



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 11, 2010
2nd Sunday of Easter
[Genesis 15:1-6](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 15:1-6](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 16](#)
Second Lesson: [2 Peter 1:16-21](#)
Gospel Lesson: [John 20:19-31](#)

Blind Faith Isn't Blind

Faith rests on God's promises
Faith results in righteousness

I don't know if you've ever talked to someone who accused Christians of just being superstitious or just having a blind faith, but I've run into that conversation a number of times over the years. It kind of goes back to the same thing we talked about last week about those that view Christians as people that are weak and just need a crutch. They are superstitious and they believe in what can't be proven. I found that in those conversations with people, you can't really argue the foundation of Christianity. You just need to keep proclaiming sin and grace, because they aren't hearing with the same ears that you and I hear with, or they're not seeing with the same eyes that you and I see with. These truths that we believe that we are sinners and that the only answer to sin is that Jesus lived in our place and died in our place and that we now stand forgiven before God and heaven is open to us; the only way those truths are believed is by the work of God. If you don't have the Spirit living in you, those words are nonsense, foolishness and superstition. They are just blind faith. And that should be kind of obvious to us.

You probably all know the world record holder for the 100 meter dash. You see him on those commercials for Jamaica sticking his arm up in the sky. There are all kinds of weird world records for 100 meters. I looked on the internet for weird world records once. There is a world record for the 100 meter dash, barefoot, on ice. Why? I don't know, but there is one. But there is not a world record for the 100 meter dash by a dead person. Pretty self evident. It's all a flat out tie. It's infinity. A dead person can't run 100 meters.

In the same way, a person that is spiritually dead can't see spiritual truth. If that spiritual truth had teeth, it would bite him because it's so close to him. But if the Spirit doesn't live in you, it just looks like blind faith. It just looks like superstition. It just looks like "step on a crack and break your mother's back" kind of thinking when you are looking at the promises that we believe as Christians.

But the fact of the matter is, as we see today, that blind faith isn't blind. It just uses a different set of eyes. It doesn't use the physical eyes. It uses the eyes of faith, the eyes the Holy Spirit gives to us when he leads us to believe, which only he by his power can do, the words and promises of God.

What we also see today is that as sinner saints, as people that have the Spirit of God living in us but we still have that sinful nature, we constantly need to get our spiritual vision checked, readjusted, refined and focused.

We see that in Abraham today. This is like the 15th time that God had come and spoke to Abram. The first time was when he came to him when he was living in Ur of the Chaldeans. He said “Get up and go to the land I’m going to show you.” He didn’t even tell him where he was going to go. Abram got up and went without knowing where he was going. (See [Genesis 12.](#))

I suppose most of you women think that’s how all men are, get up and go, but that’s not necessarily the case. Usually we have an idea of where we want to go.

God didn’t tell Abram where he was going to go. He got up and he went. He ended up in Haran, way up to the north of the Promised Land. While he was there, God came to him and gave him this beautiful promise, seven promises actually, about how he would give them the land and he would have descendants like the stars or the sand, kind of like the same one we heard here. But he also said that all nations on earth would be blessed through his offspring.

This is the promise of the Savior. This is the promise that no doubt thrilled Abram and just made the hair stand up on the back of his neck to know that he was going to have a role in the salvation of the world, even if it was just being an ancestor to the Messiah. That had to be just a thrill. But there was one hangup. Abram was 75 years old when God gave him that promise, and he didn’t have any children yet. But Abraham got up and he went down to the Promised Land, and he lived there and did the things the Lord had told him to do.

The Lord blessed him greatly. He blessed Abram and his nephew, Lot, so much that they had so many herds, so many flocks. They were so richly blessed physically that their herdsmen were fighting with each other over watering holes. Finally Abram said, “This is no good. We’ve got to split up. You decide. If you want to go to the left, I’ll go to the right. If you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.” Then Lot chose the fertile plain that was in the one direction. (See [Genesis 13.](#))

So here is Abram, being the kind, gracious guy. You wonder if he kind of, because he also had a sinful nature, spit and sputtered a little bit about being stuck with the worst land. But he went there and he lived there, and God continued to bless him. Then, in fact, Lot was living in that fertile land and it was attacked by the five kings who carried off Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham gets together with his household, and it’s an army. He goes and defeats those five kings, and he brings back the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the spoils that they had taken from Sodom and Gomorrah. He doesn’t keep them for himself. In fact, he gives a tenth of it to Melchizedec, the priest of God, and he just lets his men keep the plunder, but he would not take anything from the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. (See [Genesis 14.](#))

You kind of wonder now if Abram's sinful nature is getting a little bit frustrated with God. He puts himself on the line for Lot. Lot is the guy who had taken the good land and left him with the worst land. He goes and probably loses people in his household when he fights this battle to bring those people back. Then he ends up with nothing for it because he wants to serve the Lord. Then he looks around and what does he have? He still has no descendants. So Eliezer of Damascus is going to be his heir. God has richly blessed him but it's all going to go to some guy who is his servant, not even to the son that God had been promising him all these years. We are talking decades that have gone by now. It's been over 10 years.

So God comes to him again and says to him, "Do not be afraid Abram. I am your shield and your very great reward." It sounds like God knows the struggle that might well be going on inside of Abram between the part of him that believes in God and the part of him, his sinful nature, that is saying, "Where is this God of which you speak?"

