Sermon Notes Written by Melissa Carter

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**Walk by Faith**

**Hebrews 11:1-13**

What does it mean to walk by faith?

I have often had atheists say to me that people use faith in God as a crutch, it gives them support when they either feel like they don’t have control or they don’t want to take control over their lives. But I would say that Faith is the total opposite, Faith in God gives you confidence to walk boldly through this confident in who you are, confident that you were created for a purpose and even if you don’t yet know what that is you live every day trusting that God will reveal it when you are ready. Faith is not passive it is active, we live with and for God.

In Hebrews Chapter 11 we are reminded about some of the people who trusted God and we read of their active faith:

* Abel served God, bringing a good offering.
* Enoch built a relationship, Noah built an Ark, Abraham built a nation.
* Isaac and Jacob received and gave blessings.
* By faith sea was parted and enemies destroyed, walls were knocked down and kingdoms were built, lions mouths were shut, flames did not burn.
* By faith lives were given so that lives could be found.

So in response to those who think Faith in God is a crutch, yes walking by faith means we do not have to walk alone, means that we walk a path which has been laid before us, but that is not a weakness it is a strength. When we walk in faith we walk with the one who brings life out of death, light out of darkness, strength out of weakness. We have the courage to act because we know that we are not alone, we dare to dream because the hope we have in Christ is more than a wish for better times, it is a sure and certain hope of life eternal and life in all in fullness. And we have a choice, God gave us free will to follow him or not and walking by faith is not always the easy path.

When we choose to follow God we are choosing to follow not just the path he laid out for us, the path which leads to our flourishing but we are choosing to follow his ways, his commandments which are often contrary to the worlds so we choose to sometimes go against the tide, to speak out for justice, to show mercy and offer forgiveness. Faith is not an easy path, but it does lead us to the greatest reward.

Time to reflect:

How do you live out your faith in your everyday life?

Who has encouraged you in your walk with God?

**Psalm 121**

Those of us who are visually impaired are all too aware of how disconcerting and scary journeying through this world can be but we must remember that the unknown path is unseen for everyone and that too is disconcerting and scary.

Many people read the first line of Psalm 121 and think it is a lovely image, looking up at the quiet peaceful hills, if you are lucky enough to live in or near the countryside you may have experienced some peaceful walks and quiet places to sit and enjoy Gods creation. But this Psalm has a darker side, the hills in these days were places where people could hide and attack a traveller as they journeyed. The people who walked these routes were not enjoying the peace and quiet, they would have been disquieted by the uncertainty of their safety. But the response to their question ‘where does my help come from?’ is immediately given in verse 2 ‘my help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth’. We learn in this Psalm that God is always watching over us, he created the earth so your foot will not slip, he created the sun and moon so he will ensure no harm comes to us by day or by night. He watches over our life now and forever.

We can think that when we give our lives to God we will be okay and all harm and distress will leave our lives. Unfortunately that is not the case because we live in a broken world, but we have the assurance that God is with us in the midst of the dark and the light, the rough path and the smooth. We do not need to fear because God is in control and God will never leave us or take his eyes off us.

Do not be afraid is said many times in the Bible because God knows that we are anxious about the things we cannot see and cannot know but remember Hebrews 11:3 ‘By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible’. God knows and God sees, so when we trust in him we do not need to be afraid. For those of you who use the Nicene creed you will be familiar with the line “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen”. God did not just create the world but he created all the forces which we cannot see, gravity, time, thoughts, feelings. God created us, knows our very being and hears our inner most thoughts. That allows us to walk with him openly and honestly because he already knows us completely and he loves us, he loves us so much that he gave his son to die so that we might have life.

Time to reflect:

Which places help you connect with God?

What helps you to not be afraid of the unseen and unknown?

**Final thought:**

It can sometimes be difficult to explain to someone else what walking with God means to us. Because of my sight loss I physically walk with a guide dog and I use this relationship as a bit of an example of the relationship I have with God. My guide dog is there to keep me on the right path, their role is to keep me in the middle of the pavement and if there is an obstacle in the way they will gently walk me round it until we can return to the centre line. But when we come to the end of the pavement it is my decision to say if I want to go across the road, turn left or right. Just like my walk with God I have free will to choose which route I am going to go. But there may be times when the guide dog will try to indicate that it is the wrong choice, if a car is coming which I haven’t heard they will stay stopped at the kerbside, I even had one guide dog keep turning me around until eventually I realised that I had gone down the wrong road. By the Holy Spirit God will nudge us when we maybe need to stop and reassess our path or notice that we have gone astray but it will always be done out of love. God wants us to reach our final destination because he wants us to reach him and find eternal life in his kingdom.

Time to reflect:

What could you use to describe your walk with God to someone else?

Take some time to give thanks for the Holy Spirit, our guide and encourager.

**Prayer:**

God of all creation,

as we rejoice in the life we have received from you we pray:

Pour out your blessings on the journey ahead of us,

fill us with compassion for those on a different path,

draw us alongside those who we can journey with,

bring us to the places of rest and refreshment.

Lord as we walk by faith may we grow in confidence:

to follow your commands,

seek your truth,

and trust the Holy Spirit to direct us.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.