

SERMON FOR AUGUST 11, 2013

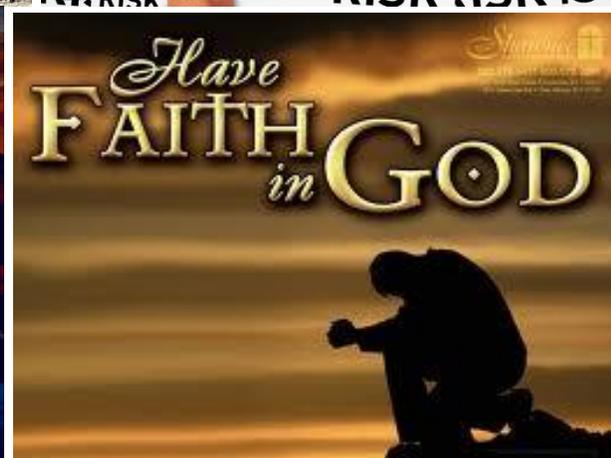
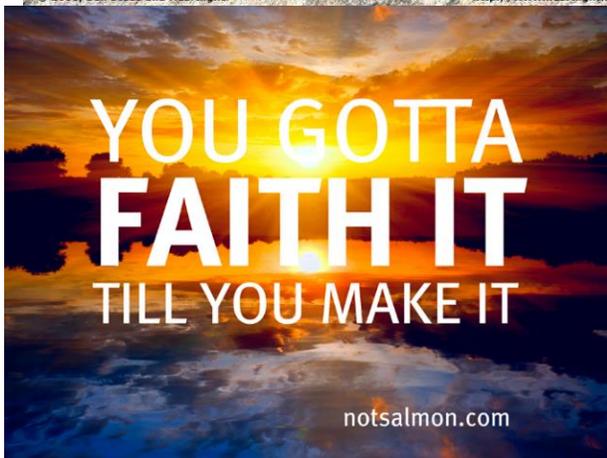
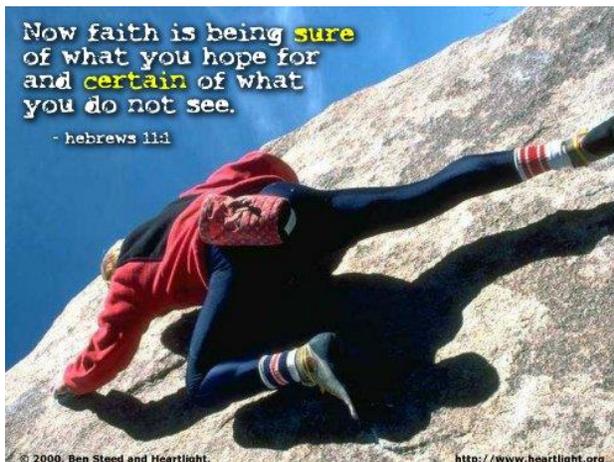
The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i (UCC)
12th Sunday after Pentecost – Ethel Lung's 105 BD

7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

Message: **"To Have Faith Means to Live a
Radically Different Way!"**

Kekapa P.K. Lee



Gathering in the Word

We're going to be in the Letter of Hebrews for our focus lesson for four weeks. We are going to sweep through an "honors list" of those that make up the "great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1). In our lesson today we get only the first half of the speech in praise of the OT heroes and heroines of faith (11:1-3, 8-16).

Today's lessons describe impossible possibilities! Hebrews tells us the story of Abraham and Sarah following GOD's promises that—although they are childless—they will become the parents of a nation.

Hearing the Word

Hebrews 11:1-3 (The VOICE Bible) FOCUS

11 ¹Faith is the assurance of things you have hoped for, the absolute conviction that there are realities you've never seen. ² It was by faith that our forebears were approved. ³ Through faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God; everything we now see was fashioned from that which is invisible.

Hebrews 11:8-16 (The VOICE Bible)

⁸ By faith Abraham heard God's call to travel to a place he would one day receive as an inheritance; and he obeyed, not knowing where God's call would take him. ⁹ By faith he journeyed to the land of the promise as a foreigner; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, his fellow heirs to the promise ¹⁰ because Abraham looked ahead to a city with foundations, a city laid out and built by God.

¹¹ By faith *Abraham's wife* Sarah became fertile long after menopause because she believed God would be faithful to

His promise. ¹² So from this man, who was almost at death's door, God brought forth descendants, as many as the stars in the sky and as impossible to count as the sands of the shore.

