

Hebrews 11:23-31

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. I would like to extend my welcome to you, especially those of you who have come to church on a Sunday such as this to inquire whether the assembly of those gathered in the name of Christ matters in the world in which we live today. And a special welcome to Arthur and Shirley Jackson returning just to visit us on a Sunday from Kansas City.

We praise God for you. As I tell my children and now my mentors, you are right where you belong. Well, many, many have awakened this week to an uneasy internal gnawing of the mind and soul in ways that have found fear rising within. I've heard it with my own ears.

I am fearful given the world in which we live. I have heard it said even this week in my own presence that I have never seen such fear rising in the hearts of a people.

which I guess is why we come to church, to get a clear perspective on the life we are leading and the times that God has asked us to live. Our text today, interestingly, requires no break from our normal pattern of sequential preaching to meet the needs of the hour.

[2 : 04] Our text gives us three vignettes from the life of a prophet, the life of a people, and the life of a prostitute that all demonstrate faith in the midst of geopolitical realities that we're causing the people to fear. So when I awakened this week and wondered what should I be doing, I'm doing what I'm always doing, opening the word to where it is next, knowing, believing, and confident in the fact that it, not me, will meet the needs of the people.

The church, of all places, ought to be an environment where fear is cast out, and vibrant, flourishing, relaxed faith is flourishing.

Look at verses 23 to 28. Moses, the prophet. Verse 23, by faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Notice that faith here is contrasted with fear, and it's a fear that was rightly rooted in geopolitical turmoil. The fear of the parents and the concern of this newborn was not one limited to the expulsion from a land, but extinction from life itself.

Not a lack of opportunity, but a loss of breath. So, get it straight this morning. Church of the Living God, I want you to know that difficult seasons are not new.

[4 : 18] Church of the Living God, Now, it can be a fearful thing to bring life into a fraying world.

But that fear is met with faith. In all likelihood, they were pregnant and then received the news that their child, if it was to be a boy, was to be drowned.

Yet, it says, by faith, when he was born, he was hidden for three months. When you read the Old Testament narrative in Exodus, it says, in wonderful south side style, that they knew he was a fine child.

And the Hebrew word, of course, is *tov*, or good. It's the echo in Exodus of the Genesis narrative. For while they were in Exodus, the people were fruitful, and they were multiplying, and as the echo of Genesis and recreation was at work, the edict came forward for the sons to be killed.

And yet, they looked at their son, and there must have been something striking about him physically, no doubt. I'm not spiritualizing it away, but there was something in the countenance of the child that reminded them of good.

[6 : 01] God's good. That God had a plan for this one. They had no idea what it was. They knew that God was a God of recreating strength and power and goodness, and He had given birth through their loins and their womb, and this one was to be held on to, guarded and protected.

That's faith. They were not afraid, but lived by faith. My sister Amy, the youngest of seven, often tells people, I tell you, don't stop at six, because she was seven.

My mother conceived, surprisingly, the seventh of seven, five years after the six.

They were not planning on this one. And this one was to give life, or enter into life, in the summer of 1972. two. The falling height of the rollicking social unrest within our own country.

The summer of 68, of course. This is instructional for those of you who are young. The Democratic National Convention held in Chicago to great turmoil.

[7 : 43] 69, the Chicago Weathermen and the riots. 1970, the Kent State bombing, Kent State shootings, with four gone.

1971, the Attica prison uprising, with 37 killed. May 13th of 1972, just a couple of months before my sister enters the world, Richard Milhouse Nixon goes to extenuating circumstances and bombs, even with greater fervor, things in North Vietnam, to midst great protest run throughout the country. The Vietnam War would not close until 1973. At that time, my mother is pregnant. And she began to wonder, God, why a baby now?

She was fearful. And the Lord led her in her reading to the birth of Esther, that ancient woman of faith, and the divine dictum, which is inscripturated upon her life, that she was born, what, for those of you who have read it, for such a time as this?

