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**Hero of the Faith**  
**Belief, Trust, Faith**  
**Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19**  
**July 15, 2018, Adrian Moskal**

I want to start by welcoming you this morning to Soccer Sunday. This is my favourite week of the year and I want to thank you for those whose kids were in soccer camp. Thank you for entrusting your kids to us for this week. We had loads of fun, played a lot of soccer, we got lots of sun and laughs and we also learned 5 things in the bible that really culminated in the message and hope of Jesus. We learned that we can trust Jesus for our salvation and our eternity. Trusting someone you don't know (yet) for salvation and eternity is a huge statement and it takes faith. The good news is that the passages we are looking at today involve faith.

We are currently in a sermon series called Hero of the faith. We are in the book of Hebrews in chapter 11. If you don't have a bible, there are some in the pew in front of you but if you want, every bible verse I talk about, you can also read along on the screens behind me. Last week we looked at Noah. Today, we are going to look at a man named Abraham. Abraham was a man that was born approximately 3900 years ago. A long time ago for sure. You might wonder what could we learn from a guy that lived that many years ago when things seem so different today. Yet, there is a lot that we can draw from the life and faith of Abraham. Abraham had a wife Sarah, a large household of people, large herds of animals, and no children. He would have been considered wealthy. In those days if you had no children, your family line had no future and that brought great shame to your house. God's sense of value and purpose has no such sense of shame and so Abraham was called by God for a specific purpose.

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**Through the life of Abraham we are going to look at 3 points:**

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**1. The faith of Abraham through his actions.**

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**2. Abraham's faith was not perfect.**

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**3. Jesus is the hero of faith and the reason for our faith.**

We are looking at the faith of Abraham. Therefore, we need to look at some definitions first.

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**Belief** is an acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists. For example, I can believe that a person is honest. It may not impact my actions.

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**Trust** is when you allow someone to have, use, or look after (someone or something of importance or value) with confidence. For example, I trust that this person is honest so

I am going to leave my money with them. If I am trusting someone or something, it impacts my behaviour and actions. Belief may not impact my actions.

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**Faith** is complete trust or confidence in someone or something. For example, if I have faith in someone, I could put them in charge of my money, house, kids, etc. Total and complete trust and confidence.

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Faith can involve placing your **trust** in something you can't see **yet**.

Now let's turn to Abraham.

In your bible turn to the first book of the bible, Genesis, Chapter 12. If you didn't bring a bible or if you find it easier, you can just follow along on the screen behind me.

We start off with Abraham being called by God to go to a new land.

(10)

**Genesis 12:1-2(NLT)**

***The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."***

Two things stand out to me in this passage. The first is Abram (God has not yet changed his name to Abraham) is promised by God to make him into a great nation. This is a huge statement because Abraham and Sarah do not have any children and Abraham is 75 and Sarah would have been 65.

The second thing that stands out is that God calls Abraham, his wife, household, and herds to leave their home and go to a foreign land that God is calling him to. I read this and I go wow!! Abraham is asked to trust God without seeing where he was to go.

(11)

I was recently on a family trip with my wife and 2 girls. While on holidays we decided to go on this hike. It was supposed to be a moderate level hike and at the end was supposed to be this beautiful lake. So we set off with our water and away we go. When I say go, I mean we go UP, UP, UP, and more UP. What I had failed to realize was to reach this beautiful lake we had to climb up a mountain. Not only did you climb up but you can't see very far ahead because you are climbing up and around a mountain. So, each time you look ahead, you are thinking, it must be right around the next corner. And you get to the next switch back and it is not around that corner. Each plodding step is getting harder and harder and you can't see how much farther it is to go. We have heard how beautiful the lake is going to be but let me tell you, my trust in it being worth the hike was wavering. I was wavering on whether I should continue. I believed the lake

was there. My trust was low on whether it was worth it no matter what we had heard and my faith was even lower.

We persevered and along the way our spirits rose as we encountered these birds that we fed.

(12)

And we finally made it to the end. We come to a clearing and the ground evened out. I was catching my breath and then we saw the lake. And it was all that was promised and more.

