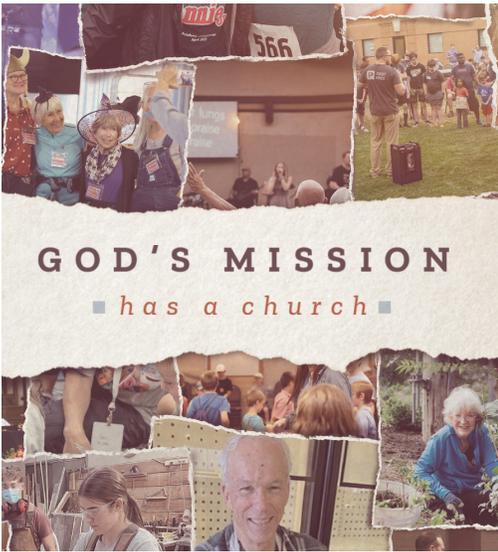




Sermon Growth Guide

February 2, 2025
God Rescues



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Hebrews 11:20-28

Key Verse: Hebrews 11:8

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”

Big Idea: When we trust the promises God has made to us, we can go confidently to the places He sends us.

Foundations

The Letter to the Hebrews has been described as a great encouragement to those seeking to live faithful lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. Throughout the letter we are urged to listen to the voice of God which is heard in Jesus Christ. We are warned against procrastinating in our faith journey. We are cheered on as we run the race of faith. And, in Hebrews 11, we are given examples of less than perfect people who lived in hope of the promises of God.

In today's reading, we focus on the faithfulness of Abraham and Sarah. We know that their lives were not morally perfect, but we know that they took risks, leaving the comfort and security of an earthly city to live a transient life. Promised land and descendants that would make a great nation, Abraham died having one heir and owning only his burial grounds.

Abraham had to live by faith, hoping that the promises of God would be kept. God promised him a forever home and that his descendants would be a great nation. And while Abraham trusted God, God then asked him to give up the only sign that the promise would be kept. In providing the ram and saving Isaac, God proved His trustworthiness in the face of the impossible.

We live in a culture where our first instinct is to doubt what we read or hear. Hebrews 11 is an historical record that shows that faith feeds hope, and hope moves us forward.

Understanding God's Word

Read together Hebrews 11:8-19

How would you describe the different aspects of faith you see described in the life of Abraham and Sarah?

C.S. Lewis has written: “If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.” How do you think this thought relates to our experience of hope?

Applying God's Word

Abraham is promised a city designed and built by God, but he lived his life in tents. What do you think this detail tells us about how we should live in relation to earthly matters as we seek to trust the promises of God?

Witnessing God's Word

Tom Long, in his commentary on Hebrews said this: Faith as an inward reality sings “We shall overcome,” while faith as an outward reality marches on to Selma! Where, in your life, can your singing – your belief that something is true, lead to marching – acting on that truth so that Jesus is revealed to those around you?

One of the most striking images in the Bible is that of the Israelites painting their doorposts with the blood of a lamb sacrifice. The lamb is slaughtered, and its blood is collected and applied to the entrance of the home. Many homes, many lambs, lots of blood. The blood of the lamb, shed for you.

So what? Who cares? Today we're learning about rescue. True rescue, according to the Bible, happens through one way, the blood of the perfect lamb. If we don't truly understand how God rescues us, we will continue to try to rescue ourselves and miss being rescued altogether – or we'll pretend that we're not in danger and not in need of rescue. There's an image of a man in a canoe moving down a river toward a waterfall. A beam is extended and someone yells, "Grab on, I can rescue you!" The man in the canoe waves back and says, "No thanks, I'm fine and enjoying myself!" Spiritually, this situation isn't rare, it's common, very common. Will you walk with me through our text today and ask yourself where you're at with understanding and receiving God's Rescue? Our Scripture today is found in Hebrews 11:20-28

Hebrews 11 is often called the "Hall of Faith." We are given a kind of hall of fame of people within Israel's history who are remembered and revered for their faith. Faith, it seems, is of central importance to the preacher of Hebrews. Let's structure our thoughts together this way: Let's go deep into Moses' life and example of faith and as we go let's consider how our own lives might be marked by a similar kind of living and active faith – by the end we'll all see together the connection between faith and God's rescuing hand over our lives.