My sister is an instrument of grace in an ungodly world. Who lives confidently, knowing that God has given her life.

[9 : 13] Moses' mother carried her son in a time more precarious than you and I have seen and probably will see. How about mothers today?

Let me put it to you. I'm old now. I can get away with this. Bearing children is by nature an act of faith. It's a demonstration of faith.

And guarding the lives of those born is likewise rooted in faith. One of our dear staff mothers gave birth last night.

Amanda Pettaway to a boy, Samuel. I mention it this morning because Amanda and Ashanti are African American.

and I know, given that they are dear friends of mine, how their mind works in regard to the world that their son is entering.

[10 : 34] By faith, by faith, fear is cast out. Today is the birthday of, well, I'm sure you're all aware, Saint Augustine.

That's one of my saints, one of my heroes. Augustine was born today. Why do I mention this?

Because the world can and does change on the days when babies are born.

May we fill this city with faith, not fear. I could sit there all day, but the text does move on, and so I should go with it.

In 24 to 26, he's no longer there in his infancy, but we find him at the end of his collegiate career, you might say. By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking reward. He refused, choosing rather, he considered.

[12 : 14] He renounced all the privileges of his upbringing. If you haven't read the Old Testament narrative, he was adopted into Pharaoh's household with the finest of private educations, with the greatest wealth that could ever be had, with the edictum upon him that he would rule over all the people.

Let me put it to you this way. He had all the advantages of upbringing, inherent power given to him through historical realities, privilege, private education, the greatest of names, an internship like none you could get, greased access.

this. He had what we call social capital. And what did he do? Come graduation, he walked away from it all.

He refused to be called, notice the language, a son of Pharaoh's house. Ironic, given the book of Hebrews, launches out, considering Jesus, who was the son of God, who went through all those sufferings as a son, and he says, my family identity is with the people of God.

In other words, he changed his allegiance from his upbringing to the faith community, in the midst of their being mistreated. That's faith.

[13 : 54] Let me put it to you this way, that he took on the reproach of Christ, forward-looking, who was the son who would go through all of these things, over the treasuries of Egypt.

Wow! This is truly a picture of a descent into greatness.

It's a fall in the eyes of the world that was fueled by faith. Not afraid. not afraid to become a nobody from nowhere.

Notice, it says that he left. That is an act of faith. Now, there are many of you here who are what I would call majority culture Moses.

You've had it. The one thing that keeps you from identifying with the people of God is an unwillingness to relinquish it all. To walk away from it.

[15 : 04] To renounce it. To look to a different culture and a different city, realizing that it will mean isolation and perhaps 40 years of laboring in a desert over sheep.

But he was looking to a reward that was much greater. He reminds me here of Jonathan in David's day. Jonathan was born as the son of the king.

He had all the rights to the reign of the people. And Jonathan relinquished it all, took off his armor, put it at the feet of the Lord's anointed, namely David, and pledged himself to him.

And that's what many of you need to do. Renounce the treasuries of the world, the social capital you've been given by birth, and say I'm a Christian, and I dwell with those who are mistreated, and I give myself to the nomadic life of wandering through this world, oh pilgrim, in this barren land.

When I was 25 years old, I wrote a friend who was a writer, and said if you were going into ministry at the age of 25, what would you tell me? He said, well, I'm not, I've got it in print, but this is paraphrased, I'm not sure if he said well.

[16 : 26] He said, I think God prepares people to be useful in the world today much the way he's always done it, and then he raised Moses.

He'll send you away to work in some far off little place for 40 years or so until he's ready to call your name. He said, I'm not too happy with those who gain success in ministry early and immediately.

