

**Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16**  
**Luke 12: 32-40**  
**August 11, 2013**  
**Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church**

A boat is safe in the harbor. But boats are meant to leave the harbor and set out upon uncertain seas.

A rocket ship is certainly safe on the launch pad, but it is meant to be thrust into the unexplored heavens.

We may stand in the shallow end of a swimming pool and be perfectly safe. But we are meant to swim in waters where we cannot touch the bottom.

Faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the conviction of what we do not see. Faith is the belief that there is more to life than meets the eye. Faith is that which convinces us that we are meant to leave the safe harbor of the secure life and venture upon uncertain seas trusting in a greater destiny. Faith is the deep yearning to be lifted off the launch pad of unfulfilled potential and to be thrust to explore among the planets and stars. Faith is that which causes us to trust that we will not drown when we lose contact with the solid floor of the swimming pool and to discover the joy of moving with confidence in water of unreachable depths.

Faith is that assurance that there is more to life than what we can see, touch, taste, hear and achieve by our own power and will. But it is more than that. Faith is also the *conviction* that there really is a More of life. There is a reality which, although we cannot see or touch it, is nonetheless real. Indeed when by faith we step out—when we leave the harbor, are thrust off the launch pad and dare to swim in waters over our head, we discover that this reality is in fact

more real than the merely material world. Stated differently, when faith calls us away from a life of seeking security at all costs, the new depth of life we experience breathes new life and joy into what was before merely ordinary.

Thus it is the very act of being willing to let go of our safety and security into places and situations where we have no prior experience that we realize how dear and precious *is* the life we have. It is in journeying out into circumstances without the protection of our carefully constructed lives that life itself becomes a miraculous treasure that is too great and grand for our one mortal life to contain. We *must* share it. It spills over the lip of our overflowing cup and brings living water to the world around us.

This is the miracle and dynamic power of faith. As we were thrust from our mother's wombs into a strange world, so we are meant to be born again into a world that can't be seen *without* the eyes of faith. Faith is the assurance that there *is* such a world. This is the heart of why we baptize children and nurture them in the life of a community of believers. We want them to enter into the life that brings the unbounded life of God that was in Jesus into our human lives.

But friends, in order for this to happen we must experience that faith for ourselves. For too many years pastors and their congregations have been satisfied with...going to church. We have not believed that anything was supposed to *happen* as a result of going to church, or praying, or reading the Bible. And we have been grateful when people join us in *going to church*. But even we join (is it Peggy or Brenda Lee) in wondering "Is that all there is?" If there is a God who created the heavens and the earth and who is revealed to humanity in and through his son, Jesus, why is not this God more evident? If there is transforming power that comes

through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, why am I not more of a resurrected soul?

Why am I not free from the circumstances of my life? What evidence is there in the world that humanity is better off with these religions which seem better at fighting each other and seeking members and money than seeking to serve in the world?

Why should anyone “go to church?”

Frankly, as I have said before, I don't think anyone *should* go to church, if going to church is a substitute for authentic encounter with God. But I do not think we who gather here come in order to *go to church*. We are here because faith nudges us that there is a More to life that wants to be known not just in our heads but in our hearts. We are here because we believe the More has to do with our personal lives day by day in all dimensions of life. We are here because this faith leads us to suspect that this More has to do with people other than ourselves. Indeed this More seeks to be known and active in the lives of every human being in the world. This More seeks for the entire creation to recognize that we are one family seeking the good of one another. This More has designed us in such a way that we cannot create one human community through social action, politics, government programs and good will alone. This united human community can only come into being through recognizing and submitting to this higher, transcending reality. Jesus called it the Kingdom of God. We cannot create it on our own. We cannot will it to happen. We only begin to approach it by...*faith*.

We have to believe that the Kingdom of God is real. It is *that which we cannot see*. It is that which our faith causes us to yearn for. It is faith which inspires in us a vision larger than our own lives and which calls us out of the safe harbor, lifts us off the launch pad and leads us to swim in deep waters.

It may be good news or it may be bad news: but the truth is that faith is a gift that we receive. We cannot make it happen or earn it. It is something which we must daily seek. I do not even think we can get faith by crying out to some power in which we do not believe to give us faith. I believe that we must ask this power greater than ourselves to enter our hearts. We must be willing to release control of our lives to this power we call God. It is the *willingness that opens the door*. With the Roman soldier we may cry to Jesus, “Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!”

When we are willing for God to release us from the control of the circumstances of this life and live in his kingdom God through the Holy Spirit is right there. When we take our eyes off of all that thwarts us and causes us anxiety and turn to the God of the Big Picture, that is of salvation in Jesus Christ, we become join Abraham and Sarah and all the faithful in the greatest adventure of this life and the one to come—the life of faith: the assurance of what God in us inspires us to seek and the conviction that what God through Jesus has begun, he will complete though we cannot see or control the outcome. Amen.