

## Sermon Transcript

06.28.2026

Hebrews 11:8-12

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- Good morning! Please open to Hebrews chapter 11, vss. 8-12.
  - As you're undoubtedly aware, the American calendar is filled with non-sensical non-holiday days of commemoration.
  - For instance, today is national Paul Bunyan day, but since none of you are wearing flannel or riding a blue ox apparently you didn't get the memo. Tomorrow is national waffle iron day, I have no clue what I'm supposed to do with that information, but I do love waffles, which is exactly what Big Waffle wants me to remember each June 29.
  - I looked up some of the more absurd days that somebody somewhere decided we should celebrate and saw the following: talk like a grizzled prospector day, sneak some zucchini onto your neighbor's porch day, and maybe the strangest of all, answer your cat's questions day.
  - Apparently, the same way that every kid gets a trophy, every day is special, every day needs recognition.
  - So yesterday was the National Wildlife Federation's Great American Campout which is the fourth Saturday each June.
  - Did any of you happen to camp out in your backyard to celebrate?
  - Yeah, me neither.
  - June also happens to be the Great Outdoors Month and the National Camping Month which sounds like a lot of fun if you live in Colorado, CA or Vermont, but we live in Texas. The only people who camp here in June are those who didn't pay attention on May 1 - national heatstroke prevention day.
  - Camping in the summer in Texas is like trying to sleep in a crockpot.
  - That said, any other time and place, I love camping.
  - At least I love it in general; there are parts I just tolerate. The dirt and bugs and lack of showers and all of that. A tent constantly reminds you that you're not home.
  - No a/c, no sound machine, no Posturepedic. Every sound, every bump in the ground or bump in the night says, this is only temporary. You get by by reminding yourself that you can tough it out for a day or a week.
  - But what if you had to live in a tent not days or weeks or months, but years and decades? What if you were called to a nomadic lifestyle for a lifetime?
  - That's what our text will deal with this morning in the life of Abraham. What would make it worth it? What would inspire someone to dwell in a tent their entire life? That's what we'll see in vss. 8-12.
  - Let's pray and we'll dive in together.
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- A couple of weeks ago we started Hebrews 11 which is often called the hall of faith chapter since the word faith occurs 25 times and we'll see the repetition of the phrase "by faith" over and over in this list of OT saints.
  - How does this fit into the context of the book as a whole?

- Well, we saw in chapter 10 that these Hebrew Christians were being persecuted, imprisoned and plundered. So there is a temptation to drift, to fall away.
- But in chapter 10, we read this
  - *but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.* (Hebrews 10:38)
- So we see two paths. There is the path of righteousness that is lived by faith and leads to life. And on the other hand, there's the path of shrinking back that leads to condemnation & destruction.
- God has no pleasure in those who shrink back because, as we saw last time, shrinking back is the posture of disbelief and without faith its impossible to please God.
- Those who believe, evidence that belief by drawing near rather than shrinking back. And to support that narrative, He gives multiple examples from OT history. Men and women who believed and in particular, believed even though that belief was costly, who believed even as faith collided with their sight and experience, as faith seemed unreasonable and absurd.
- Noah building a boat in the desert. Abraham determining to sacrifice his promised son. Moses taking on the most powerful person in the world. Samson fighting an army with a jawbone. David slaying a giant with a sling.
- That's the importance of chapter 11 verse 1 which says:
  - *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1)
- This chapter is full of examples of people who hoped for things that they hadn't seen. Noah had never seen a flood or an ark, Abraham hadn't seen the promised land or promised son, he'd probably never seen a 90 year old woman and 100 year old man have a kid, Moses and the people of Israel hadn't seen the promised land & had to hope against hope that the waters of the Red Sea wouldn't destroy them, but would destroy Pharaoh, Rahab hoped she was right about Israel's God and hope she would be delivered.
- Likewise, we haven't seen the resurrected Jesus, we haven't seen the new heavens and earth, and maybe our circumstances are dire, a diagnosis, a marital difficulty, the economy, etc. we walk by faith, not by sight, just like the hall of faith members.
- Each of them not only believed that God exists, but that He rewards those who seek Him as we read about in vs. 6.
- So last time we read about Abel from Genesis 4, Enoch from Genesis 5 and Noah whose narrative goes from Genesis 6 all the way into chapter 11.
  - *By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.* (Hebrews 11:7)
- Now the author picks up the narrative from Genesis 12 and the calling of Abraham, though he was known as Abram at the time. That phrase heir of the righteousness that comes by faith thus serves as a bridge to the example par excellence of righteousness by faith and in particular the idea of an inheritance since Abraham is consistently held up in the NT as the paradigm for justification by faith.
- So let's begin looking at the patriarch in vs. 8 which says:

