

WELCOME 3 June 2018 – 2 Pentecost '18 B

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you all here this morning. Please stay with us for morning tea...you know that's going to be awesome.

"Jump. I'll catch you." Says every parent standing elbow deep in the pool coaxing their anxious child off the edge & into the water. It's a "leap of faith" but by no means blind trust...those hands have held that child since they were born: would they fail now? But how many kids step back instead of jumping in? How long does it sometimes take?

At the edge of the land God has promised them, God's people are called to trust that the land before them is theirs to take...but they must take it in battle...and their trust in God falters...Just like the child at the pool's edge, past faithfulness on the part of the One beckoning is sometimes not enough to lead them forward in faith to triumph.

What does it mean to be "living from the promise" God has made, stepping into the unknown uncertain or difficult circumstances ahead while relying on what God has already done? Today we learn: Fear nothing. Trust God for everything. Because we are his, we have nothing to fear & can live courageously & obediently because God always keeps his promises.

. We'll explore & experience that today.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Loving God, we are limited in our understanding of you, but we know that you care for us and for all creation. Thank you for loving us and remaining with us in our sorrows and joys. Thank you for the life of Jesus whose life death & resurrection opens the door to life with you forever. Thank you for your Spirit who draws us to you & leads us even now. Prepare our heart to receive you and unite us that we might open our lives to accept your love and to respond by entrusting ourselves fully to you. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

2 PENTECOST '18 B – COURAGEOUS FAITH: LIVING FROM THE PROMISE

NUMBERS 13:16-14:9

Instead of Faith chat today let's play: Finish the sentence: "It sounds great in theory..." Again: "My head says that should work..." How many times have you not done something you really thought would be good to do because from somewhere inside a voice said "Nope. No way." What stopped you? Fear? Uncertainty? Past experience? Could you envision the worst-case scenario? Did you exaggerate the obstacles, overstate the problems, & magnify the difficulties, overthinking something & get paralysed into doing nothing? Big "BUT" will stop you.

You are not alone...I see enough smiles & nodding heads to know that's common among us all at one time or another...maybe not every time...but sometimes...sure. What did we just read? We enter the narrative of God's people at what ought to be their finest hour. God through Moses has led his chosen people out of slavery in Egypt up to the gates of the land God has promised to them for centuries.

God broke the chains of slavery from their lives with plague upon plague against Egypt. Finally the 1st-born of all Egypt is killed & the Israelites were sent hurrying out of Egypt stripping from their former slave-masters gold, jewels, clothing, "whatever they asked for." God not only freed them he equipped & enriched them off the backs of the Egyptians. Then the army of Pharaoh is washed away in the Red Sea as God's people cross on dry land. As they journey toward their new home God provides food & water in abundance & speaks his Law & his guidance for their life with him & worship of him into their lives. The pillars of cloud & fire are always in sight as they become one people under God's rule & Moses' leadership.

Then this...Having explored what was to be their land for 40 days...the report comes back: "*We entered the land you sent us to explore, & it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk & honey...*" Then there's that great big "BUT" "*But the people living there are powerful, & their towns are large & fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak! The Amalekites live in the Negev, & the Hittites, Jebusites, & Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea & along the Jordan Valley...We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!...The land we travelled through & explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, & that's what they thought, too!*"

Sounds great in theory...My head says it should work...**BUT**...It's too hard & we're not up to the challenge. Lost in the middle of all that – lost amidst the obstacles challenges difficulties, problems worst case scenarios & fear is Caleb: *But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"*

Scripture says Caleb & Joshua were the only 2 who came back convinced the battlefield would be theirs...the only 2 who spoke faith into all that fear...the only 2 who knew God had committed himself to them for their good & that promise was right before their eyes...right there for the taking...no turning back...**BUT**...

