

Journey of Faith

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 Heb 11:1-16 Matt 7:12-14

November 7, 2021

Pastor Dave Bolte



For the past several weeks we've been looking at the idea of **faith** and the various ways that that word is used in Scripture.

- ⇒ **"The Christian faith"** is the teaching and the doctrines of Scripture that center on Christ. The **"The Christian faith"** is objective, it is outside of ourselves; it is the true reality. **"The Christian faith"** is what the Christian Church believes, teaches, and confesses.
- ⇒ As an individual believer, you have "personal *faith*" in Christ. This "personal *faith*" is *trust* in the promises of God; it is *believing* in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. This "personal *faith*" is inside of you, it's a gift of the Holy Spirit: He creates it and sustains it through the Word and Sacraments.
- ⇒ As Lutheran Christians, we believe, teach, and confess that we are *saved by faith alone* without any works of our own. *Salvation by faith alone*, by grace alone, and in Christ alone is the cornerstone of the One, Holy, Christian and Apostolic Church.
- ⇒ As a believer in Christ, you also have a *life of faith* to live. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus motivates you to holy living; The *life of faith* is your *Sanctification*; it consists of the Spirit-generated good works that you do in response to God's love for you in Christ.

Throughout Scripture, the *life of faith* is pictured as that of a *Journey of faith*. The *Journey of faith* image has the idea that your entire life is based, shaped around, and focused on Christ and His Word. Your *Journey of faith* implies and means that you are moving towards a goal: the *Kingdom of Heaven!*

We can understand our lives as a *Journey of faith* only because someone else has already gone on a journey for us. The Lord Jesus Christ was on a journey: He left the glory of Heaven, was born in a humble manger in Bethlehem, He grew up in Nazareth; He lived, He taught, He worked miracles, and He was constantly hounded by the Pharisees and Sadducees. His journey moved Him to the cross: His life was all for one purpose: to end up in Jerusalem, where He would suffer and die for the sins of the world.

He died for you, He was buried, and on the Third Day He rose from the dead! In His death, He completely paid for your sins! The work of salvation is **finished!** His resurrection from the dead proves that He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world! His journey would come to an end when He ascended back into heaven to sit at the Right Hand of God the Father Almighty, to serve as our Heavenly High Priest, where He continually forgives our sins.

*Our Journey of Faith
is motivated, guided, and strengthened
because of Jesus' own journey for us!*

Understanding our lives as a *Journey of Faith* is an idea that reaches deep into the Old Testament. Today we heard a portion of Hebrews chapter 11, the great **Faith** chapter of the Bible, where God's Old Testament people lived their lives as a *Journey of Faith*. They trusted in God and His Word even in difficult times.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.
Hebrews 11:13-16

Like the Old Testament believers before us, we can think of our lives as a *Journey*; a *Journey* from Baptism to Heaven; a *Journey* that you walked by faith and not by sight, a *Journey* where you trust that God is with you each step of

the way; and that His promises will strengthen you. You are never alone in this *Journey of Faith*; God is always present and His power is at work in your life.

On our *Journey*, we walk by faith and not by sight like the Old Testament faithful. We see with our ears as we hold tight the Word of God. Today we heard this from the book of Deuteronomy:

These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:6-9

The idea is that God's Word and promises permeate our lives; our lives are based, shaped around, and focused on Christ and His Word. Even though you cannot see **God's Promises**, you *Believe* that God is telling you the truth and so you *trust* Him. That's *Faith*!

This kind of *Faith* comes only from God; it is a gift that He freely gives to you. God creates your *Faith*, and He strengthens your *Faith*, through the *Word and the Sacraments*. The Holy Spirit works through the *Word and the Sacraments* to lead you to repentance, and to *trust* in Christ as your Savior. He sanctifies you, setting you apart as belonging to God. Part of that sanctification is that you *Trust* God's Word; you *Believe* that God is telling you the truth so that you put your *Faith* in Him. As baptized disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are on a *Journey of Heaven*; and on this path, you *walk by faith and not by sight*.

Jesus takes this idea one step farther. Jesus teaches us that the journey to heaven *is straight, and that gate is narrow*.

Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Matthew 7:13-14

This is one way that Jesus teaches us to live holy and godly lives. Do not get tangled up in unrepentant sin; do not get distracted and follow the ways of the world; and do not be misled nor deceived by false teachers and their corrupt teachings. Don't let your heart grow cold; don't let yourself get bored or uninterested in God's Holy Word; don't separate yourself from His Church and weekly worship. Jesus said the way is hard that leads to life: we pick up our crosses and follow him (Matthew 16:24-26); in humility, we consider others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3); and we count the costs and consider the sacrifices (Luke 14:26–33). The journey to heaven *is straight path, and the gate is narrow.*

And as you *Journey* through life, the only truth you can *trust* is Christ and His Word. Christ and His Word is the compass that you use to navigate through this world. Christ and His Word give you the only accurate “world view” and understanding. Do not put your *Trust*, *Faith*, or *Belief* in anything in this world; put your *Trust*, *Faith*, or *Belief* in Christ and His Word alone. We live like those who have gone before us: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses – God's people have always lived by *Faith* and not by sight. This is not your home; do not love the world or anything in it (1 John 2:15); you are on a *Faith Journey* from Baptism to Heaven.

Faith is a multi-faceted jewel in Scripture! In every sense it is a gift from God:

- ⇒ it is the message of the Holy Christian Church
- ⇒ it is your only way of connection to the Savior Jesus Christ
- ⇒ It is the core teaching of the Lutheran Reformation
- ⇒ and it describes your holy, sanctified life in Christ:

You are on a *Journey of Faith* from Baptism to Heaven!

Amen!