

Abundant Life by Faith - Sunday, March 1st

Hebrews 11, kind of this morning, and I can say with some confidence that this may be one of our last sermons in chapter 11. I'm not going to finish in May, but I'm going to try to finish up next week, but that's a lot of scripture to do next week. So I have been reading the book of Hebrews in my morning devotions that we've gotten to the book of Hebrews in the plan that I'm reading, and I have enjoyed it so much more this time.

Having preached through it and having the context of chapter 11 that we've been speaking on has just been giving me insight into what the writer has been trying to give in the book of Hebrews. And as I've continued on and read through chapter 12, as Brother Bill said in Faith Journeys, go ahead and buckle up because chapter 12 is not going to be any smoother or any funner than the rest of it. And the writer really doesn't let up in chapter 12.

He doubles down on a few things. And I think it's something that we as the church, as Christians need to hear today. And so I hope for you, as we've been going through the book of Hebrews, that the messages from the word of God have challenged your Christian walk to not just be, ah, okay, Sarah, Sarah, it's all good.

I'm saved. We'll get there. I hope that your challenge, I hope that your walk is being challenged to grow and to mature into the men and women that God is calling you to be.

Because where you are now is probably a far cry from where you were the day you got saved, I hope. But you have not arrived. There's still territory to gain, especially in our personal growth.

And so as I read the word of God and as I understand ministry and how God works, you know, it's the word of God that equips us to do the work of the ministry. And so when we put the word in our heart, it allows us to be ready. There's a scripture that says, be ready in season and out of season.

You're ready in season and out of season when you have the word in your heart and you can recall it when you come up to a time or an obstacle or a situation, you'd be like, hey, the word of God says, and when you do that, you are participating in ministry. And that is what God has called you to do. And so I hope if you hear nothing else this morning that you hear that, that we are called to be equipped to give a defense for the gospel by having the word of God in our heart.

And Hebrews has been great for that for me. Last week, we looked at Moses and I presented Moses in maybe a little bit different way than most people would present Moses as a character that we know in the Bible. We often think of Moses as the very competent, confident, you know, leader of the children of Israel, speaking to God on the mountain, carrying tablets down the gall to destroy those tablets when the people are bad and go up and say, God, I need a repeat.

I need another copy, please. You know, this Moses who is sitting in judgment of millions of people who is building the tabernacle, all of these things that we think about Moses, that's not how he started. That was the process of him maturing in his knowledge and relationship with God.

And how he started was kind of a fearful guy who didn't fit in with his people or the people that he belonged to in Egypt. And as we were driving home, my wife mentioned something to me that I missed in the scriptures. And it's a fascinating thought in the book of Hebrews chapter 11, because she said, it's interesting.

After 80 years, Moses took up the mantle of his parents. And I was like, what? And I went back and read it because in verse 23, it says that Moses, Moses, his parents hid him because they weren't afraid of the king.

We talked about how Moses fled Egypt because he was afraid of Pharaoh, but yet it comes back in verse 27 of Hebrews 11 and says, Moses returning to Egypt says that he returned not fearing the king.

So he eventually took up his parents' mantle of not being afraid of the king. And I find this highlights the importance of teaching our kids about faith in God, because we pass on way more than DNA. We pass on habits, we pass on strengths, we pass on valuable lessons that will help them succeed in life later, even though they don't know it.

And so be involved in your kids' life, be involved in sharing your faith with them. Because I believe, we talked about fears last week, but I believe in life fears can be boiled down to three categories that we all fight. I believe we fight the fear of the thief, we fight the fear of death, and we fight the fear of destruction.

And we can experience these in all three parts of us, body, soul, and spirit. So I'm going to start actually this morning in John chapter 10. So if you have your Bibles and you want to go to John chapter 10, we're going to start there.

And I want to come at this passage in Hebrews chapter 11 that we're going to talk about this morning from a little bit of a different angle, because I want to look at the four examples in John chapter 10. And as I studied these things, they all pointed to me to an abundant life that is only found in Jesus. So let's read.