¹³ All these I have mentioned died in faith without receiving the full promises, although they saw the fulfillment as though from a distance. These people accepted and confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on this earth ¹⁴ because people who speak like this make it plain that they are still seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If this was only a bit of nostalgia for a time and place they left behind, then certainly they might have turned around and returned.

¹⁶ But such saints as these look forward to a far better place, a heavenly country. So God is not ashamed to be called their God because He has prepared a *heavenly* city for them.

The Letter to the Hebrews describes Abraham and Sarah's faith as involving trust GOD with the unseen and unknown.

- ✓ They launch out and start on—you might say recklessly and hastily—with no promises and few guarantees.
- ✓ They don't even know where they're going! This foolish faith is an anathema and abomination for us today who use MapQuest or our GPS for driving today.

The story of tale of Abraham and Sarah invites us to be risk takers, willing to go forth with only a dream to guide us toward GOD's far horizons. This elderly couple gives up everything secure to follow a promise.

Who would do this today? Few of us today would do this and leave everything for GOD!

Hebrews 11:1 is the famous definition of faith:

- ✓ (VOICE Bible): **“Faith is the assurance of things you have hoped for, the absolute conviction that there are realities you’ve never seen.”**
- ✓ (New International Version 2011): **“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”**
- ✓ (Contemporary English Bible 1995): **“Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.”**

Then the text quickly moves back to Creation (11:3) to note that GOD’s Word is a power that “everything we now see was fashioned from that which is invisible.”

Faith, rather than being something ultimately dependent on us—**comes to us at GOD’s own initiative and produces and gives us hope**. This hope is then made visible through the lives of the sisters and brothers here at TFCCCH and elsewhere! In other words—**GOD’s invisible work of new creation becomes visible** (incarnate) **in the life of the one who trusts GOD—that you and me!**

The community to whom Hebrews was written for had undergone great hardship—including public ridicule (they were laughed at!), their property was taken away, and some were imprisoned. Because of all of these pressures on them—some had renounced and gave up their faith; others avoided worship; still others were weary of the suffering and disheartened by the delay in the coming

(second coming) of the Lord that would have made their belief solid.

From Hebrews' perspective and perception—the world of faith *is* the “real world.” The “real world,” then, is a world made visible by those who are drawn into the very heart of GOD by the divine work of that faith in them!

And what is the foundation and basis of that faith? **It's each of us and our belief that GOD is the source of life and mercy and loving kindness—even when *all* appearances are to the contrary and opposite!**

Doing the Word

So what is the Word of God for us this morning?

**1.ONE: OUR FAITH MAKES THINGS POSSIBLE—
EVEN THE IMPOSSIBLE THINGS!**

**2.TWO: OUR FAITH MAKES US ABLE TO STEP
OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES AND DO THINGS WE
WOULD NEVER DO!**

**3.THREE: OUR FAITH BRINGS US TOGETHER AND
INVITES OTHER TO BE PART OF THE 'OHANA &
FAMILY @ TFCCCH—EVEN AFTER 134 YEARS!**

Sent in the Word

Faith is knowing that what GOD has promised will come true. Faith is what tells us that the things we cannot see can still be real.

By faith we know that GOD took nothing and made everything!

By faith Abraham and Sarah went to a new land when GOD called them, even without having any idea where they were going!

By faith Abraham and Sarah lived in the land GOD had promised them. On days it was too hot and dry and exhausting—they remembered GOD's promise to provide for them!

By faith Sarah had a child, even though she was very old and never had any children!

By faith Abraham and Sarah had lots of children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren...as many as the stars in the sky and the sand at the sea!

None of these people—our ancestors—received everything God had promised, but they saw glimpses of GOD's promises and they knew there was more to come.

By faith we continue to do as they did; to go about our living—trusting GOD to care for us, and make us feel at home wherever we are—and know that GOD will never leave us!

Faith is believing that what GOD has promised will come true. Faith is what tells us that the things we cannot see can still be real!

I TOOK JESUS
TO HEART, AND
STARTED SELLING
MY STUFF ONLINE.
REALLY?



SO... HOW'S THE
ALMSGIVING GOING?



NOT TOO GOOD.
SO FAR I'VE SPENT MOST
OF WHAT I'VE MADE ON
PACKING TAPE AND
BUBBLEWRAP.



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