

1.14.2024 Sermon

Faith is Fundamental | Hebrews 11:3

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

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Ah, Wow. It's always a pleasure to be in front of you, to have the opportunity to speak to you on a Sunday or any day, and share the Word. As always, my name's James Bady. I've been around here a little bit, still learning and growing, and just honored to be in front of you. Today, I asked my daughter if she purposely put youth group on every Sunday that I preach. She said, honestly, I don't think I did that. But oh well. And she goes off and does her thing. But you all are stuck with me today. All right.

So, as my wife said, we are in the series about faith, the Heroes of Faith series. We want to talk about faith and how it relates to our lives, using Hebrews 11. And hopefully, being able to translate that into a style and a way that we engage life. Today, I think it is true that Pastor Tracy set some of us up with the scriptures that she gave to some of us, right. So, I have the pleasure of doing Hebrews 11:3.

Now, the problem with Hebrews 11:3, if we were in the 1800s, I would be free and clear. But in 2024, we have a problem. Because the basis of 11:3 is creationism versus evolution. Right? And in the latest research, it says that people who believe in evolution, if you're a high school graduate, you're somewhere around 21%. If you're a college graduate, you believe in evolution at a rate of about 40 to 45%. And if you're a postgraduate, you're at about 73 to 75%. And we have a very educated community that I'm speaking with. So how do I engage you? That doesn't insult your intelligence, about something that is fundamental? Let's see if we can try.

So, this sermon, where it fits. Last Sunday, Pastor Tracy came up, and she was talking about Hebrews 11, and how it starts out defining what is the verbal definition of faith. And Kevin gave it a sidebar comment to add into it, of outlining all of Hebrews 11, which is there is a time element that you will see unfold by the various speakers. That first helps us by going back to our beginning. Let's look back, and then understand the roles that faith has played in history, to

then understand what's going on today as we look toward our future. But even as we look at our future, it informs what we must do today. Because our future is not set. There are things that we need to do today. And so, we're going to speak on that.

So that's the outline. Let's read Hebrews 11:3, and this is the NRSV version. And it's very short. It says, 'By faith, we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God. So that what is seen was made from things that were not visible.' What is seen, was made from the invisible. That's the core of what we're going to talk about today.

But I want to give you the context of what leads up to chapter 11. And why does the author now go into so much detail about faith? So, in the first 10 chapters of Hebrews, it talks about the greatness of Jesus and how Jesus is so unique to anything you've ever seen or heard of as it relates to the religious and theological world. Jesus is different, is what the author is trying to tell you for 10 chapters. And in the spirit of using parallels, just like this author is using parallels, I'll use a sports analogy.

So, in sports, there are players, let's think of basketball. There are players, people who make the team. And then there are the bench players, right. So, there's number 11, number 13, that guy. And then there are people who actually play the game, then there are people that start the game, then there are people that are all-stars, then there are people that are Hall of Famers.

And then there are people that are called, or in the conversation for being called the greatest of all time, the GOAT. And then there's Him. Him, right? In basketball, we use that phrase to say, you, I don't care what you think you've seen or heard. That was Him. Wherever that one goes, things become different. Whenever that one plays, you want to be there. So, Hebrews 1 through 10 is describing for us, Jesus is Him. No matter what you've heard, no matter who you've seen, Jesus is Him, very different from everyone else. And it goes through and says, you know, Jesus is different from any of the mortal High Priests you've heard of. And, you know, you are like Moses, Moses was called a servant. Jesus is called the son. And even the angels are commanded to worship this God. Jesus is Him. No matter what rituals you have, Jesus is Him. Whatever the greatest thing you've ever seen in the religious realm, He's different.

And so, based on all of that explanation, and based on all of that analogy that they've been giving to the audience for 10 chapters, the author gets disappointed, because the people that are hearing this word are still now starting to doubt. So, after all of the proof of the things that we know that Jesus accomplished, there still is doubt. And so, the author comes to them and says, I need you to use this tool called faith to bridge these gaps that you have in doubt. So, you see where we are so far in the text.