We're going to start in verse 7. Jesus is speaking and he says, Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word this morning.

Father, we ask that you would be with us today. God, that you would lead and guide us through these passages. Father, I pray that you would anoint my lips to speak your words.

You would anoint our ears to hear what you would have us to learn from the message this morning and apply it to our hearts to make us more like your son. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. So over the past few months, as we've been going through chapter 11, we've looked at what life lived by faith looks like through a lot of examples. It starts with creation.

It goes through the early heroes to the fathers of the faith. And the writer has highlighted areas that he felt was vital to living our life by faith. And as I looked at our passages this morning in Hebrews chapter 11, I really felt that there were several directions that we could have gone and all which would have been good, all which would have been true and applicable to life.

But yet for me, there was one theme that stood out and it was the theme of hope and excitement. Do you realize that a life of faith is not a dull drab thing? It is meant to be a life of excitement. It is meant to be a life of abundance, an abundant life, because that's what our faith of journey leads us to.

But not only when we arrive at heaven's gate, do we receive abundant life. The promise of abundant life is something we have today and can live in today. Amen? Amen.

In each of our examples today, the followers of God are going to experience abundant victory while all other people, the other side of this in our story, are going to experience total loss. And as we've shared before, there's no middle ground. You're either on one team or the other.

There's one team that wins and there's one team that loses. You don't get to be neutral. You belong to one team or the other.

So I want to look at each of the examples in Hebrew chapter 11, starting in verse 28, talking about how Moses, by faith, put blood on the doors. And it says in verse 28, by faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. So if you're not familiar with

this story, in Exodus chapter 12, this is the tenth and final plague that God is pouring out on the nation of Egypt.

He's gone through all the little bitty things and he finally gets to his culminating plague, the last one. And it's the angel of death is going to come in and claim all of the firstborn, anything, animals, people, anything that was firstborn he's going to claim. And I always like to ask this question because it's fun, because I was a firstborn.

How many of you are firstborn in your family? You're all dead. Well, at least in Egypt anyway. Unless, of course, you have the blood applied to the doorpost of your life, then you live.

This was a very horrible plague because it would have affected everybody. It would have affected every family. And even if you didn't have any firstborns and you had animals that were the firstborn, it would have affected your life somehow.

And that is, throughout history, death's calling card. Because everyone, one out of one person born, dies. And whether or not, obviously those who are here have not died, but we have experienced it at some point in our life with someone that we know.

And scripture teaches that through Adam, or through the sin of Adam, that it is appointed unto us once to die. And that was the enemy's goal in the Garden of Eden. It wasn't just to trick Eve.

It was to bring death. It was to kill Eve. And Jesus said in John that the enemy comes to kill.

That's one of the three goals that he has as he begins to attack us as Christians. But yet in the same breath, Jesus says, I have come that you might have life. So there's two options here.

And before Jesus, death reigned over humanity. There was no hope in life before Jesus came. There was only the prospect of dying.

And even in that, that wasn't very fun because once you did that, there was judgment. I mean, who's ready for judgment? What? Nobody raised their hands. Unbelievable.

See that night that this angel came is what the, this is what the Egyptians experienced. The total hopelessness and defeat of death because there was no out for them. It was the end of physical existence.

Psalms chapter 5, I'm sorry, Psalms chapter 6 verse 5 teaches that it's just death. After this, you go to Sheol and you live in the land of the dead and you await final judgment. And you're like, well, that was Old Testament.

Okay. Well, John chapter 11, Martha responds to Jesus when Lazarus has died. And Jesus says, I am the resurrection.

Lazarus will live again. Martha says this. She says, I know that he will rise again in the end, in the resurrection of the last day.

So all that there was, was this nothingness. They just kind of went to the land of the dead and awaited judgment to come at the last day. And I feel like their finality of death was even deeper than we feel today because we have the blessing of the influence of the Christian life and the Christian teaching.

