

Sunday, March 5, 2023
The Second Sunday in Lent
Pastor Matt Duerr

“All These Things Happened-By Faith”

Grace mercy and peace be to you from God our father from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, Amen. We continue with our theme of making Christ manifest but now focusing on the gospels and what the gospels reveal to us. Last week we saw that Matthew the former tax collector and disciple of Jesus, went to Alexandria Egypt and he wrote his gospel there. A gospel that was tailored for the educated elite. It was very scholarly, showing how Jesus fulfilled multiple Old Testament prophecies.

Today we take a little bit of a different track. We're going to go to Hebrews Chapter 11 where we find God's “Hall of Fame of Faith.” Like Matthew, this is a book written to the Hebrew or Jewish people. Its traditional title is literally - To the Hebrews. We don't know who the author is. I kind of like that because it leaves it at - “To God alone be the glory, or Soli Deo Gloria. Of course, modern day scholars try to figure it out. Some say it was Saint Paul, others say Barnabas which by the way gets my vote. Others will say Luke, others say Apollos. But the reality is this, we don't know and we never have.

In fact, if you go to the late 2nd century, from 185 to about 253, there was an early Christian scholar by the name of Origen. He was also known as Origen of Alexandria. That's right, he was in the home base of where Matthew was. And speaking on the book of Hebrews, he wrote; “Who actually wrote the epistle, only God knows.” But we do know this, we do know that whoever wrote it was a Hebrew, a Jew. Because in the very first two verses he writes; “Long ago and that many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.”

And like Matthew, in fact maybe inspired by Matthew since he's coming from Alexandria. He does a lot of quoting of the Old Testament. In fact, there are 35 quotes of the Old Testament. And while the Gospel of Matthew is more than twice as long, Matthew only records 15 quotes. So, the book of Hebrews is full of Old Testament tie ins and quotes. With the exception of Chapter 11 where there are no quotes. But the entire chapter is about the Old Testament. It's literally a retelling of the Old Testament but focusing it in on faith.

He begins by saying, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” And that is a powerful passage on faith. It's an assurance, it's a conviction, it is hope. And remember in the Greek language, hope

is a guaranteed expectation. And so this has an assurance to a conviction, this is really truth, this is really going to happen. And they, the Hall of Famers that he lists fully expected, fully knew and therefore...

By faith we read they believed “the universe was created by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” In other words, it goes back to Genesis one, and lays it out. Here's the beginning, God made this world by speaking, it belongs to Him, He alone is in charge. Number two, by faith Able offered an acceptable sacrifice. It doesn't make sense to take your very best and sacrifice it, unless you have faith, and that assurance, that conviction, that will you give your best and God will take care of it. He'll give you the best back or He'll give you more. He'll do whatever. One thing you can say about Able, Able knew how to worship. He's the first one mentioned in the Hall of Fame of faith.

By faith Enoch was taken up to heaven and didn't see death. By faith Noah was told to build an ark and he didn't argue with God. He built the ark because he had a conviction. He fully expected a flood was coming. Why? God said so.

By faith, number five, Abraham, Father Abraham, the one we started Lineage Lane with. Father Abraham left his homeland to go. Well to go, God didn't tell him where to go, he told him go. And as you're going, then I'll tell you where to go. It took a lot of faith. The father Abraham also by faith received a son, even though as the author to the Hebrew says, he was “as good as dead.” And in the middle of that, we hear number six, his wife Sarah; who by faith, God empowered to conceive and have a son.

And then it continues with Abraham who by faith offered his son Isaac up as a sacrifice. Because by faith he knew that God had promised him through Isaac that all the nations would be blessed. So he knew even if he killed Isaac, God would raise him from the dead. Speaking of Isaac, he's number seven. By faith, Isaac blessed his two sons Esau and Jacob continuing on that lineage that we talked about a couple weeks ago. By faith, number eight, Jacob blessed each of Joseph's sons including both of them in that lineage of Israel. And by faith number nine, Joseph when he was about to die at the end of his life, made mention of his bones, that he wanted them to be packed up and taken to the land that God had promised them.

By faith number ten, Moses was hidden by his parents. I guess we can give a little cheer to parents there. Go parents! Yes, both mom and dad were in on it. We're not going to kill this child, we're going to save his life. We're going to hide him. And then mom put him in that basket and floated him on the Nile. Trusting by faith, that God would save this child. And God did.

And by faith Moses refused to be known as Pharaoh's son; and he left Egypt; and Moses is the one God used to keep the Passover; which again we talked about during Passover Parkway. By faith number twelve, like the Hebrew people themselves across the Red Sea on dry ground. And by faith when they got to the Promised Land, the walls of Jericho fell. By faith number thirteen, Rahab the prostitute didn't perish when the walls fell; even though her house was in the walls. Because by faith, she had given safety to those spies that she welcomed in because she knew they represented the one true God.

