answer was, "There is one less than you think." But there is a great sermon to be heard today and it comes from the author of the Book of Hebrews. Chapters 11 and 12 are one of the greatest testimonies of faith in all literature. When you return home today sit down and read both chapters 11 & 12. Let it sink in and appreciate this great testimony of faith. Our author begins with Abel and shows that Able's offering to God was more acceptable than Cain's because of faith. Then he deals with Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Moses and even the harlot Rahab and shows the action of God through faith in their lives.

Nowhere can we find a more stirring testimony of faith in God than this one. The writer of Hebrews begins with a definition of faith: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen." But he does not stop with just a definition, he goes on to point out the many examples of faith lived in the lives of our great ancestors. The true meaning cannot be captured in a dictionary definition. It must be lived out for us. It must be seen, experienced, manifested in the lives of believers! The author of Hebrews shows us what real faith is by showing how it is brought to life in those who believed. He sets down a wonderful lesson of encouragement as he begins with verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12. "Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding it's shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb.12:1-2.

The world is desperate for people of faith. We have a world full of politicians and preachers, but few prophets who are living faith-filled lives. Just who is speaking for God today? Where are our righteous Abrahams, our Noahs and Jacobs, Josephs and Moses? Where are those today who stand up for Jesus Christ and live our

Christian faith? If not us, then who? If you and I do not champion God's Kingdom, who will? Is it just heroes of faith, those who stand up and are recognized by the whole world who make a difference? But that's just the thing about heroes. They don't have to be nobles or great achievers or inventors, or politicians or kings or queens. Even in the letter of James the prostitute Rahab is pointed out as an example of faith and good works. The thing about heroes of faith is that they can be very common people, people who are not very special in their own right. Some of our greatest heroes of faith were rejected by society, condemned, and many died for the sake of their faith. But they are special because they believed in God and his Son Jesus, and lived their lives in accordance with their faith commitment. That means you and I could be heroes of faith if we would heed God's voice. And if not us, then who will do what needs to be done to establish his Kingdom?

Sometimes we must have the courage to venture out into the unknown and act by faith for, as Hebrews says, these are the things we hope for, but do not see. Sometimes faith is striking out into the unknown, but with hope and the strength and assurance of the truth, we set out as did the many heroes before us. And one day when we realize the wonderful reward of our faith, God's heavenly kingdom, we will fully know and share the love of this tremendous throng of believers.

Once there was a little boy who was on the second floor of his burning house. On the ground below him his father called up to him, entreating him, "Jimmy, Jump! Jump! I will catch you." The little boy fearfully cried out to his father, "But dad, I can't see you." And his father called back, "Yes, son, but I can see you." We must assure ourselves that our Father can see us and will catch us if we take that necessary and essential leap to him in faith. Listen again to Jesus, "But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." Lk.12:39-40.

Remember that Abraham was not a perfect man. But he heard God's voice telling him to make a difference to leave his home and go to a place which was totally unknown to him. He obeyed and went. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. That's faith. "And the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness."

Be not afraid, O Christian, to strike out in faith and witness to others Jesus Christ and his saving message, for the world is desperate for people of faith. And if not you, then who? **Amen.**

**Pastor Barney**

Our soul waits for the Lord;  
He is our help and our shield.  
Our heart is glad in him,  
Because we trust in his holy name.  
Let your steadfast love, O Lord,  
Be upon us,  
Even as we hope in you.  
Ps.33:20-22.