

5.26.2024 Sermon

There is a Path Through | Hebrews 11:29

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

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Good morning, everybody. I am Terri, and super glad to be with you this morning. We've been on a little journey together through Hebrews 11, and it's been an exciting little roller coaster. Yeah, I know, we're so excited. I could see it. You just feel it, you don't have to say anything. Anyway, today, we're gonna look at Hebrews 11:29. As you know, if you've been here, and maybe you know, anyhow, Hebrews 11 is all about heroes of faith.

It talks about how these people in Jewish history lived their lives with faith. Honestly, as we've been talking through it together, what I see is a bunch of normal people who were unsure, who were daunted, confused, frustrated, maybe even angered by everything that was happening in their lives. All these people made mistakes and tried to find their way. The element of faith, the through-line of faith that I see through all these stories, is simply that they recognized that God is with them in their lives through all of it. And that's really relatable to me.

There's a lot of doubt mixed in with belief. It looks like some of them maybe don't have any belief. Right? But God is right there with them. And I think that's what faith looks like. It's just this big, swirling cauldron of all the stuff that happens in life. And here we are, trying to find our way. God is right there with us. I think sometimes we think faith is like, "Yes, I believe, and it's gonna happen just right." You know what I mean? That hasn't been my experience of what a life of faith looks like at all.

So, I'm kind of looking at this scripture this morning, reading it through my lens, through my perspective. And you know, sometimes I try and step back a bit and look at the text objectively, but this morning, I'm just going to lean into my own subjective viewpoint. And I want you guys to do the same thing. Think about this text, through your experience of life. For me, a life of faith has included a lot of wondering where I'm going, and how it might ever be possible to get somewhere.

A lot of not knowing where I'm going. A lot of feeling unsure about myself, about my life path, about what decisions I should make. Maybe some people are blessed with more certainty than me. But that's most of the time, certainty has not been my overall experience. And I guess if I've come to any conclusions about this, it's that life is an unfolding journey. More than it's a commute to a destination. And maybe that there isn't really an endpoint per se.

Maybe the point isn't to figure out where I'm going. Maybe the actual treasure is the friends we make along the way. And with that thought, let's look at our text this morning. Hebrews 11:29. This is the Revised Standard Version. It says, "By faith, the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land. But the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned."

So, we've been talking about how God called Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, where they had been enslaved for generations. And they have finally been released to leave. Imagine the shock of it, the choices about what to pack, how to best travel. As they leave that place, I can only imagine a sliver of it. Interestingly, Exodus 13 says that they left Egypt armed for battle, ready to fight.

I don't know that I had noticed that before. But they were armed. Exodus 13 and 14 tell the story and kind of plot a map of where the Israelites traveled. And they were directed by God to not go the shortest route back to Canaan but instead to go the longer way through the wilderness. After traveling for several days, maybe longer, they came to a place where they needed to turn around like they, they couldn't go further because as far as we can tell by the text, it seems like they were hemmed in by like a mountain range and like the sea.

And so, God actually said to Moses, "double back and retrace your steps back to a specific place by the sea." And the scripture says that God said to Moses, "Pharaoh will think that you've become entangled in the land, and you're wandering around confused." But watch what I'll do. And that really hit me, that turn of phrase "entangled in the land, and wandering around confused." And that I think, is what made me really think about my own life. How many times have I felt entangled in the land, it's just such a poignant phrase there for me.

And wondering, wandering around, confused. So, the camp where they're directed to do, and the Egyptian army comes after them, thinking that they'll be easy prey. And the people of Israel are basically trapped between the sea and the mountain, and the fiercest army, with so many chariots that could just trample them right over. And they think they're gonna die. And they asked Moses if he just brought them there, because graves were scarce in Egypt. It's a little salty, but fair.

But God protects them from the army. And makes it so the army can't even see them. Right. And overnight, a wind comes up and makes a path through the water. Which, the next day they safely travel through to the other side. The Egyptian army tries to follow them, but the waters rush back in and they're stuck and they die. It's an iconic scene. I always think of how it's portrayed in The Prince of Egypt, right with these walls of water on either side, and you can see like the silhouette of fish swimming as though it's like an aquarium tank.

They make it to the other side. So that's the story. That's what we're working with this morning. And it makes me think about times in my life when I have felt entangled in the land, and confused and wondering, and it makes me think about what was faith in that moment. When I'm camped between the sea and the fiercest enemy, the sea being an impassable path that I can't walk and the fiercest enemy being the lies breathing down my brain telling me that I'm going to die here, right?

Times when I can't see the way forward, but God does something in me outside of me, I'm not even always sure. And then after a little bit, I look back and somehow I'm on the other side of that thing. What I take from this as an illustration of faith is that it's not always that we have to believe that something's gonna happen, like the people of Israel, they didn't, they thought they were gonna die. And they, they weren't like, "God is gonna do this for it." Right?

They were just yelling at Moses about bringing them out there today. Moses did know that God was going to do something. I'm sure he didn't have in mind. What happened in the story, right? By faith, the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land. What did their faith look like in that moment of their lives? They thought they were trapped, and a goner. They thought it was over. And then there was this opening, this opportunity. And they walked through it.