Now you get to this point, and you feel like maybe the author to the Hebrew said; 'Oh my goodness! I have I've just gotten through the first five books of the Old Testament. I've got a whole lot longer to go.' So he kind of summarizes it and he says, 'And what more shall I say?' And he lists a whole lot of people who were prophets, who were faithful servants of the Lord, who had good times, had bad times, who were sacrificed, or killed, murdered, and everything. But he wraps it all up by saying; 'and all these they're commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us.'

What's interesting there is that's written in the past tense. God had provided something better for us. It's why the word hope is used that guaranteed expectation. It's looking forward. The author's point is this; when God first spoke right back there at the very beginning of Genesis, saying to the serpent that through the seed of the woman, his head (the serpent's head would be crushed) though he would bruise that child's heel. That's the something better. And since God had said it was going to happen; to God, in God's mind, it's over, it's done, it is finished, it's going to happen! It's as if it has already happened. Because I said it. And so, by faith, those faithful Hebrew people believe this; something better was coming. But they were already going to benefit from it because God had said so. To God, it was all done already.

And so that now takes us to our gospel this morning. A faithful Hebrew, someone who's thinking like this. Jesus has crossed the sea of Galilee going from the eastern side, the more barren side, where he would go with his disciples to get away back to the West side. And as soon as he's there, ministry starts again. And we read, then came one of the rulers of the synagogue. Well, who or what was the ruler of the synagogue? The ruler of a synagogue was, I quote, the Layman responsible for the local House of Worship. It's the lay people. Yeah, the head of the lay people. Shall we say, the congregational president.

Historically we look and most of these rulers were Pharisees. Just like you might say we have within our church or churches, a congregational president. And our constitution calls for that congregational president to be an elder. And to be an

elder, well you must be a person definitely of faith. But more than that, you have to be a person of knowledge. You have to be someone who is actively engaged in Bible Study because how can you lead and help if you don't know what you believe? And so this ruler, Jairus, by name, comes to Jesus. And we read, seeing him seeing Jesus, Jairus fell at His feet and implored Him earnestly. Now he's got a big concern and it's like he's praying right then and there to God; which of course he is doing when he's talking to Jesus; and imploring Him earnestly on behalf of 'my little daughter.'

When we compare this to Luke, we find that this little daughter was probably about 12 years old, but was his only daughter. My little daughter is at the point of death. And now we see the faith coming. We've already seen faith when he gets down at Jesus's feet and just talking to Him about this concern. But he gets very specific; 'come and lay your hands on her so that she may be well and live.'

By faith Jairus came. By faith Jairus knew Jesus could do something about it. By faith, Jairus knew there was something better and he was kneeling at His feet. Jesus is that something better! And so off they go, Jesus, His disciples, Jairus, the whole crowd of people, which we'll talk about here in the coming weeks. As they are coming closer to Jairus's home, someone from the house comes to him and says 'Why trouble the teacher any further? Your daughter is dead.' I can just imagine Jairus's heart just dropping to the very soles of his feet. And yet we read Jesus overhearing this looked at him and says, "do not fear, only believe." And by faith, Jairus continued.

They got to his house and there was wailing there was mourning there was hectic commotion. Because back then when a person died you buried them within 24 hours and so they were already engaged in the mourning process and all of this. Jesus comes in and He says you know, 'why all this she is "only sleeping."' Why would He say that? Because Jesus knew the resurrection and there's a lesson for us about the very last day. Jesus sees all of those who have died as simply asleep. Why? Because He's going to wake them up. If they were dead, they'd be dead, but to Him they're just asleep. He has won them, they will wake up! And he says the same thing here to Jairus, "she's only sleeping." Of course, the people jeer him and mock him, science says her heart is not beating. But Jesus goes in, leaves the noise and all the commotion behind Him, which is something we maybe need to do more often with this world. He goes in and says 'Talitha cumi' which means, little girl, I say to you arise. By faith she was raised; and by golly if that ain't something better!

How do you think Jairus responded to that? And I'm not talking about just right then and there, because I'm sure he hugged her, he kissed her, he was overcome with the joy. What about the next day, and the day after, a year after, on his

deathbed? I would like to think that Jairus always reminded his daughter of that. That she was alive because the something better, the Messiah, had raised her from the dead. And that she had the joy of being a person who would get to experience it twice. Because again, if this was his only daughter, what is the ultimate joy? Something better, eternal life with our Lord and Savior.

That is the ultimate something better. and it is ours through faith and only through faith. It's yours, it's mine, it belongs to everyone that who, like Jairus, just kneel before our Lord and Savior and say, "Lord, help!" I'm at the point of death, a physical death, or as sinners, always on the cusp of spiritual death.

But Jesus is the something better, and He has something better for you and me if we will just get out of the way and let Him save us, and by faith, believe. In our Savior's name. Amen.