John chapter 11, Jesus says, I am the, I am the resurrection and life. Those who believe in me, though they may die, shall live. So we in the church, but also collectively in the world, most people believe in something after death.

There's not just nothingness. There is the beautiful influence of Christianity on the world that there's something that will happen once death comes. And so Jesus took it upon himself to go to the cross, being obedient to the father and being beaten beyond recognition, not even recognizable as a man, hung on the cross for six hours to shed the blood, to cover the doorpost of my life, to give me freedom and salvation from this death that all men face.

Amen. See, it was Jesus who won a victory over death, taking all of the power and authority and the fear that it had over your life and my life. And it was Jesus who gives us the freedom from being anxious about this impending appointment that we all have at some day, hopefully years and decades from now, but yet we still have an appointment.

And Paul wrote this as he spoke to the church at Corinth in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, says, O death, where is your victory? It has been taken by Jesus. Death, where is your sting? Because now through Jesus Christ, there is life after death. And in 2 Timothy, Paul talking to Timothy says, Jesus has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

So the enemy has always sought to kill because there was some finality and unresolved angst with death because there is nothing we can do about it. But yet Jesus enters and he takes away one of the most powerful weapons the enemy has, which is the fear of death. I love the scripture.

Jesus talking, says, don't fear the one who can kill the body, which the enemy seeks to do. Fear the one whom after the body has been killed can take your spirit and give it a second death in hell. See, no longer do we have to fear the death of this body.

We must only think about our eternal living quarters. Amen. And through the blood of Jesus, we have eternal life.

Amen. So Moses, by faith, applied blood to the doorpost to give salvation from the death angel. We do the same thing with Jesus Christ in our life, applying his blood to our life, no longer to be afraid of death.

Hebrews continues in verse 29, with the nation of Egypt leaving and coming to the Red Sea, it says, by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians attempting to do so were drowned. So after the 10th plague and Pharaoh having lost his son, he doesn't just let the children of Israel go. He kicks them out.

He commands them to leave, to take everything, plunder my nation, I don't care, just go away. And so Moses and the congregation of the children of Israel leave Egypt and they begin to head east back to the promised land. And I want to read this account because it's such a, I didn't want to put it on the screens because it would take a long time, but I just want to read this account because it's a great picture of our life today, it seems like.

So I'm going to be reading in Exodus chapter 14, and I'm going to be reading, starting in verse 1, 14, right? Yes. All right. It says, then the Lord spoke to Moses, tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, yes, that's right, between Migdal and the sea.

You must camp in front of Balzephon, facing it by the sea. Pharaoh will say of the Israelites they are wandering around the land in confusion. The wilderness has boxed them in, and I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will pursue them.

Then I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh and his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord. So the Israelites did this. Verse 5, and when the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh falls into his trap.

And his officials changed their minds about the people and said, what have we done? We have released Israel from serving us. So he got his chariots ready, he took his troops with him, he took 600 of the best chariots, and then he took every other chariot he had in Egypt with officers in each one. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued the Israelites who were going out defiantly.

The Egyptians, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, his horsemen and his army, chased after them and caught up with them as they camped by the sea beside Pi-Hi-Hiroth in front of Balzephon. So as Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians coming at them. The Israelites were terrified, and they cried to the Lord for help, and they said to Moses, is this because there were no graves in Egypt that you've taken us to die in the wilderness? I love the children of Israel.

I'm going to preach a sermon one day just about the complaints of the children of Israel. It'll probably take me five years. What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Isn't this what we told you in Egypt? Leave us alone so that we may serve the Egyptians.

It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die here. But Moses said to the people, don't be afraid. Stand firm and see the Lord's salvation that he will accomplish for you today.

Amen. So here are the Israelites orchestrating, I'm sorry, here is God, I said the wrong group of people, orchestrating all of these things. But it's to paint a picture of how the enemy works in our life.