And so maybe sometimes faith isn't knowing that something's going to happen. Right? Maybe sometimes. It's just that when something does shift, when the opening comes, faith is required to step into that path, through the impossible to step through the thing that was just impossible. You know, sometimes maybe, in our lives, and I want you to be thinking here, think about when this has happened in your life? Right?

When have you come up to some situation, some scenario, some decision that you just didn't have? It just didn't have it? Just couldn't, couldn't do it. Couldn't make it change. I really love it when I can make it change. Most of the time, I can't. Most of the time, when I think I can, I'm wrong. Maybe all the time, I don't know. Probably. Sometimes it's really dramatic. And it's like you're walking through in between walls of water, and you see it as it's happening. Right.

Sometimes, it's a miracle that you are watching happen in real time, as you're walking through some time sometimes, and honestly, I think for me, it's been this more often. Sometimes I'm

just taking one step at a time. Just taking the next step because that's all that I can do. And then after a little bit, all of a sudden, I realize I'm on the other side. Right? Sometimes it's so subtle, that we don't know what's happening until it's over and we can look back.

So, I'm going to throw out a few questions for us to think about this morning. Here they are. Can you look back on a moment in your life when you felt trapped and tangled in the land? Like there wasn't a way forward? And what was that time like? And talking about something that happened in the past? How did you get through it? That because you're here now and how did faith play a part in that experience for you?

I know sometimes some of the things are like I don't want to think about that time when I walked through the sea. But it's good to remember the times that God saved us from an impossible situation, which sometimes is like looks so benign from the outside of our lives. But when there's something that feels impossible within us, it's impossible, right? So, as you're thinking about these questions, I want to give us a little time this morning to talk with each other and share if you want to.

If you're a person who wants to talk about this, then I want you to join up with somebody else who wants to write groups of three, and tell a story about these questions. If you're somebody who doesn't want to talk about it, then maybe you could jot some thoughts down in a journal by yourself, I'm not gonna force anybody into a small group this morning. Or you could if you're not, if writing is not your thing, you could just sit and reflect. Right?

So, people who want to be in a small group I feel like I'm taking a risk and nobody's gonna want to people who want to be in a small group, raise your hands and make groups of three with each other okay? Like right now okay, go ahead join up find a place to sit down where you can talk with each other I'm gonna give you all five minutes so not everybody in the group has to share and if you are sharing a story try to not take up the entire five minutes okay I'll let you know when we're getting close I'll give you a one-minute warning people online if you want to share a story in the comments go ahead. That'd be cool. Okay, go right evening morning right.

Guys, time around, subjects, you all right, all right there was a longtime question. Know when I was in there got really lucky, I think, you're just all right we're gonna have just one more minute so start to start to wrap up your stories. Guys here for life, okay start to come back together here ever good people who are in the groups sharing with each other, would you just feel your feel your feel your heart for a second from hearing or sharing a story of how God brought you through something?

Do you feel more encouraged? If so, raise your hand. Just kidding, you don't have to. But this is I think this is a huge reason why it's important to gather together with each other with our

brothers and sisters in faith, who are also walking through their lives. Right looking for looking to see more clearly how God is right next to us as we walk through our lives. Sharing in each other's stories is part of that because it strengthens us and helps remind us when it's getting hard to remember that my friends there always is a path through there always is as bleak as it may look sometimes and as bleak as it is sometimes there is always a path through.

And sometimes you don't even know you're getting to there to the other side until you're already there. And you look back and then you can see it. So, my friends, don't lose hope. I want you to be encouraged this morning. And I especially want you to be encouraged if you're in that place right now. Where you just can't see it. Right, it just looks like there's an ocean. And how are you supposed to get across, right?

If you're in that place, or you feel entangled in the land, or you feel like you're wandering, confused. First of all, solidarity have been there. I'm there in some ways right now, you know. And second of all remember this story as an image of God getting you through, no matter what your thing is. Keep this in mind, tuck it in your pocket, so that when you feel particularly bleak, whenever this next week, just take it out and review. Army on one side ocean on another, God made a way through, God will do the same for you, I promise. I promise. It's true.

And so, I just want to pray over you this morning. And I want to give an invitation that when the service is over, if you would like personal prayer, I'll be up here somewhere with some of my fellow elders, I'd be happy to pray for you. If you just want prayer, for this situation, whatever it is for you. So, God, I thank you that you're never abandoning us, Lord, that you're never forgetting about what we're going through. We're never off your mind. You're always right there with us.

God, I thank you for all of the testimonies in this room about how you brought us all through stuff in life. And I pray over every one of us including myself, that we be able to remember your grace toward us, your love toward us, your faithfulness, that you will show us the way through, especially when we don't know how. Lord help us to rely on you in those moments, especially. So that we don't have to freak out. We don't have to give up. We can. We can manage to hold steady because we know that you've got us that you are our way through whatever that looks like.

I pray for that encouragement in each one of our hearts, that you would strengthen our hearts and that you would give us joy even in the dark moments. Thank you for your love God Amen.