

February 15 Worship

Reader- Laurie Dillon

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”* John 20:29

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Opening Scripture- Psalm 99(page 520)

Opening Chorus- 506- Open Our Eyes, Lord

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: The earth has its kings, but God is ruler of all.

People: Praise God above all, the giver of life!

Leader: The mountains may tremble, the oceans may roar.

People: But God's presence is more powerful than the earth itself.

Leader: Come into God's presence, for God is among us now.

People: O God, show us your glory; we seek your ways.

All: Come to the Rock, the God of life, for God is present now.

Hymn of Praise- 117- Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- We worship you, O God, with songs of praise. We worship you with words of prayer and with ears that listen for you to speak your saving truth into our lives. We worship you in the silent spaces where we struggle for hope and for courage. We long for a glimpse of your glory: the glory that shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it; the glory that touches lives with a beauty so holy that it heals the wounded soul; the glory that gives strength to the weary. Open our eyes Lord as we pray in the way You taught, saying... *Lord's Prayer...*

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end.
Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Exodus 24:12-18(page 67)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 17:1-9(page 851)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- Open My Eyes That I May See

New Testament Scripture- 2 Peter 1:16-21(page1062)

Message

“Open Your Eyes And Believe”

Are you one of those people who need proof for everything? “I'll believe it when I see it,” or “Seeing is believing,” or perhaps you need absolute proof of any statement you hear. Having blind faith is considered by just about everyone to be a trait that is not admired. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”(Hebrews 11:1) Simply put, the biblical definition of faith is “trusting in something you cannot explicitly prove.” Blind faith is not what God expects of His children. Our faith is not mindless or unproven belief in something that cannot be proven. We believe in God because we have good reason to. There are many examples in scripture that justify our faith in God.

Let's start by looking at one of the greatest examples of faith found in the Old Testament. God told Abraham that Abraham would be a father of many nations and that his wife Sarah would bear him a child even though they were very old. Indeed, Sarah was 90, and Abraham was around 100 when Isaac was finally born to them. Then God told Abraham to do the unthinkable, to kill Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). Upon receiving the order, Abraham did not question God. He “blindly” followed God’s orders and traveled quite a distance to a mountain with the intention of killing his son. In the end, God stopped him and said, “Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son” (Genesis 22:12). This account makes it seem that God was rewarding and complimenting Abraham for blind faith, and since Abraham is one of the models given to us to follow, it would seem that blind faith is the ideal. That, however, is not the whole story. If we turn to the book of Hebrews and read what it says about Abraham, we can find out a bit more.

The 11th Chapter of Hebrews is often referred to as the hall of fame of faith. In it

we find many of the greatest people of the Bible and their accomplishments through faith. Abraham is listed more than once, but verses 18-19 tell us Abraham “reasoned” that God had promised a great nation through Isaac and that even if Isaac were killed, God could bring Isaac back from the dead, and because of that reasoning, not blind faith, Abraham followed through with the command. Abraham did not act blindly. Instead, he used his powers of reason, based on what he knew about God, to think it through. He knew God’s nature as a faithful God, and he remembered God’s promise regarding Isaac. Then he acted accordingly.

Throughout Scripture we find that reason, wisdom, and logic are lifted up as good traits. For example, Proverbs 3:13 says we are blessed when we find knowledge and understanding. God created humans with the ability to think and reason, and God expects us to use the gift He has given us. If God had wanted us to blindly follow, He would have made us like all the herd animals he created, beasts who simply follow without thinking. We were created special, in His Image, so that we could think and come to rational decisions to do what is best for us. Now, this can lead to some not so pleasant results since we oftentimes don't do exactly what is in our best interest. We are expected to act in faith on God’s promises just as Abraham did, but we do that from a position of trust based on all the knowledge we have of God. Abraham followed God’s order based on his faith that God would keep His promise to raise up a nation through Isaac. Abraham had learned that God would keep His promises through a lifetime of walking with God, so this was a reasoned and informed faith. There will be times in our walk with God that we will act purely on faith because we do not have the whole picture, as in the case of Abraham. However this faith is not blind; it is based on knowledge of God’s nature and character, His promises in the Scriptures, and our personal experience walking with God every day.

There are many quotations regarding seeing and believing from many people, some who are well known and some who are not. Let's hear just a few; Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe. *St. Augustine*

Faith is taking the first step when you don't see the whole staircase. *Rev ML King Jr*
I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else. *C.S. Lewis*

These are only 3 of many quotes but they say it fairly well. No matter how it is said, seeing and believing is an individual concept. Each of us shows our faith in different ways. The important part comes from us just having faith in something beyond ourselves. When we turn our faith inward we lose sight of the importance of believing that there is somewhere we can turn when life turns against us. If our faith is in ourselves only, we quickly realize that we have very little power over anything.

Having the willingness to turn things over to God gives us strength from a different source, a strength far beyond our own. It is difficult to turn to God when we hurt. We want to fix things ourselves but we can soon become overwhelmed and give up. Having faith gives us strength beyond ourselves. It is through this God given strength that we are able to overcome obstacles that seem to be beyond our own ability to conquer. We find solutions to problems that felt way too complicated to solve. Having faith in God's ability makes our lives easier to live. There will be times that we may feel that God is ignoring us, when if we stop and think about it, He is fixing it in His own way. 2nd Corinthians 2:6-7 tells us; "So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight." If we think about it, faith ends with sight. Once we see for ourselves that something is so, we no longer need to have faith in it.

There is one thing that we must have if faith is to be a power in our lives. This one thing is something that we, as human beings, find very difficult to deal with; trust. We cannot trust someone we don't know, and that is the secret of learning to trust God. Knowing God and trusting Him does not come naturally. We must have a relationship in order to develop that level of trust that is required. Trusting God is an all or nothing deal. We cannot trust just a bit. This trust works 2 ways. Can God trust us as much as we trust Him? It is probably a good thing that God is forgiving. True faith requires 100% trust in God. Anything less weakens our faith and makes susceptible to doubt. If we want strong faith, we must have strong trust. Praise be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- Lord, you are the mighty one, You created light; you send your light around the world. You sent your son into the world of darkness as the one true light, the light that brings hope to all. And yet we want to capture it like a firefly and keep it to ourselves so that only we have the good feelings and experience. At the same time there are those who would reject your light, try to find any way imaginable to cover the light. But God, you told us to be the light of the world and to let our light shine. And so today as we pray, we want to let our light shine for others whose light may have grown dim, or has almost gone out or yes even are in the dark. We want to shine the light of hope to those who are discouraged, dejected, despondent and disappointed. We want to shine your light of love to those who are our enemies, are hated, are bullies, abused, bullied, disenfranchised. We want to shine your light of grace to those who have given up, don't believe God loves them, and don't feel wanted, lonely and needy. We want to shine your light of faith, for those who are hungry to believe yet are not sure, those who have struggled a long time with chronic illnesses, frustration, anger and

disbelief. Lord, we carry your light into this world for all to see what a glorious and wonderful God you are. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 528- Abide With me

Benediction-Come down from the mountain with mountain-like faith. Walk on God's paths as bright, shining lights. Live in God's ways with faith, hope, and love. Go into the world transformed and renewed! Go in peace. Amen.