

Faith. There was a grandson who was a pilot. He was very close to his grandmother. He was forever trying to get his grandmother to let him take her up in his plane. She would never do it. Finally he convinced her and she went up in the plane but he noticed she was very uncomfortable.

When they landed the grandson's wife asked her if she enjoyed the flight. She said it was nice but let me tell you a secret she said. I didn't let all of my weight down.

She trusted her grandson but only up to a point.

There was a man who while walking on a mountain trail slipped off a cliff. He was hanging off the cliff clinging to the root of a tree. He prayed dear Lord save me. He heard a voice from above, just let go and I'll catch you. The man thought for a long time then said, is there anyone else up there.

It's like that in faith. Faith is a very hard thing. When we confess to someone that we are having trouble, that we are struggling in the faith, it probably means that we are on the right track.

Someone has compared the Christian faith with other religions saying: Other religions are about doing things for God. The Christian faith is about God doing things for us. And I would say: and our trusting that God. That's the hard part – to trust God and not our own abilities.

The readings for today were picked so that the theme of the first lesson and the gospel go together. At least that's the idea. Today not only does the first lesson and the gospel go together but it seems that all three lessons go together and they are all about faith.

We begin with our first lesson where Abram is telling God that he doesn't have any children. You of course remember that God promised to make him a great nation. To have a great nation you have to start with at least one child. Abraham is known as the Father of the faith. When God told him he would be the father of a great nation he believed him. But here Abraham is reminding God, I don't have any children and one of my servant's children will be my heir. God says, Oh no he won't.

God took him outside had him, "look up toward the heavens and count the stars, if you can count them. So shall your descendants be."

Then Abram did an amazing thing, he believe him.

There still were no children, no babies, no pregnancies. How could he believe him if there wasn't any proof? How could he believe him. Abram is very old, Sari is old, it's been a long time since God first told him he would be the father of a great nation. How could he believe? How could he have faith?

In our second reading from Hebrews we read: Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

The man on the cliff didn't have faith, didn't want faith. He wanted to be sure, he wanted to see and touch and feel.

But the Christian faith is just that, faith. The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. By faith Abraham obeyed. Isaac and Jacob were inheritors of that promise, by faith. Listen to verse 13 it really captures faith. *All these died in faith*, he is talking about everyone from Adam and Noah through Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob to Moses.

*All these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them.* They had God's promise, God's word but it wasn't actualized. There weren't in the promised land.

This is the part of faith that makes it so hard. Abraham was promised a land to live in, he never saw it. Nor did his children, grandchildren, great, great, many generations. Even Moses never entered it. But it came true. But Abraham and Sarah and many of their descendants didn't see it.

They could only see it only from a distance but they had faith. This week we had Glenn Peter's funeral. What did we hold on to and console ourselves with? It was a faith, faith in something, none of us has seen. It was a faith we only get to see at a distance. So of course faith can be a difficult thing.

In the beginning of the first lesson and the gospel reading God starts out by saying Do not be afraid. *Do not be afraid* Abram, *Do not be afraid, little flock.* God or one of God's messengers give the message *do not be afraid* 62 times. Why do they give the message do not be afraid so many times? Maybe because faith and trust are so hard.

But even though it's hard. God still doesn't want us to be afraid, God wants us, to believe him and trust him.

It is very hard but have faith in God and not in possessions. Not in that which can be stolen, or can wear out, or can be destroyed. It is very hard, but have faith in Jesus and not in armies and governments. It is very hard but have faith in what God does for you than what you can do or what you have done for God.

Religious discipline can help to keep us faithful, as long as it isn't the religious discipline we are having faith in. Faith can be difficult especially when it takes so long and is hard to see any hope.

But Jesus says, *Do not be afraid, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Faith makes us right with God and frees us to serve in his kingdom. By faith we live and walk with God. amen.