***By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. (Hebrews 11:8)***

- As a thought experiment, think about how many people you trust so comprehensively that you would follow them no questions asked if they were to show up and say, hey grab your things and come with me.
- Now, imagine that you're Abraham. You're a pagan living in pagan Mesopotamia, somewhere near modern Iraq. There's no build up, no spiritual progression, you're worshiping the moon & suddenly this foreign God shows up and says, hey Abram, leave your family & friends & religion & all that you've known & come to this unknown land. Not only unknown in the sense of foreign, but unknown even in the sense of I'll tell you where you're going when you get there.
- There's no Google Maps that shows the destination and estimated time of arrival. The same way that Israel in the desert had to learn to trust and follow day by day with the pillar of cloud and the daily ration of manna, so Abram had to quite literally walk by faith each day as he journeyed toward a land he had never seen.
- The distance from Ur to Haran, the first stage of the journey, was anywhere from 750-900 miles depending on the exact route. That's just the layover. Then from Haran to Shechem was another 4-500 miles.
- Imagine having to journey the distance of Dallas to Los Angeles in the ancient world over mountains and deserts and rivers and through occupied territory, not knowing where you're going or what awaits. War, robbers, famine, whatever. That takes conviction, that takes assurance, that takes faith.
- And this is the thematic center of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. God's revelation to Abram is at the heart of the OT.
- God appears to him and promises him multiple things. Traditionally theologians have summed it up in three parts. He was promised a name, offspring, and a universal blessing.
- We read in Genesis 12:
  - *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* (Genesis 12:1-3)
- And this promise has been at the center of major geopolitical debates for millennia, but in particular, its been in the spotlight the past couple of years. I don't have time to cover this in-depth since that isn't the point of Hebrews 11, but I do want to mention that this is a topic that demands a lot of skilled critical thinking.
- When it comes to asking the question, who inherits the Abrahamic covenant, we can't think thinly. We need to understand the complexity of that question.
- After all, Scripture refers to the offspring of Abraham in multiple ways.
- Obviously there are those who are biologically related to Abraham. You know Ishmael and Isaac, but what is often forgotten is that Abraham remarried after Sarah's death and had another 6 sons. So, there is a sense in which any of those sons could be considered offspring.
- But the particular blessing passes through Isaac in particular and then through his line through Jacob. This is what is known as Israel so the nation of Israel could be considered offspring of Abraham in a distinct sense from descendants through his other sons.
- We see all of that in the OT itself, but in the NT things become even more intricate.
- For example, the phrase offspring of Abraham can also be used in a spiritual sense. In this sense, all Christians are offspring of Abraham.
  - *Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.* (Galatians 3:7)