He left and then notice finally he kept he kept the Passover he sprinkled I love the full circle of 24 to 28 this is a supreme act of faith in his elderly years he's 80 by now look get it this way having been protected by his parents at birth he now puts an entire generation of infants under the protection of the sign of the covenant he's a parent who takes responsibility in faith for applying the sign of the covenant upon the next generation and when he didn't want to do it the angel of the lord came to him and was going to actually take his own life and his wife had to do it for him we have a lot of parents here who are giving birth to children I could list probably a dozen within the last year now you know my convictions on the covenant on the sign of baptism for all five of my children came under water at their birth and I'm not here to argue this morning for the biblical nature of my view although I could but I want to say a word to the parents what keeps you from in faith taking up the right and the responsibility to raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the lord even more to put them under the sign of the covenant or at least know why you're not and yet you're giving them to him anyway this was an act of faith on

Moses's part the children of Israel couldn't do a thing for themselves it took a dad to take blood throw it over the door that the destruction would alleviate its presence from his own household it took a parent to shelter those in their midst and that is exactly what he does that the firstborn might not the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch him the implication is clear let me put it to you this way at least generally speaking how you interface with children reveals much about your faith I want this church to be a church that if God would gift you with children you would never be afraid of it and it is a gift not given to all I will never regret having the sense of seeing all the strollers lined up in the back and calling us the church of the sacred stroller because in my heart

I am revealing to you this needs to be a congregation of faith where young white women bear children young black women bear children young Asian women bear children young Latino women bear children where they look at Holy Trinity and they say my word they are afraid of nothing now let's go from there then from the prophet to the people verses 29 and 30 notice faith is not always to an individual we are Americans so we always think in terms of faith and regarding personal terms but here in the midst of a chapter filled with individuals you've got a vignette about faith in a collective moment it moves from faith of the individual to the faith of the entire people the singular faith gives way to the plurality of faith verse 29 by faith the people crossed the

[21 : 05] Red Sea as on dry land but the Egyptians when they attempted to do the same were drowned by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days there was a collective fear this too was rooted in a geopolitical reality if you look back at Exodus 14 and verse 10 you can see the context of the crossing when Pharaoh drew near the people of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold the Egyptians were marching after them and they feared greatly they

feared greatly their backs in other words were against the wall and it was God who got them there they were hard pressed they were hemmed in faith required that they would walk between two towering walls of water which must have had some kind of incredible wind tunnel effect because actually they were held back by winds the walls were and the ground underneath them was completely dry the scriptures continually speak in terms of them walking on dry land they weren't on a sand bottom that even had any moisture yet in it they walked on hard clay like path through these towering walls it was collective it was fierce in other words they ventured on faith is the active agent in their deliverance from the enemy it takes faith for the church to find a way through let me put it to you this way we need a way through you can't go back you can't go forward you been there has the church been there this is a collective agent at work the church was to set out and the one thing that would would mitigate their movement was grumbling the grumbling rising within the corporate people of

God was an indication that they were not being faithful so finally God tells Moses what are you talking to me for tell them to set out and they went by faith what do we need deliverance from what does the collective body of Christ need deliverance from I'm not sure exactly what applicable! thing I can grab here other than to tell you there are times where we are going to need the deliverance of God and the way forward that's the way the walls came down verse 30 notice corporate faith is not only the active agent in delivering you from things faith was the active agent in gaining victory over things defeating an enemy is a different thing!

than being delivered from an enemy but having been delivered from Egypt they now walked forward defeating enemies now don't get me wrong our world and our mission is not geopolitical in nature we fight against a different enemy we're taking no ground but that doesn't mean that there aren't spiritual forces and powers and activities where the church is to continually be enlarging itself and moving forward and for Israel what was simply required was that they would follow God's word that they would trust in his promises it was the most outrageous war strategy ever given get the people up walk around the city once a day and go home blow your trumpets along the way get the people up do it again on the!

day the trumpets blowing three times and a the indication is that it was completely their trust in the word of God that would do something for them that's it often I have told you that this church will continue to put simple raw exposure to the word of God at the center of our worship and I am at times met with resistance from those who would want me and us to adopt a different strategy that once in seven days we would give ourselves to something other than simply the word put forward and you should know I will not do anything other than what I am doing plenty of churches are have Adam but I'm struck this week with the awesomeness of

