

The Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost
8 August 2010
Genesis 15:1-6 Hebrews 11:1-3,8-16 Luke 12:32-40

There are some real life questions that I suspect some of us have experienced. Some of these questions are in the hymn "What A Friend We Have In Jesus". Questions like: "Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Do your friends despise, forsake you?"

I believe these questions are real to us because life is not lived without some despair and hopelessness. Some of us have had friends forsaking us along the way. And, is there anyone who can claim a life that hasn't encountered fear somewhere along the way?

Think with me for a moment of all the ways we can be afraid. It's not uncommon for us to fear what people will think of us if we don't perform a job well or live up to their expectations. We often fear we will not have the security we think we need. We fear we will not look as good as others. We fear we might make a wrong decision. Perhaps, our worst fear comes from realizing we are not all that we can be; that we have not been faithful to other people, that we have not been faithful to God.

These fears, these worries and concerns which we carry around daily can enslave us just as if we had chains on us; chains holding us down. These fears make us afraid to move. They cause us to be apprehensive of change. They cause us to be fearful of growing. They stifle our giving.

As we journey through life how do we get beyond despair and hopelessness and fear? Is it possible to rise above those earthly worries and concerns that would keep us down? Might we have a faith that moves us to believe and rely on the promises of God?

In this morning's first reading Abram is very doubtful, even despondent about his future. Because Abram and his wife are childless at an old age, the realistic, practical thing would be for them to prepare for a future without an heir. Even though God has promised an heir it's difficult for them to believe this promise because of their old age. Abram shows how close he comes to abandoning his faith in God's promises when he says: "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." These are the words from a very despondent man.

It was very tempting for Abram to lose his faith and fear a future without an heir. Indeed, there was the possibility of Abram's fear enslaving him; holding him down; immobilizing him to the extent where he would no longer hear the Word of God with its promises and no longer be faithful to God.

But, by the Grace of God, Abram's fear did not overcome his faith in God. Abram believed God when God spoke: "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." Abram trusted God's promises even when all the earthly

evidence spoke against them. Abram trusted God's promises even when God was slow to keep the word.

Abram's faith is to believe God, even when he can not understand or comprehend how or when God will achieve what God promises!

The author of this morning's second reading continues the discussion on faith by telling us: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Both Sarah and Abraham had a deep trust in God when they set out on their journey. They simply believed and trusted that their loving God would always be faithful. Therefore, for them there was really nothing to fear because their worries and concerns were put into perspective. In spite of the fact that they did not know where they were going, they could depend on their God's faithfulness. Their faith allowed them to rely on their God's promises! Their faith permitted them to trust God! And that, was sufficient for their needs.

My sisters and brothers in Christ, those of us who trust in the Lord can truly hope for and rejoice in what we do not yet see and have. The reason for this hope is not that we experience all that we want and all that is good this very moment; if we did, it would not be hope. The reason for our hope is the belief we have, the trust we hold in the One who has made the promises.

Baptized into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the Spirit has gifted us with a faith that trusts in the One who has made the promises. The Spirit has gifted us with a faith that trusts God to be who God is, and for God to do what God has promised to do.

Therefore, this morning, I can stand before you and boldly proclaim: "In this life, we need not be afraid!" "Have we trials and temptations?" Oh yes! "Is their trouble anywhere?" All you have to do is read a paper or look at the news and you know the answer to this question. "Are we weal and heavy laden cumbered with a load of care?" On Lord, only you know the magnitude of the answer to this question. "Do our friends despise, forsake us? Oh yes. However, there is no need for us to carry these worries and concerns. We don't have to be afraid, "for it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom".

My prayer is that our faith will lead us to truly believe and trust; thereby freeing us to receive from God and to give to others.

My brothers and sisters in Christ: Do we believe ? Oh yes Lord, we believe; help our unbelief.

Amen.