**3rd Sunday after Pentecost Sermon**

**Text: Romans 4: 18-25**

**Theme: Faith!**

 The world is a mess. Our country is in turmoil. Humanity seems broken. Tensions are rising. There is a growing divide between the two main political parties. There is growing animosity between groups. There is inequality. Many people are unhappy. They are showing it in the streets. And there is fear. Yes, real fear. What will happen next? And, then there is the big question. Why is this happening?

 Why? Sadly, we are in this situation because of sin. Many have lost their connection to God, the Creator, who is the source of life, meaning and blessing. Our greatest need is to end our separation from Him; get right with Him; be transformed by Him. How is this possible? Our text for today gives us the answer. **Faith!**

Like the word **Grace** that we heard about last Sunday, the word **Faith** is well known. We talk about being faithful, parents name their daughters Faith. In the NIV translation, faith is used **270 times** in the Bible. But do we understand what Faith really is?

 I once heard this analogy for faith. “**Faith is a little boy who ties a rope swing onto a tiny sapling’s branch. Then, noticing that the seat of the swing rests on the ground, he goes to get the garden hose and begins to water the sapling.”** It is a cute story and make you think about faith, but is it a good explanation for what faith Is—that is, **Biblical faith**?

 If someone has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, what do we mean? In our text for today we have that definition. It comes out clearly. I think it is one of the best explanations of Faith in the New Testament. So, let’s look at it together. **18Hoping beyond what he could expect, he believed that he would become the father of many nations, just as he was told: “This is how many your descendants will be.” 19He did not weaken in faith, even though he considered his own body as good as dead (because he was about one hundred years old), and even though he considered Sarah’s womb to be dead. 20He did not waver in unbelief with respect to God’s promise, but he grew strong in faith, giving glory to God 21and being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.**

 **Hoping beyond what he could expect**, **he believed**. How about that for the **meaning of faith**? It explains exactly what is in the mind of Abraham. Looking at the situation logically, it was just impossible for anything to happen the way God said would happen. He should say this; “You other words, God said, "It is going to be through you and Sarah." "But God, you don’t understand. I am too old, she it too old." Yet he didn’t hang on to that kind of logic. He believed God! The promise! And the promise is restated here: "**in order that he might become a father of many nations"** That refers to the spiritual descendants. That is not just his physical descendants the Jews but you and me! That is what God had promised him.

 Then it goes on to say, " **just as he was told:**, ‘**This is how many your descendants will be**’" Who told him. The LORD. God himself. His word spoke. And Abraham believed. It reminds me of another verse in the Bible. It is found in Romans 10:17. “**Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is found in the word of Christ!** Faith is there when you believe God to the point that you are willing to rest everything on what He says.

 But I have a question. When I look at the life of Abraham, I question this phrase in the text. **“He did not weaken in faith”** I looked up Abraham in the Bible. He was impatience, fearful, and lied under pressure. He allowed Sarah to convince him to help God fulfill the promises by giving him her maid servant to have a child-Ishmael. In both Genesis 12 and Genesis 20 while in Egypt during a Famine and later while living in the Negev desert in Palestine , scared, and self-preserving, fearing for his own life, Abraham urges his wife Sarah to lie not once but twice to say she is his sister so the Pharaoh and King Abimelech would not kill him after seeing her beauty and taking her into their harem. **Strong in faith?** Hard to believe! Yes, if faith depended on our ability. Our work. Our effort. We would all fail! Sin gets in the way. It got in the way for Abraham. And it gets in our way. Sin that separates us form God. Sin that deserves punishment! But where we are weak, God is strong. Were we are faithless, he is faithful!

 Faith is God’s work. He worked it in Abraham. He works it in us. Ephesians 2:8-9 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9**not by works, so that no one can boast.” This is how he was strong in faith! **20He did not waver in unbelief with respect to God’s promise, but he grew strong in faith, giving glory to God 21and being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”**

**23Now the statement “it was credited to him” was not written for him alone, 24but also for us to whom it would be credited, namely, to us who believe in the one who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. 25He was handed over to death because of our trespasses and was raised to life because of our justification.**

 Now put this into context with justification by faith alone. Justified means, “**declared not guilty**” Paul is using **divine logic**, because it is the Holy Spirit empowering Paul to write this. Paul is saying, "Hey, do you want to know what faith is? Faith is resting solely upon what God’s Word says." God gives you the ability to believe it! Jesus died, he rose, paid the price. You are forgiven. Through faith it is credited to you! **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** (2 Cor. 5:21)

 The final point in today’s sermon is the application. Let us allow God to work in us the same way he worked in Abraham. **20He did not waver in unbelief with respect to God’s promise, but he grew strong in faith, giving glory to God.**

Today I ask this question? Are, you walking by faith or are you walking in unbelief? Consider the following:

• **Faith** sees Christ’s love for sinners **Unbelief** says no one is really bad.

• **Faith** waits, even when God delays. **Unbelief** gives up when God tarries just a little bit.

• **Faith** gives comfort in the middle of fears and tears. **Unbelief** causes fears and tears.

• **Faith** makes great burdens light. U**nbelief** makes light burdens great.

• **Faith** lifts us up when we are down. **Unbelief** throws us down.

**And most of all!**

• **Faith** gives us the victory over sin, death, the devil. Unbelief leaves us conquered by them all.

Thank you God for my faith! Thank you God for the Victory! AMEN

**Romans 4:18–25**

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