- *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.* (Galatians 3:29)
  - So there is a sense in which the Church is the spiritual Israel.
- So now we've seen three different groups that could all claim the mantle of offspring of Abraham: all of his physical descendants, the particular descendants who constitute Israel, and the Church. But there's one more. Look at Galatians 3:16:
  - *Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.* (Galatians 3:16)
- According to this passage, Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise. He is the true and better son of Abraham, the true and better Jew, the ultimate embodiment, the example par excellence of Israel.
- Almost all of the sociopolitical debates over Israel today are owing to a lack of critically distinguishing between the complexity of those different referents.
- Rant over. Back to the text.
- We see Abraham held up as a preeminent example of faith and a number of events illustrate that faith. Among those are believing that he will have a son despite his barrenness and a subsequent willingness to sacrifice that son. After both of those demonstrations of faith, there is a reference to Abraham's justification by faith, but his faith isn't first evidenced in Isaac, its on display from the beginning of the narrative. Its first seen in his decision to follow the Lord by leaving his land.
- As Luther says:
  - "This is the glory of faith, namely, not to know where you are going, what you are doing, what you are suffering, and, after taking everything captive—perception and understanding, strength and will—to follow the bare voice of God and to be led and driven rather than to drive." (Luther)
- This kind of response takes faith. Uprooting and leaving everything familiar and embracing what is foreign takes the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- And how Abraham's faith was manifest. He believes and so he leaves. In short, faith obeys. That's something both Paul and James bring out in regards to Abraham as well. He was justified by faith alone, but faith wasn't alone, it was accompanied by works.
- Why? Because faith believes not only that God exists, but that He rewards those who seek Him. In other words, faith sees that obedience is better.
- As we've talked about before, its always the case that we do what we find most valuable in the moment.
- According to Jonathan Edwards
  - "The will is always as the greatest apparent good is." (Jonathan Edwards)
- In other words, you will is like a balance or scales. It always inclines toward the greatest pleasure as sure as the law of gravity.
- Or, as R.C. Sproul notes
  - "We always choose according to our strongest inclination at the moment." (R.C. Sproul)
- Think about why you got up early this morning. Maybe you love sleep, but you loved getting up early to read your Bible or pray or eat breakfast or come to church or whatever more than you loved sleep. Why will you go to work? You might hate your job. But you love having a job more than unemployment, you love providing for your family, you love a paycheck. So, even when you do what you don't want to do, its because you want to do it because you always do what you want to do.

- What does this have to do with Abraham?
- Well, it helps us to see how faith and works are connected. If we really believe that Christ is better, God is better, righteousness is better, then we wouldn't chase after sin. In other words, all disobedience is ultimately grounded in at least a moment of disbelief.
- In that moment, we exchange the truth about God for a lie.
- And the point as it relates to Abraham was that since he actually believed that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him, then the natural consequence of that faith was to act on it. To get up and get moving. The only way to not act on it, is to not believe it.
- If I told you that if you'll get up at 3am tomorrow, I'll give you \$10 million dollars & guarantee your kids perfect health for the next 50 years & promise all of your immediate & extended family's salvation, the only way you would sleep in is if you simply didn't believe me. And why would you? I don't have a billion dollars & can't promise healing or salvation, but God can.
- Not that God promises health and wealth, but at least whatever He does promise, He is perfectly able and willing to fulfill. He isn't lying and He isn't limited in His sovereignty.
- So, if you really believe that obeying is better than disobeying, then you will obey because faith inherently motivates obedience. We always do or obey whatever we believe will bring us the most satisfaction.
- Abraham believes God. And so He goes to an unknown land by faith.
- And this will be a type that applies to Christ's own journey from heaven to earth as He follows the will of the Father. And that same journey is applied to us as chapter 13 says
  - *Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.* (Hebrews 13:13-14)
- Let's keep going. Vs. 9.

***By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. (Hebrews 11:9)***

- Later in the chapter, we'll see this interesting paradox whereby there is a sense in which the patriarchs received what was promised and another sense in which those promises remained unfulfilled.
- Look at vs. 13
  - *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.* (Hebrews 11:13)
- This corresponds to what we see in the historical books of the OT where certain passages say that Israel conquered all of the promised land and other passages that say that the task was unfinished.
- Now, its easy to just call this a contradiction and throw out the Bible, but easy just means lazy. In reality, there is something much more fascinating happening here and that is pointing to the already/but not yet phenomenon we see throughout Scripture.
- There is a sense in which we are already saved, but another sense in which we are being saved. There is a sense in which Jesus is already ruling as the exalted messianic king and another sense in which the fullness of that reign awaits the consummation.
- Likewise here with Abraham. There is a sense in which Abraham receives the promise. After all he is dwelling in the promised land, but another sense in which it isn't fully fulfilled. After all, he's dwelling as a stranger, a sojourner.