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We had a fabulous time up there and talked with some people from Australia. It was so worth it, but along the way, when you aren't sure how far, how hard or even exactly where you are going, it can get hard to trust. It takes faith. This is what Abraham did. He trusted and obeyed God without seeing or knowing where he was going.

Let's Turn to Hebrews 11 verse 8. This is one of our 2 main passages. Hebrews 11 is a chapter on people of great faith in the bible.

(14)

***Hebrews 11:8-10 (NLT)***

***<sup>8</sup> It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents.***

(15)

***And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. <sup>10</sup> Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.***

Abraham didn't just believe what God told him. He had to put his faith into action and trust God. His steps were not his own. He was following God in faith and his actions backed it up. He did this in faith for the promise of something better.

Verse 10 says, "Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God." He had faith and trust in what he could not see. Abraham packed up everything he could and obeyed God and left a place that he knew for one that he did not. He put ALL of his trust in God.

He put his livelihood in God's hands because he didn't know if it would be suitable for his herds. He put his life in God's hands because he did not know what awaited him on his journey. He put his family in God's hands because he packed up his household and his wife and away they went. He didn't just believe that God existed. He didn't just trust God. He trusted God completely and took steps of faith in following him.

The second example of Abraham's faith we are going to find in Genesis 22:2. God is taking the temperature of Abraham's faith. Is Abraham trusting in God, or in himself? Is his trust full and complete? He poses this command to Abraham.

(16)

**Genesis 22:2 (NLT)**

***2 "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."***

There is lots of parents in here. This has to be something that causes us to go what? This sounds crazy and weird and just wow. Abraham and Sarah had waited so long for Issac. Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 when he was born. He was long awaited and much loved as all of OUR kids are. Abraham had to decide if God was trustworthy or not. He didn't always know where God was taking him but God had always kept his word to Abraham.

The writer of Hebrews explains it this way:

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**Hebrews 11:17-19 (NLT)**

***17 It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, 18 even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." 19 Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.***

Think about this for a second. Abraham, a couple of servants and Isaac would have packed up supplies for them to offer a sacrifice to God in the land of Moriah. Isaac asks his dad, we have all the stuff for a burnt offering but where is the sheep? You must think that Abraham would have paused and swallowed hard as he says God will provide a sheep. They then arrive at the destination for the sacrifice and we pick it up in Genesis 22:12.

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**Genesis 22:12-13 (NLT)**

***12 "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son." 13 Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son.***

God had promised to make Abraham into a great nation. God had promised to do it through Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham trusted God in this and God proved to be

trustworthy. Abraham trusted God in his earlier promise. He completely trusted that God would be able to complete his promise through his son Isaac.

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1. We have seen Abraham's faith in God through his actions.
  - He followed God to the promised land.
  - Took his son to be sacrificed knowing God would find a way.

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2. Abraham's faith was not perfect.

Abraham's faith was not perfect. Let's see a couple of places where he had doubts.

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### **Genesis 15:1-3 (NLT)**

***Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great." <sup>2</sup> But Abram replied, "O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son?***

(22)

***Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. <sup>3</sup> You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir."***

God had promised him a son and Abraham had doubts. He was getting really old at this point in time. He wrestled with what was promised and what he thought was possible even for God.

Let's look at another place where his actions did not line up with his faith in God. Abraham is travelling to the land promised him and they have to alter course.

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### **Genesis 12:10-13 (NLT)**

***<sup>10</sup> At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. <sup>11</sup> As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai,***

(24)

***"Look, you are a very beautiful woman. <sup>12</sup> When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!' <sup>13</sup> So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you."***

Asking your wife to lie about her marriage to you, to save yourself (and put her in harm's way) is not a path to bravery or trust in God's plan.

This is actually good news for us!! All of us here. Just as my faith and resolve was wavering as I hiked up that mountain, we all have times in our lives where we doubt.

I almost turned around before we made it to the end. I could have easily. I doubted I could do it or that it was worth the sacrifice.

Abraham doubted God and he still ended up in a chapter in Hebrews amongst people of the bible of great faith.

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How about you? Have you ever struggled with finances, health, death, or relationships? Have you ever had doubts about how you can get through it. Do you have the strength? How about what happens after death? Do you know what is to come and where your place is? Have you ever doubted that God is the answer? Let me assure you that God is big enough for your doubts. Ask him about yours. That is what prayer is. Prayer is talking to God.