So, once we get to chapter 11, the author starts out by using a verbal definition. 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.' And we struggle with that in the 21st century. Can you imagine what the audience did when they first heard this? And it's almost like the author looks at people and sees they're not getting it and then starts going to all of these parallel actions. Right? Okay. If you don't understand my verbal definition of faith, let me give you some analogies and examples of where you already use faith. And that's what I want you to use to believe in Jesus. Right?

So first, it starts out with, you know, you believe God created us, right? And in that time, the answer would have been clearly yes. If that was 2024, you know, 70-something percent of the people would be like, maybe. Right? You see what I mean about I've been set up. I've been set up. It's a different answer today. But then the answer was, it was a rhetorical question. By faith, we all believe in that time, that God created the heavens and the earth at the beginning of everything that is, we have faith in that moment, that God created it. All right. Yes. That's Hebrews 11:3 in that moment.

Today, it would be more like, hey, you know if you went to the airport and you saw a person dressed in an outfit, in a uniform with the hat on. And they walked past the gate agent and walked down the jetway and got on the plane and turned left to the cockpit. Who is that? The pilot? But have you checked? Have you validated? You assume you have enough information, you've seen enough things, you have enough confidence that this is who they say they are.

This is Faith. Faith is not an on or off. It exists on a spectrum. You start with maybe not even knowing about the topic, you become aware of it, you have questions about it, you ask and get various data and validation of it. And you go to this moment of belief, but there is always this gap, that you insert your faith in order to come to a conclusion that this is good enough for me. This is the task of Hebrews 11. I need you to employ that tool, whatever it is in you. Some of you will need a lot of evidence. Others will just be a statement. But whatever that is, it is that's the point where you come from not knowing to knowing. It's faith, the point of doubt, to confidence. Faith the same way.

So, we got the pilot, you know, one of my sons just got a car and it's a manual, right? So, he thought he could drive a manual. Can you see me drive a manual? You've seen other people drive a manual? I want to take him to do his test. Good God. But eventually, he got it. But he had faith just by looking. I can do this. It'll be okay. We'll figure it out. I don't even have a neck brace today. But it was interesting. It was interesting. Right? So, you use this in your everyday life is what I'm trying to say. And the ability to use this in your everyday life. It helps you to process information, process data, it helps you to move through life.

And then we come to this point now of the author talking about why is it important that they are pointing back to our origin story? Right, so it is by faith that we believe through God's command that we were created by the omnipotent God. It is by faith. We believe that. Why is that important? Why is it important that in Genesis, we believe in the creation story of in six days, everything that you see, it started to exist and that that that came into existence that we now see was by a spoken word, a command. That power of just belief in a command created a world that became tangible. It becomes important because of what you believe, at your beginning, shapes how you think about yourself.

Now, it makes a difference that you think that you are in the image and likeness of an all-powerful transcendent God versus the random occurrence of a splitting element. It makes a difference, what you think about yourself. If you say I am made by a loving God who has a purpose for me, versus I am the result of chance and have no control. It makes a difference of how you engage the situations around you. If you believe that you are what Jesus said about you, which is that word faith through your words you can move mountains like God created Earth through a command. It makes a difference of where you think your Genesis is. It makes a difference. Because if you believe that your life has purpose, direction, and control. It changes your energy and your actions today. It changes. It gives you hope. It gives you courage to handle today.

And I understand that because there's this problem. So, in the religious world, we're asked to utilize faith. But in our secular world, we're asked to operate very differently. I remember early in my career, being down in Memphis, Tennessee, lovely people in Memphis, Tennessee, great food. I put on like 10 pounds, immediately upon arriving in Memphis. Some great food. I was invited to people's houses to eat all the time. And we had this tea, one cup of tea, that was calculated at 750 calories, one glass. I had three. This is Memphis. I love you all.