See, the Israelites are really between a rock and a hard place. There's the Red Sea in front of them, which they can't cross. And there's the armies of Egypt pressing them hard from behind because they love them so much.

See, we often find ourselves in this place in life, don't we? Situations where there's no way out, there's no good options, there's only certain defeat. I mean, you're going to lose no matter what you choose. See, the enemy is seeking the opportunity to steal our confidence in the promises of God.

Think about the children of Israel. Think about Moses. God has sent them there, told them to come out.

He's going to bring them to the promised land. He's given them the promise. You're going to show up in the promised land.

And they're not even a mile and a half out of Egypt almost. And here they are just kind of stuck. And God plants them in this specific spot where there's no good option for them.

There's no good choices. And it looks like they're just going to die. Even they say, why'd you bring us here to die? It was certain death to them.

And the enemy whole...

Our purpose in our life is to come in and steal the confidence that we have that God will keep his promises to us. See, we often find ourselves stuck somewhere, our lives stuck somewhere between a rock and a hard place. Anybody just live on Easy Street? Yeah, no.

And this is what the enemy does. He takes advantage of what life throws at us. But here's the catch.

Not just when life throws something at us, specifically when we have agreed to trust God, to be obedient to his word, set our face to go ahead and be following God, that's typically when red seas spring up in front of us, and armies are pressing behind us, and we're faced with, well, is God really, is his promise really true? And I often face this issue in my life. Because for me, it's a blessing and a curse that I have this in my life, but I must have a full understanding of something before I feel confident enough to jump in with both feet. So, to give you an example, like I said, it's a blessing and a curse.

In Bible college, I had a roommate who wanted to get together and start doing some roofs. Now, if you don't know this, I've owned a roofing business for a lot of my time here in Helena, and have done a lot of roofing. But when I was a teenager, or when I was in my young 20s in college, I had a roommate who was like, let's go get some roofing work.

And I was like, ah, no thanks. But he had a good point. He's like, there's good money for college kids, we can do it.

But at that time, I had only done summer help with my dad on the roofs. I didn't have a good complete knowledge of roofing. I'd only done bits and pieces.

And I had that most noble job of most sons in starting out in businesses, where I had the trash bag in this hand, and I had the trash in this hand. And I was to make them meet in the middle, and walk around the house that my dad was doing, and pick up trash. That was the biggest part of my job.

So I lacked the confidence to go ahead and push forward with my roommate, and get some roofing work. Fast forward a couple years, we get to Montana. I really needed some money.

My father-in-law says, hey, let's go roofing. But the kick was, he said, I'll teach you what you need to know. Because my father-in-law had roof to wall.

And it was very quickly, after a summer of working with him, I had a full, competent understanding of the task of roofing, and everything is history from then. But it took that gaining confidence to really jump in to it. And so the enemy, which can include ourselves to a degree, is always working to undermine our confidence in what God is asking of us, because we feel like we lack the experience.

And here's the cursing part of that. When God often asks me to do something, I want to be like, yes, but I don't fully know what you wanting of me, so no thank you. There's that stealing of the confidence of the promises of God in my life.

Not just trusting God, but questioning God. And that's where the children of Israel find themselves, as they're looking at the sea. So God gives some advice to the children of Israel, in Exodus chapter 14, God says to Moses, I love this, why are you crying to me? It's like, I don't know God, you know? He says, why are you crying to me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.

See with God as we are obedient to move forward, we gain confidence as he begins to part the sea before us. See the Israelites wanted to go back. They wanted to retreat when facing impossible odds.

But if I could quote this very beloved pipe-smoking theologian when he faced impossible odds, I would quote this. This theologian's name is Gimli from Lord of the Rings. And just to paint the picture for you to know where I'm at, they have just won the Battle of Gondor in the third movie and they need to help Frodo get to Mount Doom.

So Argon suggests that they march on the black gate. And it's like impending doom guys, it's a bad, bad thing. So Gimli pipes up and this is what we should all have in our life when facing these things.

