

*A sermon preached by Emma Hodge at St. Michael and All Angels, Sandhurst
on Sunday 11th August 2019*

In The Name Of The Father, And Of The Son, And Of The Holy Spirit. Amen

Our New Testament reading is from the Letter to the Hebrews and is part of a longer section which is often summarised as a “celebration of faithful life” and it is clear that the author expects the readers to be familiar with Old Testament people.

The reading starts with analysing **What is faith?** Faith is important to the majority of us, for most (if not all) of us, it's part of the reason we are here this morning but what is faith? And while I am not presumptuous enough to think that I can explore all the various aspects of faith in just one sermon, instead we can explore a summary of what is faith and how people show their faith.

The dictionary defines faith as “complete trust or confidence in someone or something”.

However the first verses of our New Testament reading which was from the letter to the Hebrews also defines faith.

Here faith is defined as two points

- Firstly: to be sure of things we hope for and
- Secondly: to be certain of the things that we cannot see.

As is so common in the bible, a few words say a great deal!

If we look at these in more detail

To be sure of the things we hope for

This does not mean our secular hopes and dreams, such as winning the lottery, passing an exam; getting that job, Instead it is our faith hopes.

Our faith is built on promises of things still to come, and if we take one example, when we say the lord's prayer, we hope for the future especially in the lines “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done...” where we are praying for two hopes, the firstly that God's Kingdom, which has not yet come, will come. This will come when Jesus Christ returns and the second point is that we are praying that God's will, and not people's will, will govern people and nations where personal or selfish considerations are put aside and instead people and nations focus on what God wants us to focus on, for caring for the environment, the poor, the oppressed, telling others about Jesus to name just a few.

If we now turn our attention to the second part of the definition of faith:

To be certain of the things that we can't see

At first glance, this seems more obvious, none of us alive today have seen Jesus. None of us have seen God the Father or the Holy Ghost.

However, we have all just said the creed, that ancient statement of faith where each one of us have said that we believe in God the Father, the son and the holy Ghost,

The Father, the Son and a Holy Ghost, there is a sermon potential on each of them, let alone the three of them as the trinity and today we are looking at them as part of the wider statement of faith. God the Father, often referred to as the creator; God the son; Jesus Christ who came to earth and died for us on the cross and was raised from the dead; God the Holy Ghost who is the advocate or helper.

Knowing what faith is, is one thing, but applying it to our daily lives is a second thing

Biblical examples of faith

Our reading gives us some examples of people in the Old Testament who show faith in their lives.

Noah: we are all probably familiar with at least part of the story of the Noah. The man who built the ark. He and his family were the only good people who were saved when the flood came. ¹

Abel: Another well-known bible person, often associated with his brother Cain who ended up murdering Abel because Cain was jealous of Abel being in God's favour after they both presented their offerings to God – Abel presented the fat of the first born while Cain just gave some of his harvest. ²

Abraham and Sarah the mother and father of the Jewish nation. The couple who were unable to have children and yet when they were old became parents to a whole nation. They are often mentioned in the December, on the first Sunday of Advent when we look at the Patriarchs³

¹ Genesis 6-7

² Genesis 4

³ Genesis 17

Enoch Now I wonder how many of you are familiar with the story of Enoch? If you are wondering what Enoch is known for, it is something far more simple and everyday. He is known as someone who is described as walking with God. He is also known as one of two people in the bible who does not die. ⁴

Enoch, for me, is one of the people of faith that I can relate to. I'm not saying that walking with God is easy, but it is something that we can relate to and aim for.

Walking with God is a way of describing someone who seeks to understand what God is saying, both through scripture and prayer, and putting that into action even if that means going against society and what they believe.

If we had continued to read the rest of the chapter, we would have had more examples of people of faith and indeed, there are more examples than are mentioned. All of these people are known for putting their faith in God, in keeping that means they were faith to God,

This is something that each one of us can strive to do.

However people who show faith are not just restricted to the bible, there are many examples of people today demonstrating their faith, some of them are well-known people while a lot more are families and friends. If you are like me, the people who show faith are not well known people; they are family and friends, one of the few celebrities that I know who have shown their faith is the athlete Jonathan Edwards who refused to compete on a Sunday linking back to the 10 commandments which states that we should keep one day holy and not do any work. By not competing on a Sunday meant that he was unable to achieve certain sporting achievements.

Our faith is defined not just by words that are found in our scripture but also in our actions. There are several examples, both biblical and modern day, of people who understand their faith and put that faith in God into practice. Faith in God, God who is the source of hope for the future and the certainty of those things that we can not see.

Will people look at us and say that we demonstrate our faith in God?

⁴ Genesis 5