- BTW, I'm reading a really good book on immigration from a biblical perspective that helps to demonstrate how the OT distinguishes between one who is legally residing in a land and one who is simply visiting or hasn't gone through the proper legal process.
- There are two main Hebrew words that are often translated separately as sojourner and foreigner. What's interesting is that if you look at the rights of sojourners and foreigners, they're quite different. For instance,
- You could charge a foreigner interest, but not a sojourner.
- A sojourner could partake of the Passover, but a foreigner could not.
- The difference was that a sojourner had been legally and culturally acclimated to Israel and were thus afforded the same rights as citizens whereas foreigners were just those who were passing through or didn't yoke themselves to Jewish law and culture.
- I mention that because again a lot of the contemporary sociopolitical debate over issues like immigration are appealing to the OT, but reading it without recognizing the layers and distinctions that it makes.
- To use texts about sojourners to support something like unfettered illegal immigration is to make a category mistake since sojourners by biblical definition are those who have legally and culturally assimilated into the host nation.
- At some point I'm going to write a blog about immigration that goes into this, but since the text is talking about his sojourn I thought I'd throw out a little appetizer.
- Now, before we move on to vs. 10, I want you to think back to the narrative of Genesis. Think about all that transpires in Abraham's life that seems to be contrary to God's promises. There is a famine, his nephew is kidnapped, he has conflict with kings, his wife is taken into a royal harem, he's old and childless. Even the fact that he is perpetually a sojourner and doesn't own the land seems to be contrary to God's promises. Those are a lot of excuses to walk away, to doubt, to despair.
- And yet, Abraham believes. He obeys. He walks by faith. So yet again, we see how this is a demonstration of the principle of faith being an assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.
- And that should be a model for us. Maybe God seems slow in fulfilling His promises. I would imagine it seemed that way for Abraham. He never owned the land, spent his twilight years childless. And yet, faith remembers the words of 2 Peter 3:9
  - *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness...* (2 Peter 3:9)
- God's delays are intentional and His promises are sure. Our job is to believe that even in the midst of the waiting and in the face of uncertainty. When our marriage is broken, when our struggle with sin seems unbreakable, when our child is wayward, when we lose our job, when our name is dragged through the mud. Faith responds with the words of the disciples who say, where else would we go. You have the words of eternal life.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 10.

***For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. (Hebrews 11:10)***

- Notice the contrast between tents and a city. Not just any city, but a city that has foundations. Putting down roots as opposed to the nomadic lifestyle that Abraham lived.
- This then points forward to chapter 12 which speaks of the new Jerusalem
  - *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering...* (Hebrews 12:22)

- And because this city has foundations, it cannot be shaken as we read in 12:28
  - *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe... (Hebrews 12:28)*
- This image of a new Jerusalem or heavenly Jerusalem comes up a number of times in the Bible, culminating ultimately in Revelation 21:2
  - *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)*
- In other words, THIS is the real promise. This is the real promised land, the new Jerusalem on the new earth.
- In other words, the land of Israel was a type, a picture, of something fuller and truer and better.
- As the Levitical and Aaronic priests foreshadowed the heavenly priest who is Christ, so the earthly land foreshadowed a better land.
- We've talked about this before. How the OT holds out the hope of long life in the land and how that promise is expanded when refracted through gospel lens. Long life becomes eternal life and the promised land becomes the entire earth.
- Again, there is so much modern angst over a tiny sliver of land in the middle East, when that isn't the point. I'm not saying that there's no significance whatsoever, but I am saying that we should read the OT through NT lenses if we want to understand God's global and eternal plan.
- The same sort of typological reading helps to understand the concept of a promised offspring as we said earlier. There is a sense in which Ishmael is a son, but there is a distinct sense in which Isaac is the son. And of Isaac's sons, there is a sense in which Esau is a son of Abraham, but a distinct sense in which Jacob bears that reference. And then the term can be applied to the church as well, but the ultimate expression of that promise is Christ Himself. He is the true heir.
- We are co-heirs insofar as we're united to Christ, but He alone is the true heir of the promises.
- So this is why God's promises to Abraham were not fully fulfilled in his day. They couldn't be because they were ultimately types, pictures, pointing beyond themselves to something better. As we'll read in a few weeks in 39-40:
  - *And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39-40)*
- Suppose Abraham did get to actually possess the land. Suppose he had long life in the land. So what? Does that usher in the kingdom? Does that solve the fundamental problem of humanity? Of course not. That promise doesn't cure what ails creation except insofar as it points beyond itself to the one in whom all the world is blessed.
- So God's promises remained unfulfilled so that His people could see that they could only be fulfilled in the true and better Son.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 11.