Gimli responds, certainty of death, small chance of success, what are we waiting for? That's the confidence that God wants to instill in us when he asks us of some things. Is most of the things he's going to ask of you certainty of death? Probably not. It might be death of a sort to you.

It might be having to put something to death within you. Definitely when God asks us and leads us to do something there is a small chance of success if you want to do it by yourself. Probably no chance of success.

But what God wants from us is that final nod to say great, bring it on, let's do it. See the enemy wants to steal our confidence when we're stuck between the Red Sea and the Egyptians. But if we're willing to press forward into what God is calling us to do, the sea will be open for us.

And when trouble follows, that sea will crush them. It will be their doom. And then life gets easy.

Because we're in the promised land now. Now all will be good. It's a land of milk and honey.

So as the children of Israel passed through the trap of the sea and enter the promised land, they find a heavily fortified city waiting in their path to destroy them. Hebrews chapter 11 verse 30 says, by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. See the children of Israel had just crossed the and they set foot in the promised land.

Joshua was now leading them. And only to find that there was armies waiting for them. And I know that they knew this.

But in our life it's a lot like that. The enemy rarely gives up. And if he can't kill us, and if he can't steal our confidence, he's still intent on destroying you in the long run.

See with the Red Sea, it was impossible for them to win unless God made a way for them to move forward. There was a threat behind that was pursuing them to kill them. And there was no way to go forward because the sea was in their way.

And God had to step in and make a way. With Jericho it's different though. They're not being pursued by the Egyptians.

They've all been drowned in the sea. There's no immediate danger to them, but it's only an obstacle in front of them that they have to overcome. See it's blocking them from realizing the purpose and the promise that God has made to them.

So what do we do? Because the enemy is hoping with these obstacles to wear us down and ultimately in the long run destroy our faith because of the obstacles in front of us. The solution to Jericho was seven days of obedience that included a process for winning. There are some obstacles we face that take a process to be overcome.

See all too often in the Christian faith we expect God to move quickly. We pray. We tell God exactly what we want Him to do.

We tell God exactly how we want Him to do it. And then we tap our foot annoyed that He's taking so long to fulfill our commands. A lot of times when we face these obstacles and God gives us an answer, we don't typically like the answer.

See God tells the children of Israel march around the city for seven days. Not only do that, but shut up while you're doing it. Very smart of God.

Just shut up. Don't even say a word. Because often we feel like the instructions that God gives us are foolish.

God, really? Of all the things you could ask of me, this? So the children of Israel are told to march around the city for seven days and be quiet. In second Kings, Naban who has leprosy goes to the prophet and he's told to wash seven times in the Jordan and he gets mad because he's like there's cleaner rivers where I'm from. This is stupid.

Why do this? I feel like we keep circling back to this, but the test that God gives is always obedience. Rarely will God ask us to do something that we're like, that's what I was thinking too. We're jiving God, we're on the same page.

I like this. The test is always obedience. Because it's in these times the enemy will always be in our ear.

This is foolish. This is stupid. You know how dumb you look? You really, you have a better plan.

You could do this better. That's the enemy chiming in our ears, telling us, don't trust God. Just go at it on your own strength.

You can make it. It was those very same words that deceived Eve into seeing the fruit of good and evil as desirable. See, destruction comes from disobedience.

If the enemy can just get us to question God's rules, question God's promises, question the Word of God, he has us set up right where he wants us to utterly destroy our faith, one of his three goals in our life. And all he has to do, sitting on our ear, is get us to, did God really say that? Hmm. Destruction always comes from disobedience.

And you could think back over your life. Some of the worst periods of your life may have come from questioning what God wants, choosing to strike out your own path and to do it on your own strength. See, God is the one who gives life through Jesus.

And that life comes from putting our faith in Jesus Christ alone. Being obedient to the Word that he has given us, whether it's in your prayer life with something he's leading you to do, whether it's in reading the Word of God, and there's some things in here he's saying you have to change in your life, when we begin to submit our lives to be obedient to what he's telling us to do, we dismantle the plans of the enemy every time. Every time.

