

FAITH: THE ASSURANCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN

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by Carol Ingells

When we walk to the edge of all the light we have and take a step into the darkness of the unknown, we must believe one of two things will happen – there will be something solid to stand upon, or we will be taught to fly.

~ Anonymous

Living faith-fully is one of the greatest challenges any human being faces. Of course every day we make countless choices *based on faith*, but we are seldom aware of it until we've come to "the edge of all the light we have and take a step into the darkness of the unknown."

We have faith the electricity will stay on through the night, faith that there will be coffee available in the morning, faith that the light will turn red or green, faith that the brakes will work, faith that the fire department will come when needed, etc.

And then there's the deep foundational faith that may or may not come forth for us when things are the most disappointing, or frightening, or confusing, or sad. Do we have *that* kind of faith?

Now by faith, I'm not talking about beliefs—doctrines, creeds, catechisms, theological statements. No, I'm talking about a dynamic process that carries us forward when we have no clue as to the way. It carries us forward toward things hoped for; things not seen or see-able. It carries us forward toward God. Thomas Merton wrote: "Looking for God is like seeking a path in a field of snow; if there is no path and you are looking for one, walk across it and there is your path." That is dynamic faith at work.

One of the ways we maintain faith is through noticing the life examples of others. Earlier this summer, we thought about Abraham and Sarah laughing at the crazy idea that they in their dotage would have a baby. Another Sunday, we listened to Moses' words to the Hebrews as they were about to enter the Promised Land. Choose life, he said. These characters and their stories appear near the beginning of this library of books we call the Bible. And here in the Letter to the Hebrews, almost at the end of the Bible, we find a recitation of the faith which propelled these generations and generations of people forward. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and so forth.

Incidentally, Sarah is the only woman actually named. If you ever need a quick reminder of the history of the O.T., read Hebrews 11. It is some of the most beautiful writing in the Bible, too. The first verse “Faith is the *assurance* of things hoped for; the *conviction* of things not seen” is probably one of the most quoted verses ever. In the King James Bible which I grew up with, it says “faith is the *substance* of things hoped for; the *evidence* of things not seen.” And in *The Message*, Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of the Bible, he writes: “The *fundamental fact of existence* is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under *everything* that makes life worth living. It’s our handle on what we can’t see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.” Not as beautifully written, but helpful in understanding. And then follows the examples people throughout the history of Biblical times and how they lived by faith. Their stories and countless others can inspire our faith, encourage us to walk in faith.

It is important for us to realize, too, that we ourselves serve as examples to others, whether we are aware of it or not. Our faith

is reflected in the way we keep moving through each day, regardless of the burdens we are carrying.

Well, what is *our faith in*? Our work, our family, our country, our government, our schools, our churches, our investments, our golf scores, the Detroit Lions? Not one of these earthly things will see us through, not even our love for our families. Eventually we will be hurt, disappointed, betrayed, disillusioned.

Jesus assures us that our faith is in the One whose good pleasure it is to give us the kingdom. “Fear not, little flock,” he says, “for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” He goes on to remind us that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. And so as we find our treasure more and more in our relationship with God, that joy and hope empowers our faith.

When we walk to the edge of all the light we have and take a step into the darkness of the unknown, we must believe one of two things will happen – there will be something solid to stand upon, or we will be taught to fly.

Thank you, dear God, that it is so!!!