Verse 23 "By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict." Moses' faith begins with the faith of his parents. I love that! Parents, please, please – do not underestimate the influence you have in raising your children up in the Lord.

Set an example of faith. We, the church, are a spiritual family. We ought to set examples of faith for one another to see and follow. Have you found someone in this congregation to pour into, to care for, to such a degree that after your time here is complete, their life is the better because you invested in them?

In the opening chapters of the book of Exodus the king of Egypt sends out an order that every baby boy born to the Israelites is to be thrown into the Nile River – genocide. Moses' parents disobey the king, civil disobedience against a law of the land that contradicts the law of God, "because they saw he was no ordinary child." Moses was called by God to lead Israel through the crowning moment of Israel's nation-history, the deliverance from slavery. I also think it's completely right to see through the eyes of the heart, enlivened by the Spirit of God, and see that every baby is "no ordinary child," but an image-bearer of God and therefore worthy of care and protection and love from the Nile-waters of today – from conception to natural death.

Verse 24: By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Materially speaking, Moses had it made. The son of Pharaoh's daughter. Lucky duck. Instead of dead in the Nile, you're wearing rings of gold around your wrists, and you carry a get-out-of-jail-free card in your front pocket. But Moses believed another narrative. Moses believed in God. Moses believed that the God of Israel was true and living and active and calling his people with identity and purpose and mission. In today's society, you are able to find an affirming word to almost anything you want. But like Moses, will you listen to the narratives of the world or the narrative of God? Will you refuse to be known as a son of this age and instead live in light of God's saving call on your life?

Verse 25: He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. The pleasures of sin. CS Lewis pens, "ease,

safety, rest – are good, not best.” Moses had to eventually make a decision, will I choose to align my identity with Egypt or with God? Will I choose comfort and pleasure or discomfort and God? “Choose this day whom you will serve.” Will you serve your own mission? Or will you join God’s mission? Throughout our sermon series, God’s Mission Has a Church, we’re asking one another to consider what it means for God to establish the Church to accomplish His mission. We don’t drag God into our mission, we are drawn by God’s grace into God’s mission to seek and save the lost, to see all things made new, to be hands and feet and hearts that come together in Jesus to see the justice and mercy of heaven unleashed here on earth. To belong to God and be commissioned into his mission means first that we are rescued: God Rescues, by faith.

And now we arrive at a most surprising statement. Verse 26: He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. Moses lived and died over a thousand years before Christ, yet here the preacher of Hebrews says, “He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.” When our faith is in the one, true God everything we do in that faith is directly tied to God’s mission – to give your allegiance to God is to live your life for the sake of God’s purpose and good pleasure to seek and save the lost through the rescuing work of Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection. What about you? Do you regard disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Colorado, the treasures of friendship with the world, because you are instead looking ahead to your reward in Christ, eternal friendship with God and his people? Our passage claims that Moses placed his faith in God.

Verse 27: By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. The greatest missionary stories I know

are those that culminate in a decision-moment: will I press forward, even though intense suffering surely awaits me, or do I shrink back from that which I am called? But almost always the Christian life is so much less dramatic! The little, everyday decisions, though, are equally as important. Will I love that neighbor now, today? If I do, I won’t get to that home project. Will I open my home and host a Life Group? Sounds messy! Will I calendar time to serve the poor in my city? I doubt I’ll make a dent. Moses “persevered because he saw him who is invisible.” Would anything in your life change if you, like Moses, “saw him who is invisible”? Would everything change? I’m convinced that some of the most important work we have as a church community is to help one another see the kingdom of God, see King Jesus – in every moment of our days, to see God’s kingdom at hand – it changes everything. Moses stopped making his decisions based on the king of Egypt and started living his life in response to seeing the King of heaven. I hope the same will be said of me at my funeral. I hope the same will be said of you at your funeral. “Here lies a child of God, he saw him who is invisible, and lived accordingly.”