An older gentleman pulled me aside when I first started working there. And he said, young fella, I need to tell you something. Don't believe anything you hear around this place. And only half of what you see. He wanted to protect me. Because he knew that I would be lied to at some point in time, while I was there, that I was going to face opposition. While I was in this role, that there were already some people because I got a role that other people wanted, that didn't want me to be successful. So, he was coaching me not to believe anything around me. It was dangerous to believe, to have faith that someone standing in my face, smiling and laughing, actually was laughing and giggling with me. Instead of trying to set me up. Right? In your work, in these environments, so have worked in environments or got this coaching? Everyone.

So, here's the problem. How do you separate religious faith and secular disbelief in you? Not the world, but how you go about life? How do you handle situations? How do you order your

mind? The Bible says a double-minded person is unstable in all their ways. How are you going to handle this? Because I don't think you can. You are either going to fall prey to unbelief. Or you're gonna have to deal with the repercussions of doing what's fundamental to you. Faith, fundamental. Faith is fundamental. It was at your beginning. When you were created, it is in your now to sustain you. It is a part of your future. Because the faith that you have now is the substance, what you are working with, but to the machinery, the thought, the passion, it's all you have right now. It's your faith. Right? We think of it as some ethereal, mystical thing. But it orders your mind and completes who you are. It integrates everything that you see, to create an action. And then that action becomes your future. Day upon day, one day of targeting towards something.

Martin Luther King made the statement that the moral universe's arc is long but bends toward justice. I will change that statement. The arc of success of your life is long, but it bends toward wherever your faith is. Wherever it is, and so that's what makes it dangerous. When you have no faith, you have no target. You have nothing that you're bending toward. The role for all of us, hopefully, is long. But where is it going? Where have you done? A faith check of yourself?

Have you looked at what is your now faith? The faith that you have right now, the tool, the substance that you have right now? And so where is it pointing me? Where is it taking me? Is it inspiring me to do something different? Does it have what I want out of my life? And it's in? Right in the 1980s? That was stuff. But as I get older, I don't necessarily want stuff. I want peace. I want peace. What comfort? I don't like agitation. What is, how do I get there? I don't want to be homeless. So of course, I need a home. I don't want to have to walk everywhere.

So alright, I need a vehicle. You know, I love to eat. So, I need a couple of nickels. So, I don't eat. But in the end, what do I really want as my faith taking me there? What are the mechanisms? And so, in the fact that it's fundamental, to have faith, and that it's impossible to separate? It becomes dangerous or concerning, let's say, when I hear my neighbors say I am in despair, that justice can be around me, that hope can be around me. I don't believe it anymore. Because what does that say about the society? And what where it's going? Where are the people of Christ saying, if there is a problem, we can work together that we create this thing we both want? Where is that thing? Despair of others is not isolated from us. It is not something because they, well, they need to get their act together. And I'm just going to do my thing. No, we are connected. We are connected. And our now faith determines what our future faith, our future substance, our future reality will be. And so how do we do that? How do we capture that?

Because it's interesting to me, I don't have anything against evolution. Like I said, I want to get that part. Now. Those that believe in evolution, there are those that study it in detail also said there are moments where we take a leap of faith. And I'm not saying no matter which of the

theories you believe, you believe and you came to that belief through a certain level of faith. All I'm saying is it determines and gives you the power to do something different if you believe in evolution versus creation. And people are responding to this. As people get more educated, they feel more, less powerful. There's a reason behind that. There's this belief that I am random. There has not been one thing of great significance that didn't first start in our hearts and minds and a faith that it could exist.

Every great technological advancement first started in the faith that it could be done. A heart transplant, blood transfusions, flight, even the internet, all of those things first started in the faith that we can put the things together that God gave us to create something different. So, I ask you, do your faith inventory because it'll point you to somewhere that then becomes great. And I know there's greatness in you because you are created as the Imago Dei, the image of God, the power to create, the power to make a change. Because I don't want you to be what the older gentleman wanted me to be. And that is a person that believed nothing he heard and only half of what he saw. Because without faith, it isn't possible to please our God, and that's what we endeavor to do. Amen.