***By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. (Hebrews 11:11)***

- There's an interesting debate by translators as to how to translate this.
- You see the ESV on the screen. Look at how the NET translates this:
  - *By faith, even though Sarah herself was barren and he was too old, he received the ability to procreate, because he regarded the one who had given the promise to be trustworthy. (Hebrews 11:11, NET)*

- So notice, the ESV highlights the faith of Sarah while the NET highlights the faith of Abraham. Now, this isn't a debate about feminism. Later we'll read about the faith of Rahab and other women in Hebrews 11 so the question isn't whether the Bible commends women for their faith, it certainly does, but the question is which does the author mean right here in vs. 11.
- I won't get into all of the technical reasons for why there's a difference of opinion on this because at the end of the day, it doesn't matter all that much for understanding the author's point in Hebrews 11. It took both Abraham & Sarah to conceive the child & whether it's Abraham's faith or Sarah's faith on display here in Hebrews 11, the fact remains that faith is front and center.
- This faith is further expounded in a rather lengthy passage in Romans 4. Let's look at that.
  - *as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.* (Romans 4:17–21)
- Notice all of the conceptual overlaps with Hebrews 11.
- First, the phrase God calls into existence the things that do not exist corresponds to Hebrews 11:3 which said:
  - *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.* (Hebrews 11:3)
- As we talked about then, this hints at the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, out of nothing. Unlike all of the pagan mythologies of the ancient world, God didn't create the world out of some preexisting primordial matter. He called into existence what didn't exist. He did that with creation and he does that in conception as well. He calls a new life into existence each time sperm meets egg.
- IOW, the fact that Sarah & Abraham were both past the age as Hebrews says or as good as dead which is Paul's super politically correct & tactful phrase, the fact that they were barren was no more an obstacle than creating the world from nothing was an obstacle to God's design.
- Next notice the importance of the word promise in both passages. In Hebrews, it says that she considered him faithful who promised. Whether that should be she considered or he considered, the point is the same, the faith was based on a promise.
- It wasn't wishful thinking, it was grounded in the nature and character of God.
- We've talked about this a number of times before. There are all kinds of reasons that we might not fulfill a promise. Some of those have to do with our character: we lied or later changed our minds. Some of those might have to do with our finite ability as circumstances can be out of our control so we promised to be somewhere but our car broke down and our phone was dead, but God is not subject to changing character or changing circumstances.
- God's promises cannot be thwarted because they're grounded in His nature and character.
- Namely, He is immutable, that is unchanging. The immutability of God is a doctrine that's been discarded or disregarded or denied over the past century or so and yet it stands at the fountainhead of our faith. As James Dolezal writes:
  - "God's unwavering covenant faithfulness is worthy of our hope precisely because it is rooted in His unwavering and unchangeable being." (James Dolezal)