[26 : 21] God's word I don't need to break from our series in Exodus to meet your fears about geopolitical realities because God so ordains in his word that the very next text is talking to you and so here we are one day in seven silence before the word for it will do all the heavy lifting third the prostitute the prophet the people the prostitute verse thirty one by faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient I'm sorry because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies in Rahab we have one of the most wonderful women of biblical faith and do you know what her reality was rooted in it says in chapter two verses nine that the fear of

Israel had fallen upon the inhabitants of Jericho actually talking about them melting away so again you have the fear but notice it's very different fear in Moses the collective fear was with the people of God and they fear is on the enemies of God and yet we have one with faith I love this woman this outsider who provided protection to the people of God at the risk of her own life this is nothing short of aiding and abetting the enemy this is nothing short of treason and it says that she welcomed them with peace this is a woman who used her home to protect God's people and she did not perish I've always been amazed well I'm not going to go there God saved her it would be her her family

Boaz who eventually then would emulate her faith by bringing a Moabite woman into his own home as his wife and it would be her offspring who would be connected to David himself the king of Israel and later Christ Jesus Christ comes from a Moabite woman in an interracial marriage conducted by faith of a man who saw his grandmother do this don't tell me that there's nothing for us to do at the time of Noah's birth Noah not in the scriptures but my first son our first son if you don't know my son he hasn't been here very long he's up and gone most of you might not ever meet him but at any rate our first born is named Noah and at the time of Noah's birth a woman came to my office I had

an!

first infant she said I'm in danger of my life I thought she'd come into the wrong office she said she'd come from the city of Chicago that she was on the run from her husband that he had beaten her that he threatened to kill her to make matters worse he had some connection with law enforcement and she was convinced he would use all the means at his disposal to find her and she said can I sleep in your house I thought are you kidding me somebody's trying to kill you and you want to come behind my door and I got a little newborn son and then I did the wise thing talked to my wife we made the bed put clean sheets on it took her in for a few days boy

I tell you I was locking that door at night making sure our lights were turned off like nobody was home but we did it in faith Rahab was a woman who was willing to risk that those who were in trouble would be okay she's like the proverbs 31 woman strength and dignity are her clothing and she laughs at the time to come wow I want women like that in this church we need Rahabs we need laughter in the face of a world spinning out in fear no fear here we're done with that at holy trinity in fact you'll now have something to say to those who are fearful no no fear here we ought to be marked visibly by confidence those who attend holy trinity ought to have their eyes up their feet forward their shoulders back their pace relaxed time for whoever comes in front of you a word for whoever needs you a bed for those who are desperately longing for protection our walk ought to be purposeful we ought to be able to provide an answer to the questions our city can't get around all done through faith

[32 : 20] I'm not naive not everyone's going to be protected not every couple wanting children is going to have them not every couple that does have them will be able to keep them when Jesus was born the whales went up from the women as the children were ripped of very life itself!

! It doesn't have the money to bury your own child and to stand in the gap and to walk with and alongside it needs to be done regularly routinely confidently faithfully to this church sits under the hearing of a word that you might be unleashed into a world at absolute rest working all the while our heavenly father we we come today looking at these vignettes of personalized faith and corporate faith in three settings of extreme political turmoil and we thank you for the timeless nature of your word and I pray that we would be your people

I pray that we would have some who are seeking even today shelter from the judgment that is to come by harboring within their own heart your son who will save them from destruction I pray that as a church you would give us wisdom when it comes time to walk through tall walls of water on either side I pray that you would give us a quietness of presence to defeat all the spiritual forces that will walk against us in this day I pray that we would live in a world fraying at the edges with quiet confident faith hiding children giving birth laughing together knowing that your son is moving us forward to that final day Lord

God may strength and dignity be ours in Christ's name amen