(26)

1. We have seen Abraham's faith in God through his actions.
  - He followed God to the promised land.
  - Took his son to be sacrificed knowing God would find a way.
2. Abraham's faith was not perfect.
  - as he got older, doubted God could/would give him a son
  - doubted he would live as he went to Egypt, lied about marriage to Sarah

(27)

3. Jesus is the reason for our faith and our hope.

We see that Abraham was a man of faith but still had times of doubts. Abraham chose to put his faith in what was to come and in God.

This is the essence of spiritual faith. Putting your faith in the unseen. It takes faith to put your trust in God.

(28)

**Hebrews 11:13-16 (NLT)**

***13 All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.***

(29)

***14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.***

God has prepared a place for us for those who have put their faith and trust in him. Abraham died before all that promise was realized but he had a promise that it would take place. God would make a mighty nation out of his bloodline. This was a people that was to represent God on earth. So that when other people saw them and met them, they would point to God and be attracted to him.

(30)

If your faith is in God, then this is not your home. We are awaiting our heavenly home and our purpose in life to point to Jesus until we are ready to go home. Jesus is the only and complete Hero of Faith.

(31)

**Hebrews 12:1-2 NLT**

***Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.***

In chapter 11, the writer of Hebrews was saying that this is not our home. We are nomads here on earth, awaiting the time where we get to go to heaven. Chapter 11 shows us many people in the bible that showed great faith in God. Now in chapter 12, it is says therefore, we should get rid of anything that gets in the way of us completely giving ourselves to God. It is our sin that gets in the way. Sin is the things that we do that we shouldn't, or the things we don't do that we should. It is those things that are contrary to God. We should cast those things off because they trip us up.

Have you ever tried to be better. Sheer trying to be better is not possible in the long term. The good news is that God is with us.

(32)

***<sup>2</sup> We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.***

We don't have to be perfect in our faith because Jesus is perfect. We run this race of life by keeping our eyes on Jesus. Jesus, who is God, came to earth, living a sinless life, and then dying on the cross for our sins. He died for the sins that separate us from God. Jesus did not stay dead. 3 days later he rose to life conquering sin and death for us who put our faith in him. He is the hero who initiates and perfects our faith. Jesus is the true hero of our faith. We don't have to be perfect. We need to trust and obey. We take a step forward in life and trust Jesus (just like Abraham).

This week as we were in the midst of setting up for soccer camp, I man was walking his dog and we got talking. He asked me about the construction going on at Christian Life Fellowship. I said that I think they were building a portable for their daycare and youth but I didn't actually work there, we were just storing stuff in their building for soccer camp. I said I was a pastor at CRBC.

He stopped and looked me up and down and asked me a question. Well, first he made some statements about the trapped boys from Thailand and the suffering of refugees from Syria. Then he asks, how can God allow that?

He had doubts that a good God would allow such suffering to happen. He had doubts and was wondering how anyone could have faith in God with so much suffering in the world. I agreed with him that those things are awful. I also shared with him that God thinks they are awful too. I shared that the sin in the world grieves God more than us. He has a rescue plan for all of us and that is Jesus. Because Jesus is God and he sinlessly went to the cross to die for our sins and rose again conquering sin and death, I said we can have faith that he has a place for each of us in heaven who put our trust in him. And in heaven, there is no sin, pain or suffering. He listened, thought about it, and thanked me for the talk and continued walking.

We all have that opportunity. There is not one person here who is without sin. There is not one person here, not me or you, that is perfect. We can put our trust in Jesus, who is perfect and who is God. We can put our faith in Jesus that his perfect sacrifice was payment enough for our sins. If you have never done that, you can do it today. If you do, come and tell us. We would love to share in the celebration.

**(33)**

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3. Jesus is the reason for our faith and our hope.

Jesus is the true hero of faith. He is God's rescue plan for all of us. This is what Abraham was trusting in. He was trusting that God had a way to save us from our sins and that was Christ. Abraham did more than believe that God existed. He completely put his trust and faith in the hope of Jesus. We all get that same choice.