

Trinity 4 (2020)

I am thinking this morning of a five-letter word, the concept behind which, is central to everything from banking to marriage.

I wonder if you have already guessed what this word is? /// It is F-A-I-T-H.

Without faith nothing much gets accomplished. But with it much is accomplished.

For example, the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, despising danger, dared to affix their name to that document that became the charter of this republic.

At that moment they could not see the outcome, though believed blessings would follow, namely the blessing of liberty. But, for the time being, they had to act on faith.

Another example. This church. In the beginning the original 12 or so founders did not even have this parcel of land. All they had was a dream. To make this dream a reality, they had to step out on faith. We today are the beneficiaries.

But faith is not just something required at the beginning of an endeavour. It is also something that is needed all the way through, from the beginning to the end.

Take banking for example. It does not matter upon how firm a foundation on which your bank is established.

If faith goes away, pandemonium ensues, as happened with so many banks in this country in the 1930s.

At that time, even a number of institutions which were fundamentally sound began to teeter as people lined up to withdraw their lifesavings. What was lacking? That little five-letter word.

Well, I've made my point. Faith is essential in virtually every area of human life. But what about its place in our approach to God?

What does the Bible say?

Well, it has a great deal to say on the subject, not the least being that **without faith it is impossible to please God** (Hebrews 11:6) and with faith all things are possible (Mark 9:23).

In addition, the Bible highlights a number of exemplars of faith. Abraham, whom we meet in today's Old Testament lesson, tops the list.

He started out life in Ur of the Chaldees, in modern-day Iraq.

It was a region of idol worshipers, and we have no reason to think that Abraham and his family were any different from their neighbours.

But somehow God's call got through. Abraham not only heard that call but heeded it.

He pulled up his tent pegs and began heading in the direction God had told him to go, stopping for a time in Haran and then on to the land of Canaan.

Thinking of Abraham's faith, I am reminded of a conversation I overheard when I was 12 or 13. Two girls were talking after a Sunday School assembly. One said to the other:

“If believing in Jesus is what it takes to go to heaven, what do you have to lose. Okay, I believe in Jesus.”

Even at that young age, I sensed that there was something more to faith than this.

Abraham, who is sometimes called the Father of Faith, should give the lie to any such 'easy believe-ism'.

His belief was indeed a matter of the heart. He was convinced that God had spoken and that God could and would make good on His promises.

Yet, his faith was also a matter of the feet. Abraham engaged them and got moving.

The same sort of active, 'doing faith' is required today if we are to please God.

Both heart and feet much be engaged.

When we stand to say the Creed . . . when we say ‘I believe’ . . . we are doing more than giving bare assent to a laundry list of theological propositions. No, we are enlisting for duty in the battle for truth. We are getting on the road with Abraham and people of faith out of every generation and place.

We have already said the Creed in this service, but the next time you say it, stand at attention and say it in the spirit of ‘I’m signing up for duty’ and see how much more meaningful it becomes.

Be deliberate. See yourself getting on the road with Abraham and his family.

And, that is exactly what we are doing. We are joining with the Old Testament people of God and journeying with them.

One the promises God makes to Abraham is that in his Seed or Offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed or saved. Jesus is that Seed or Offspring.

If we are in Him . . . if we have been joined to Jesus in faith and baptism . . . we are now a part of Abraham’s enlarged family. All the promises made to the patriarch are ours.

We are on our way with Abraham to a new and better country.

For us that country is the new heaven and new earth promised in Revelation 21, a place of no more tears, no more sorrows, no more death.

Allow me to close with one final thought. It concerns the “I will-s” found in today’s passage.

I don’t know if you noticed them, but there they are before each of the promises God makes to Abraham.

**“I will make of thee a great nation . . . I will bless thee and make thy name great
. . . I will bless them that bless thee, and so on.**

The world in which you and I live is a scary and dangerous place. Plague, prejudice, violence, hatred and discord stalk our streets.

Ultimately what gets us safely home to the new, better Promised Land is not our own skill or strength but God's own faithfulness.

He who called us will see us safely through to glory.

You don't have to lead a fearful, defeated, meaningless life. Life can be better.

God's 'I will-s' still stand.

F-A-I-T-H is the victory.

Get on the road with Abraham today.