What's the difference ^b/_t Caleb/Joshua & the other 10...After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, "*Look as far as you can see in every direction—north & south, east & west. I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you & your descendants as a permanent possession. I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! Go & walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you.*" Gen. 13:14-17 Doesn't stop there

The Lord appeared to Isaac & said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. Live here as a foreigner in this land, & I will be with you & bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you & your descendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, & I will give them all these lands. Through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Gen 26:2-4

To Abraham & to his son Isaac (& every subsequent generation) God made a promise Now...hundreds of years later it is time to see that promise kept...**BUT**... What's the difference ^b/_t Caleb/Joshua & the other 10...Living from the promise...Joshua/Caleb know that promise as well as they know their own names & they will not back off – not be denied – not encounter any **BUT** big enough to move them off what they know to be true & what they know to be theirs by the hand of God. Caleb says it: "*Let's go **at once** to take the land; we can **certainly** conquer it!*"

Now I can't guarantee you that kind of certainty...nor the success Joshua/Caleb experienced...but what I want to do is lay out for us a way to live from God's promises so that we get around all those big **BUTS** trying to keep us living trapped by – stymied by – crushed by the obstacles challenges difficulties, problems worst case scenarios & fears...I've said before I believe too many Christ-followers live out of a sense of scarcity...we live more aware of what we don't have

can't do isn't at our disposal than we do from the abundance Christ has promised he came to bring into our lives...more from scarcity than from that river of living water Jesus said will flow from our hearts...more from scarcity than from *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ...Eph 1:3 -- All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.*

Some years back...I was taught a simple process for taking the promises & the assurances in the Bible & hearing them for me the way they were intended. Now not every promise in Scripture is for me Caleb was promised the hill country of the Negev not me But there are countless promises & assurances you & I can claim & live as our own. Now...Everything I say from this point forward is contingent on one thing: you reading this. If you are not regularly/daily reading God's Word to you it will never be God's Word TO YOU.

So let's go...Let's pick a promise...one we know...John 3:17 – *“God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

1st – Pray it back to God in thanksgiving – Father, thank you. You sent Jesus in love not anger. You came to redeem me & rescue me not punish me. You've claimed me as your child & I praise you for Jesus' sake...Amen.

2nd – Say it to yourself as a reminder – Deut 6:4-9...It's easy to forget things you don't review over & over...I am relearning various math skills because I am helping with homework John...did you hear that? God's not disappointed in you...He loves you. He wants you to be his forever. Jesus has died/risen to bring you into his family.

3rd – Say it to the devil in victory – Look...every lie you believe comes from Ol' Scratch himself. Every time you give up before you get up is because the evil one has convinced you you're a loser. *1 Peter 5:8 – “Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”* Luther used to throw inkwells at his tormentor & drive him back with reminders of his baptism. Claim the promise in victory...devil you have no power here...the Son of God himself has redeemed me with his blood...delivered me from your clutches & your deception...be gone. *Eph 6:10-18 - Be strong in the Lord & in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-&-blood enemies, but against evil rulers & authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, & against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth & the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, & take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times & on every occasion. Stay alert & be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.* Let the promises of Scripture do precisely what they were given to you to do...build you up on the unshakable foundation of God's eternal love for you & in the power of the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead & now lives in you.

See that...when you build your world & your worldview around the promises that God has already made to you & will always keep; you are living not from your own strength but from the promises that are intended to draw you more deeply into your trust in Jesus. This is one way to build intimacy in your relationship with the Father in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit...You ready? Your turn...together...

1 Corinthians 1:30 - God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure & holy, & he freed us from sin.

1st – Pray it back to God in thanksgiving

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1 Peter 2:9 - You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light

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In Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are more powerful than we imagine - more dangerous than we think & more capable than we allow ourselves to believe. Fear nothing. Trust God for everything. Because we are his, we have nothing to fear & can live courageously & obediently because God always keeps his promises.

Let's pray: Father, in the crushing burdens and stifling busy-ness of our lives we lose heart and falter in living Christ's way. Plant your love and your promises so deeply in us that the evil one can't distract us or destroy our confidence in you. Grow your strength in us daily so that in every way your image is restored and your power released so that we live your Kingdom here and now for the sake of the world your Son died and rose to save. We pray in Jesus' Name...Amen..