

Sermon 11th Sunday after Trinity 2016

So what is God asking you to believe in your life today? Are you going to be able to take that step of faith so that God will count it as righteousness?

Abram was elderly and he and his wife had had no children, traditionally, if a man died without heir his eldest servant would inherit. Abram had wealth and fame, he had defeated kings and by his acts shown his faith, however Abram was afraid, of dying childless, of revenge from the defeated kings, we don't know. God addresses this anxiety by a powerful statement of goodness; "I am your shield, your reward shall be very great." God is our shield, our protector throughout our life, it is faith in his promise, not human obedience, that defines our salvation. We are justified by faith. But also, remembering this story of Abram, that God's blessings are beyond our imagination, descendants too numerous to count wasn't what Abram had asked for, just an heir, we must beware of making God's actions too small, of not allowing him full rein in our lives, of being capable of much more than we can imagine.

Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews continues this message about faith. He talks about receiving God's promises in faith even if we are unable to see them happen. Looking forward and not back. To heaven and not earth. The whole of Chapter 11 in the letter to the Hebrews is about faith. It speaks of those who have gone before, fallible human beings, living difficult lives, but having faith.

He is writing to those who have professed faith in Christ but are living under threat of persecution, they would not receive the full benefits of faith in their lives on earth, they would probably be difficult and dangerous, but they were to look forward to the rewards of heaven. He is asking that faith remains steadfast despite trials and despite the temptations to sin that we face.

Jesus reiterates the message of having faith and looking forward as we hear from Luke's Gospel. He also makes a point of telling us as the reading from Genesis did, of not being anxious and trusting in the God who wants to give us our heart's desire. It is his pleasure to give us what we need to meet our earthly needs as well as our needs for life eternal. Earlier in the chapter Jesus tells us to beware of covetousness and greed in this earthly life, but the other side of the problem with money is being anxious about having enough to meet

our needs. At all times our faith, our thoughts and our deeds should reflect the promise of God's kingdom, showing where our values really lie. Jesus will return, God's Kingdom will be restored on earth but we don't know when.

And so we return to having faith and looking forward. To knowing that our reward will come, but maybe not in the way we expect it or when we expect it. We may need to wait for God's kingdom. But in our waiting we try to live out kingdom values, keeping our faith strong and our eyes and minds open for how God may be working in our lives and others, stepping out into the unknown in faith and obedience.