God comes to him with those reassuring words, those beautiful promises. "Take your refuge in me, not in the good land or the bad land that you live in, not in what you might have, but take your refuge in me." Notice the words that come out of Abram's mouth. Can you kind of hear the bitterness? Can you feel the tang of bitterness on his tongue as he says, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless, and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" Doesn't it sound like it was kind of pent up and finally it just burst forth? "Yeah God, you're my refuge and my shield and you kept me safe. That's great. But where is the son you've been talking about?" (See [Genesis 15](#).)

The evidence of God's blessing was all around him. Yet Abram, at this point in time, could only see the one blessing that he longed for that he didn't have.

We never do that, do we? We never live in abundant of blessing from our God and spend our time focusing on the blessing that we want that God has not yet chosen to give to us. We'd never do that, would we? Can you relate to Abram here a little bit? Can you feel his frustration? Can you see that the problem is that at times you and I and Abram focus not with the eyes of faith but with the eyes of sight, the physical eyes. He doesn't see his son. He just sees Eliezer. Every time he sees Eliezer, it probably ticks him off because that's the guy that is going to get it and not his child, his own son, that God had promised. "God, why aren't you keeping your promises."

God promises us he'll help us through all the difficulties we have to face in our life, but instead of clinging to that, at times do you ever find yourself saying, "God, why are you letting so much difficulty into my life?" We're all that way, aren't we? It's because, at times, we don't look with the eyes of faith. We don't focus with the eyes of faith. We focus with what we can see. As long as you and I live in a sinful world, and that will be until the Lord calls us out of it, there's going to be a lot of lousy things to see. That's why we need to have that spiritual vision readjusted by God's promises.

That's what God does. He takes Abram and says, "Go count the stars. Okay smart boy, you want to be smart? Go count the stars for awhile. I'll get back to you in a couple hours? You think you know better than I do." He doesn't slap him for it, but he says, "I'm a little bigger than you are and I've got a bigger picture in my mind than you do. All those stars that you can't even begin to count...you are going to have more descendants than that. You just have to believe me. Trust me. The One who is your shield and your very great reward, trust me. Believe what you can't see, which is the very nature of faith. But don't believe it simply because it would make you feel better. Believe it because it's what I, the Lord your God, have said. Put your trust in my Word."

I have to believe Abraham learned this lesson, to focus on what God says and to see with the eyes of faith, at least at times in his life, because at times in his life, he soared to the heights of faith. Like when he was willing to sacrifice that son who finally came, Isaac. "Take your son, your only son, the son whom you love, and go to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him to me." That three-day walk...we are told in Hebrews that Abraham reasoned that because God had said through Isaac the Savior would come, that even if he killed him, God would raise him from the dead. So great was his trust in that Word, when he focused on it, he was able to do what we think is just unbelievable. But it wasn't blind faith, it was faith that was focused on the Words and promises of God. (See [Genesis 22](#).)

So when you and I are struggling, when you and I are worrying, when you and I are anxious, when we've got all these things that trouble us and worry us and no longer is the Pepcid touching the storm of acid in our stomach, that's when we need to refocus our spiritual vision and get back into those words and promises of God. The God who says "I love you and I am with you" has never told us he was going to take away every difficulty. But he has told us, "I love you enough that I'll be there to help you through every difficulty." He has promised us that he will always be on our side.

He has promised us that he loves us. That love for us is certain. Today we receive the very body and blood that was given and poured out for us. There can be no doubt that he loves us. Here's the evidence. He wants us to have this visual, visible Gospel so that we know that he loves us and that he is with us, so that our vision is readjusted and refocused.

When we focus on God, we see the blessings that God has for us. The greatest blessing he has for us, he speaks to Abraham in the Words I read to you. Abram believed God and he credited it to him as righteousness. He credited it to him as being perfect or right with God. Abram wasn't perfect or right with God. He was just challenging God. Later on in his life, he still would do all kinds of silly things and sin against God when he didn't focus firmly on the Words and promises of God. But because he believed those Words and promises of God, God credited it to him as though he was absolutely perfect. Now he was right with God and heaven was open to him.

That's the blessing that we have. We have it because we, with the eyes of faith, have seen the risen Lord. We've seen the hands. We've seen the side. We've stood with the disciples and rejoiced. We have seen the Lord. We've done it with the eyes of faith. It changes us. It makes a difference.

Now we have this joy and this confidence that the God who loves us that much will be with us. He has declared us righteous in his eyes. Now we go forward and we do what God has called us to do. We trust him. We live for him, not because we have to do it to make him love us, but because he's already completely loved us. When he gave us the gift of faith, he made all the blessings he has ours. In this world, we are going to have them imperfectly. That's the nature of the beast. But they are ours. They are stored up in heaven for us as Peter told us last week.

This is the truth we have and we would do well to listen to it, not rely on our eyes. Did you notice what Peter said in the Second Lesson? He said, "Yeah, I've seen the Lord and all that, but I'm not relying on my own eyes. We have the word of the prophets made more certain and we would do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place."

The light is shining into the dark place of our hearts today, through the Word and through the Sacraments. That's pretty neat. And that is ours!