Verse 28: By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. The situation in Egypt was at a breaking point. Eventually, God sends Moses back to tell Pharaoh, “Let my people go.” Moses and Pharaoh, like two boxers in a ring, go back and forth through nine plagues. God demonstrates his power and commitment. Pharaoh says, ‘no.’ I don’t know what is more astounding, the devastation God rains down on Egypt or the cold hardness of Pharaoh’s heart to not yield to God. But God is more resolved to set his people free, praise God. And God alone is all-powerful, praise God. So, in the final analysis, God sends “the destroyer of the firstborn” to free his people.

Now the Lord had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and

on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. ... So Moses said, "This is what the Lord says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. 5 Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. 6 There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. 7 But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.' (Exodus 11:1, 4-7) Moses prepares the Israelites according to the word of the Lord, "By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel."

The Passover in Exodus, the killing of the spotless lamb, the application of the blood for safety from death, is without rival the greatest foreshadow of Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus, 'the firstborn son of heaven,' whose name means 'God Saves,' dies the death you and I deserve and offers us the freedom and joy and peace we could never have otherwise. The twist is we all of us seem to default to imagine ourselves as the good guy, but Scripture teaches us that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. We stand before God and find that we are not clean; we are our own Pharaoh. Through our unrighteous deeds, we have purchased God's wrath. Yet instead of wrath, we find grace. We find the just wrath has been redirected. We find God himself climbing up on our cross, taking our place. Eternally, the "destroyer of the firstborn" comes down on Jesus, the perfect lamb - so perfect that the sacrifice is once and for all - a righteousness so beautiful and so powerful and so worthy - and so totally and completely coming from the outside. Bonhoeffer puts it this way: The death and the life of the Christian is not determined by his own resources; rather the Word comes to him from the outside. The Reformers expressed it this way: Our righteousness is an "alien righteousness," a righteousness that comes from outside of us. If somebody asks him, 'Where is your salvation, your

righteousness?' he can never point to himself. He points to the Word of God in Jesus Christ which assures him salvation and righteousness. And it can come only from the outside. In himself he is destitute and dead. Help must come from the outside, and it has come and comes daily and anew in the Word of Jesus Christ. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together)

One of the most striking images in the Bible is that of the Israelites painting their doorposts with the blood of a lamb sacrifice. The lamb is slaughtered, and its blood, blood from the outside, is collected and applied to the entrance of the home. Many homes, many lambs, lots of blood. The blood of the lamb, shed for you.

Our world needs the Lamb of God, the once for all great sacrifice, Jesus. Jesus' blood was shed for the forgiveness of sin, for the forgiveness of your sin. On the cross, Jesus offers to trade places with you. Receive this 'alien' gift, this gift from the outside, by faith, with gratitude. I can't think of a better thing to do at this point than to move from the Word to the Table. It is our tradition at the Table to repeat this declaration, "the blood of Christ, shed for you." In fact, if you don't remember anything else, remember this, "By faith, you receive the blood of Christ, shed for you." If, by faith, you've placed your trust in Jesus, run again to this table of grace. If your faith is somewhere else, or up in the air, or you're just not sure - will you take this time to consider giving your full trust to Jesus - trust for forgiveness and rescue and purpose and mission? And if you're ready for a change, tell somebody - somebody beside you, someone on the prayer team, if God is knocking on the door of your heart, let him in. And next time we come to the Table I hope you'll be the first in line. Let's pray: Father, thank you for your word to us in Christ. Thank you that Jesus is the lamb that takes away the sins of the world. Help us to live by faith in your finished work. Help us to live lives that daily say yes to your mission in the world to seek and save the lost, to see all things made new. Amen.