- Here's is why this is essential and I've digressed for a bit to talke about this.
- Because the idea of a changing God is like an acid that will eventually eat through all of the other divine attributes. If God can change, then that change can be used to undermine His love. After all, He loves you, but what if tomorrow He loves you not. Today He can't lie, but if He can change, maybe tomorrow He can lie. Herman Bavinck warns us of that danger by writing:
  - "Those who predicate any change whatsoever of God, whether with respect to his essence, knowledge, or will, diminish all his attributes: independence, simplicity, eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence. This robs God of his divine nature, and religion of its firm foundation and assured comfort." (Herman Bavinck)
- So this is not some abstract ethereal ivory tower conversation. It makes all the difference in the world that
  - *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* (James 1:17)
  - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* (Hebrews 13:8)
- In other words, an essential attribute of faith is believing in that which is humanistically impossible if that thing is promised by one who is perfectly faithful. We see that in the creation, we see that in a virginal conception, we see that in the resurrection of Christ. Each of these were impossible from a naturalistic perspective and yet faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 12.

***Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. (Hebrews 11:12)***

- Again, we see the phrase as good as dead that we saw in Romans 4. And that isn't just the author throwing shade at Abraham. There is a strong rhetorical point.
- You've probably heard the story of how John Tyler, the 10<sup>th</sup> president, who served from 1841-1845, had a grandson that was alive until last year. How? Well, Tyler had a son at the age of 63 and his son had a son at 75 and that son lived to be 97.
- That's an interesting historical anecdote that someone born during George Washington's presidency had a grandson still living during Trump's second term. But as improbable as that might be, it wasn't impossible.
- The reason that the text calls Abraham good as dead is to show that it wasn't just improbable, but impossible. Their reproductive abilities were dead. He and Sarah were barren, as barren as existence before creation.
- And yet, in this barren desert, a bountiful garden flowered.
- As many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand.
- The contrast couldn't be more drastic. Out of one man, God created a multitude. Out of death, God created life. Again, notice how this fits the same pattern established earlier in the chapter. Vs. 3.
  - *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.* (Hebrews 11:3)
- And remember how last time we looked at Abel, Enoch and Noah, whose faith all transcended death to some degree. Though Abel died, yet he still speaks. And Enoch who was translated into heaven and avoided death, and Noah who escaped death in the ark.

- In other words, even death doesn't stop God's promises and power. And if that's true, then what do we have to fear?
- Paul writes about just this sort of thing in Romans 8. As I read this to close us out, I'm going to do so slowly because I want you to personalize it. I want you to think in particular about circumstances that might tempt you to doubt and despair.
- If even death or non-existence won't stop God's promises, why would we think cancer or Muslims or Democrats or a relational conflict or an affair or foreign policy or the economy or whatever else occupies our anxieties could do so?
- So as I read this, take hold of this truth. Take hold of this promise.
- Believe that He who promises this is faithful. Church,
  - *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)*
- Let's pray.

### **Communion**

- If you're a visitor today, we invite you to partake of communion with us if you've trusted Christ, been obedient to His command to be baptized, and are not under church discipline or walking in high-handed unrepentant sin.
- In other words, we practice what is called close communion.
- Historically, some church practices open communion in which anyone is invited to partake. Think Oprah Winfrey saying, you get a cracker and you get a cracker. There's no disclaimer about only believers who are baptized and repentant. In other words, there is no "fencing the table."
- Other churches practice what is called closed communion. By closed it means you must be a member of that particular church to partake. If you are visiting from out of town, you need to refrain.
- But we practice what is often called close as opposed to closed communion. You have to be close to us in the sense of a shared faith and obedience and commitment to discipleship. In other words, we fence the table as wide as the universal body of Christ, but you don't have to be a member of our particular body.
- Why do we do that? Well, in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul writes this:
  - *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)*
- Notice the warning there. If you take this in an unworthy manner, you do so at your own peril. As we've said many times, that doesn't mean if you messed up this week. We've all messed up this week. But if you are presumptuous. If you are just pretending. If you're just going through the motions. If you have unresolved conflict, don't take the elements. Rather, repent. Believe that obedience is better.

- So I want to give you a minute or so to search your heart and pray and then we'll partake together.
  - *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)*