

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera Qld

10<sup>th</sup> August 2025 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

**Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16**

**IN FAITH**

Would you describe yourself as a dreamer or a doer? An idealist or a realist? A prepper or a reactor? The idea behind those kinds of labels is to get us to think if we are people who jump in and do things spontaneously without really knowing what we are facing or what the outcome will be, or do we take a more considered, thought out, approach, which lessens the risks as much as possible and gives us the best chance of achieving what we are seeking to achieve. How do you go answering those questions? Would the way you answer them be the same as those who are close to you? Having got you to think about all that, I have to confess that I'm not a great fan of putting those kinds of labels on ourselves and others. They're the kind of thing a personality test seeks to find out about you by asking, 'in this situation would you ...?', but I always end up thinking, 'well, in some cases I would act like this, but in other cases like that'. But still, it can be useful for us to think about how we do approach different situations, and even why we do that. So, my question is: are you willing give up everything to climb the mountain if you don't know what is on the other side?

How do we go if we try to put those kinds of labels on the people from the Bible who are listed in Hebrews 11. This chapter is often called the 'Hall of Faith', because it talks about some of the people in the Old Testament who stepped out blindly, against all odds, to follow God's call in faith. People like Noah who built a very big boat a long way from any water, and trusted that after the flood everything would be ok for him and his family. Moses who led 400,000 people across a desert for 40 years. Rahab who betrayed her own city because she believed in and trusted

the God of the Israelites. King David who fought many battles against all odds, trusting in God to give him victory. And the two we have in our reading today, Abraham and Sarah, who trusted God that they would have many descendants even though in their old age they were childless. Thinking about where these people started from, and what they went through on the way to receiving God's promises, were they dreamers or doers? Idealists or realists? How willing were they to give up everything to climb the mountain not knowing what was on the other side?

Of course, there is a big factor at play here in the lives and actions of these people, which takes away any labels we might put on them, and that is their faith. For them, what was on the other side of the mountains which were before them was God's promises. The first verse of our reading sums it up well: 'Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.' (v. 1) A way that we can apply that to our lives is that faith turns hope into certainty we can build our lives on. As Christians, 'hope' isn't a wish, or a dream, or a desire. Through faith, which is trust in God's promises and knowing He will carry them through, because He has in the past, faith is a sure and certain trust that God will work through what He has called us to do. It's the hope that comes from our faith which enables us to climb the mountains God calls us to climb knowing we can trust Him in what is on the other side.

Have you ever climbed a mountain that was before you, not knowing what was on the other side? Perhaps it was when you began a new relationship, moved to a new place, began a new business or started a new job? Was it taking up a new role of service in the Church or some other organisation, or making a major lifestyle change? Did you feel any uncertainty in doing that, or were you confident that it would work out well, whatever 'well' was? What are the mountains you have been called to climb in faith? What mountains are you still climbing, or thinking about climbing, right now?

The thing about following God in faith, even though it turns our hope into certainty, is that everything isn't going to just turn out the way we want or expect it to. The road of faith is littered

with broken expectations, which are replaced by even greater realisations. There is no doubt that in looking at each of those people listed in Hebrews, even though they followed God in faith they each went through some hard times. Abraham and Sarah trusted God, but when He seemed a bit slow to keep His promise they decided help Him out by having Abraham father a child to Sarah's maid. That did not work out well! Moses at times struggled with his burden of leadership, causing him to make some bad decisions, and so, perhaps harshly, he was never able to go into the promised land. David was a great king, but his decisions in his personal life meant that his family harmony was not good. In faith they climbed the mountains before them, just not on a nice and straight path. But still, despite these things, and despite the fact that they never got to really see where their faithful service led, in faith they followed God and trusted in His promises.

In faith. How do we go climbing the mountains our faith calls us up in our lives? I'm pretty sure that none of us would say that we ever have a nice straight path, but that like all those people from the Old Testament we also waver a bit along the way. We have a distinct advantage over them, though, and that is that for us we can now look back on the ultimate fulfillment of God keeping His promises by sending Jesus to die and rise for us. This helps us to know and see that our faith turns hope into a certainty we can build our lives on. We can know what is on the other side, because we step out in faith to follow God in His call to us to live with and in Him in our lives. Through Jesus we know His love, we know His forgiveness, we know that whatever we go through, even if it doesn't turn out like we wanted or expected, that He is still with us.

A time we really see this come to the fore is in funerals. As much as it is a blessing to live in faith, it is also a blessing to die in faith. That is where these promises are fulfilled for us; where Moses enters the promised land, where Noah's Ark saves his family, where Abraham and Sarah realise their many descendants. As much as we know God is with us in our lives each day, and as important as that is, in a funeral as we read or hear the words of promise of forgiveness and new life, then we are reminded of what is on the other side of the mountain, and who will take us there.

In faith we can not just wish that there is a new life beyond this one and that we will be a part of that, but we can have that certainty of new life which allows us to now live our lives in Him.

In faith we know God's love for us. In faith we know the certainty that God is with us in everything we go through, every mountain we climb, in our lives. In faith we have not just hope, but certainty, and the confidence and peace which goes with that. In faith we can live our lives, following Him faithfully, being certain that His love for us in Jesus is with us always. Amen.

**FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION:**

- Would you say that you are a dreamer or a doer, an idealist or a realist? (we actually need both!) If you can, ask people who know you well how they would describe you.
- If possible, have a look at Hebrews 11 and all the people who are listed there. If you know their story, think about how they followed God in faith in their lives, and how God worked through them. If you don't know about them, look them up in the Old Testament and find out more about them.
- What are the 'mountains' you have climbed in your life? Did you experience God's promises on the other side? What are the 'mountains' you are climbing right now, or thinking about climbing? In all of these, how does the certain hope you have through your faith help you in what have faced/are facing/will face?
- Do you struggle to step out in faith? Is there a decision or change you feel you need to make but you feel uncertain in doing that? Bring this to God asking Him to give you the faith to follow His path and know His promises.

Pray: thank God for the gift of faith, and the sure and certain hope it now gives to us. Pray for the faith to step out in knowing God's love and promises in our lives, to follow on the path He calls us to go.

*Pastor Andrew R. Koehler  
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