**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**August 7th, 2022**

**The Longview of Faith**

1. Faith

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of

things not seen.” Hear that again, “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” In our text this morning from Hebrews, we are given a beautiful definition of faith. When we walk around and we say we are “people of faith” or we “act on faith” or “we have faith in God” – faith often feels like a nebulous word. Faith is something we know for certain but cannot aptly explain, because it’s something so divine that is held within our soul. Perhaps it’s indescribability points to how sacred it is for those who believe.

 I believe Hebrews gives us the closest definition of faith that we will be able to touch on with Earthly words. We rest in that tension, as we often do in our life in God, and point to an unknowing that we find deeply fulfilling.

 Once Hebrews defines faith, we are given this array of examples from within our Scriptures of those who walked in faith. They didn’t know what was to come, but they did it anyway, they followed the call.

1. Modern Day Application

These words from Hebrews are words I’ve needed to hear for

a while and they are like a breath of fresh air. Let me tell you why they are so important, because you might find yourself in a similar dilemma.

 Sometimes, I find myself discouraged or overwhelmed by the world we live in. You can choose from your assortment of challenges – from economic to ecological, healthcare and the safety and wellness of all beings, or the relational and political rifts that do not lie dormant in our culture.

 Sometimes I find myself sitting down and thinking, “Have I done enough? When will I see the fruition of all that we’re working on? What should I do differently?” You can get yourself caught in this web of thinking easily, especially in the American culture we live in.

 We live in a culture that asks those kinds of questions of us. The American dream is a dream to succeed, but it also means we uphold the ideals of being - faster, effective, stronger, bigger, and better. The goal of striving forward is not inherently bad, except we often lose ourselves in the midst of moving forward, because in our culture, enough will never be enough.

 So we need to reorient ourselves to God’s time rather than our own clock. Hebrews is a brilliant reminder of the importance of this work. Look at Abraham and Sarah – they were told that their descendants would be as many as the stars in the sky, but they wouldn’t see the work of their children’s hands on Earth. Look at many of our Biblical people, from the priests, to the prophets, and beyond – they cast a vision, but they wouldn’t see it come to fruition in their lifetime. But you know what? They did it anyway. They followed the call, because they knew in that sense of faith – the conviction of things they would not see – they knew that it was the will of God. They did it anyway and the call is just the same for us.

iii. The Longview of Faith

 So, I ask you to try and be countercultural, just as our Savior has taught us to be, and take a long-view of faith. I feel called to share a particular message to a few of us this morning – so I stand with some bravery as God gives me a holy nudge forward.

 To our Northminster friends who are here with us today – we are so glad you are with us and are glad to be in fellowship with you this morning. We know you are in a time of crucial discernment, where you are making decisions and you do not know what is to come. You, my friends, are truly walking in an act of faith – following the call into unknowable waters, but you trust in the God who has led you here. We pray for you, we lift you up, as you take the longview of faith – as you remember your history as a people of faith from a particular congregation and as you discern your call to the next – trust in the promises of the God of Sarah and Abraham and David and Jonah. Have faith, even when it seems stormy, because our covenant God has always led us out of the wind and waves and to safer waters.

 And to Springfield, I encourage us to take that longview of faith as well. Many of you have served as Elders – you’ve seen the session agenda and there’s never a quiet time – there’s never a season of life here where we aren’t pursuing what God is calling us to in the here and now. That is healthy and beautiful, and I encourage us to continue to do just that, but to not get caught up in the stress of it – but rather, the excitement of that call. Some work may be quick, sometimes it needs to be – and some of the work takes a while, it takes discernment, it takes prayer, it takes energy, intelligence, imagination, and above all, love. The work of the Kingdom here on Earth is one that we continue to press forward with, but we also need to bear something in mind that may be difficult to hear. We may not see what we have worked for in our lifetime.

 Those are hard words to hear, but that’s why we do the work we do – we do it not only for us, but we do it for our children, and our children’s children, and beyond. We live in the mindset of Sarah and Abraham and look up at the stars and recognize the Kingdom is so, so much bigger than us. We are called to build that Kingdom, but we also face the reality that the fruition of our works might be seen from Heaven rather than from Earth. And yet we push forward, we remember our Biblical ancestors, we give thanks for their faithful work, and we follow in their footsteps.

1. The Longview

My prayer for each and every one of us is that we hold on

tight to faith – again, not something we can see, but we know deeply. And in that faith, may we all take a longview of the work before us – the long view that our work matters not only for the present moment, but for a greater and more hopeful future. And while we are taking the long view, I’d also remind you to take a few longshots while you are at it, a few Hail Mary passes – because God sometimes calls us to what seems wild and unlikely and against all odds – but that’s a place where God also does some incredible and wonderful work that completely blows us away.

 May we all be blessed by this Word and may we go out into fellowship and into our community and beyond and live into this life of faith this day and always. Amen.