

Theme: Trust in God Alone! - Hebrews 11: 1

The message for this morning is from the Epistle of today verse 1, which says: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who has brought us together". Amen

Dear Christian friends:

Allow me to tell you the following story of a man who is not a believer and a woman who is a believer. I think we can relate to this story. As believers in Christ we encounter in our life people who do not believe in Christ, but our task is to shine the love of Christ to them with our actions and words.

Edward is at his workplace and it had been a long hard day for him. Business had not been very good lately, and arguing on the phone with suppliers did not make Edward feel any better. Oh, they all made wonderful promises to him, but Edward had been burned once too often, and he no longer trusted anyone except himself. He would believe the things they said when the contracts were signed and the merchandise had arrived.

Edward was so engrossed in thought that he did not see Mrs. Lucy who entered the office. "Good evening sir, I see you are working late again," she said. Oh, it's only you, Mrs. Lucy. She was part of his custodial staff. Edward was very fond of her. She was such a kind-hearted woman, always so bright and cheerful. Edward also knew that she was a very religious woman, for she had invited him to join her at her church for services several times.

Of course, he had always been too busy to go. After all, he worked hard all week and had other things to do. Besides, he had long ago given up believing in all that church stuff. He just could not be bothered with it. Yet he knew that it did something for Mrs. Lucy. He thought: "Ah, yes, lucky Mrs. Lucy. She never seemed bothered by the cares of life and business I feel so heavily upon me." Edward's life was far from easy. His wife had left him a few months ago, just when business started to turn sour. She was always complaining about the long hours he put in at work, and how he always seemed to come home in a bad mood. Edward knew that she was right, but what else could he do?

Mrs. Lucy asked "You look a little tired, sir. Shall I come back later?" No, I am just on my way home now. Edward said. She replied: Thank you sir. Have a good evening, and the Lord be with you. "The Lord be with you." Somehow those words bothered Edward tonight. He saw the confidence that Mrs. Lucy had in God, and in many ways he wished that he could have that same faith. But it seemed so naive to believe in God. After all the things that man had learned about the world and about its history, how could anyone still believe in what he considered fairy tales?

Besides, on days like today, he doubted very much that there was a God, and he was even more convinced that if God did exist, He sure did not care what was happening in the world right now. One look at the news convinced Him all the more that there was no God. Look at all the people dying in wars in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, and other part of the

world. Look at the greed and corruption all around us. People are suffering around the world. Where is this great God that I heard about when I was a kid? Do something, God, and I will believe in you.

The following day Edward arrived at his office and someone told him that Mrs. Lucy had fallen down a set of stairs. She was in the hospital with severe head injuries. Edward hurried to the hospital. He prided himself on caring about all his employees, and Mrs. Lucy was somehow special. But as he drove to the hospital, he could not help but think to himself, where was your Lord in all this, Mrs. Lucy. Why did not He help you when you needed him?

Edward was not quite ready for the sight that greeted him when he walked into Mrs. Lucy's room. He knew that she had taken a terrible fall, but he did not realize that she had broken an arm and a leg, as well as her head injuries. And yet when he came in, Mrs. Lucy managed a smile. Oh, sir, I am sorry to have to bring you down here. I guess I was being a bit careless. But the Lord still was watching over me. Edward was surprised. How can you say that? Look at what has happened to you! How can you believe that there is a God if he would let this happen to you?

She said "Oh, sir, you misunderstand faith. Faith is not something we have just when it is convenient to believe. Faith is something much more than that. Have you read about Job? He lived several thousand years before Jesus was born. Job had suffered a great deal in his life. Disasters robbed him of his wealth, his family and his health. If ever there was a man who had reason to doubt God, it was Job. And yet he said **"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand upon the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God, whom I myself will behold and whom my eyes shall see, and not another."**

She continued: "The only thing that kept Job going was his faith. And yet Job had never seen God, nor did he know the Redeemer, as I know Jesus Christ through the word of God. Yet he believed in God. And although Job had his moments of weakness, I am sure that he was confident that God was going to see him through all the problems he was facing. And that is how I feel. God has given His own Son to die on the cross and to rise again so that my sins might be forgiven. He has promised that He will be with Me to help, to strengthen and to guard me in my life. He has promised that I will live forever with Him in His glorious kingdom.

Maybe we cannot see with our eyes God's forgiveness at work in our lives or the greatness of the glory that waits for us in heaven. But by faith, I know that all these promises are true. And I know that it is hard to see how God could be keeping His promises to me when I hurt so much right now, but what I cannot see with my eyes or with my mind, I can see through the faith that is in my heart. The bible says "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

I am so sure and so confident in God that the things that I hope for and the things I cannot see are as real to me as you are. I see that God has a wonderful mansion reserved for me in heaven, and if I should die right now, I would be with the Lord forever. If it is His gracious will to restore my health, I will still have days to live for Him here on earth.

And He will be with me, even as He was with me when I fell to preserve my life so that we could have this time to talk together.”

Edward could see that Mrs. Lucy was tired, so he excused himself and left. But he could not forget the words Mrs. Lucy had spoken or the light in her eyes as she spoke of God's assurance of His love. Edward wished that He had that same confidence. Maybe it would have made a difference in his marriage. Maybe it would have given him more peace of mind when business started going bad. But Edward remembered that when he did go to church and when he did believe that there was a God, still he never felt the same confidence and trust that Mrs. Lucy had in her life. After all, how can you believe in something you cannot see or prove that it even exists?

And yet, when Edward went home, he looked for something he had not used in many years. Finally he found it - the bible he had been given many years ago in Sunday school. And he sat down and started to read. He read about Thomas in the gospel of John **“Unless I shall see in His hands the imprints of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”** He read how Jesus later appeared to Thomas and invited him to put his finger in the print of the nails and to feel the wound in His side; and be not unbelieving, but believing. But above all, Edward was struck by the words **“Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”**

Suddenly Edward found that he could not stop reading. He read the opening words of Genesis telling how God created the world and all that was in it. He read about Adam and Eve and the fall into sin. He read about Job, and about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He read that God loved the world so that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

He read as if he were hearing these things for the first time, and the more he read, the less these things seemed like fairy tales without any proof. He started to understand that Jesus did not just die on a cross, but that He died for him. He saw his sinfulness, and the grace of God. He saw how people of faith were always willing to risk and stake everything on God, and how, like Mrs. Lucy they were not disappointed.

And even though Edward did not realize it, the Holy Spirit was working in him, creating faith in His heart. Now as our text says, **“faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”**. And Edward was beginning to know that wonderful assurance, that firm confidence that would trust in God alone. He still had a long way to go, but would not Mrs. Lucy be pleased when she got out of the hospital and they could worship together and enrich their faith in this wonderful God.

At last, Edward felt at peace, and he was ready to rest. And as he laid down to sleep at night he did something else he had not done for a long time. He prayed. It were simple prayers, but prayers that came from a believing heart. Amen.

“The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keeps your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour”. Amen