The enemy depends upon you being disobedient to God. See, obedience gives us the ability to overcome death, to walk through the sea on dry ground, and to see the walls of the obstacles of the cities of Jericho in our life fall flat. And then it's through those times of obedience that it opens the door for salvation to all the Rahabs of the world.

See, Rahab heard of what God was doing in Israel, and she put her faith in the God of Israel. And what I love about that one line in Hebrews chapter 11, Rahab, the very first Gentile to ever be counted in the assembly. Not only that, she's a part of the lineage of Jesus Christ, giving us the opportunity as Gentiles to walk through the door of Jesus Christ into his sheepfold.

So when I opened this message, I shared how faith is a journey of adventure to an abundant life. And sometimes as we live through life, through all the enemy's attacks, it's hard for us to understand how all of this stuff is good for us. See, each day is filled with opportunity to trust in Jesus, to be obedient to his word despite what the enemy attempts to steal, kill, and destroy from our faith.

But yet, to all of us who endure to the end, we can help someone else along the way. All of our experiences are to give credence to our faith so that as the Rahabs of the world are looking on, they can be like, you know what? There's something about that God that they serve. Stand with me this morning.

As we close out this morning, abundant life comes when we surrender to the process of Jesus and apply the blood that he shed on the cross to our lives for the forgiveness of sins. That one act of faith, of trusting in Jesus, differentiates us between those who will live forever with him in heaven and those who will die a spiritual death and spend eternity in hell. Jesus overcame the killer so that we could have life with him.

Abundant life also comes whenever we forward into the unknown with confidence that God will make a way, even as the enemy is pushing hard behind us with knives out, ready to stab and kill. See, with confidence in Jesus, we will experience abundant life as we walk through those impossible situations, not covered in mud but yet as dry ground because God is making a way for us through the impossible situation. Abundant life also comes whenever we're facing challenging obstacles that are trying to block us from accomplishing the purposes that God has called us to.

See, the enemy seeks to destroy our faith with the walls of Jericho. He wants us to crash upon them to realize that we can't make it. It's in these seasons that we must pray and ask for God's direction.

And no matter how foolish the response, be willing to be obedient to what he's asking of you. Because it's through obedience that we foil the plan of the enemy to destroy us. And what I love about it, the part of adventure that comes, is as we experience all of this, there will be others who are watching, looking at your life, seeing how you respond to the test and the trials that are in your life.

And as you trust in God and are obedient to his word, they gain some validity to the God that we serve, saying he looks like someone who can be trusted, speaking of God. That's when we become not only lives of abundant life for ourselves, but we begin to pour out abundant life to those around us and bring people in to know who Jesus Christ is. Ultimately, that's our goal.

Ultimately, that's our goal. Amen? Amen. Father, we thank you for your word this morning.

Lord, it's through the difficult times that truly make the good times that much sweeter. So Father, your promise to give us abundant life doesn't mean that it will be a life of ease. It doesn't mean that it will be a life without difficulty.

But yet it is through those times that we understand the true goodness that it is to walk with you. Because though we might face these things, Lord, you promise to give us life as we're obedient to your word. You promise to give us dry ground to walk through as we face impossible situations.

Father, you promise to remove the mountains from our life and to make the mountains and the valleys as straight ground before us so that we can see and know how much you truly love us. And it's as we accomplish these things through obedience and our faith in you that we're able to bring the Rahabs along and to show them the goodness that you have. Father, I pray that you would help us to know the situations that we face.

If it's the sea, Father, help us to have the confidence to step out in boldness to know that you're leading and guiding us. Father, if it's the walls of Jericho that we would take a moment and pray and seek your face and find out how we are to go about surviving the obstacle in front of us and be willing to obey your word. We thank you for this.

We ask for your wisdom in our life as we face these things. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

Well, Lord bless you guys. Alpha on Tuesday night. If you're part of it, love to see you.

We'll see you next week.