

As we look back over the past few weeks and months, life has been extremely challenging and difficult for many of us. Many of our congregation have dealt with declining health, surgeries, and been in the hospital and rehab. And unfortunately, several families have lost loved ones and friends, such as Albert, Ken, and Tim. And then there is the financial concern with the up and down stock market and the uncertainty of tariffs. Depending on which political party you support, you are either happy with the direction of the country or depressed. With so many things happening in our congregation, I thought this would be a good time to review a topic that we have discussed in the past – walking in faith.

You know things happen in life for a reason. Sometimes God sends us trials, problems, and disappointments to help us grow spiritually. Also, when one door shuts, God usually opens another. Now while God opens the door, He also expects us to learn something from every situation in life. As I look back over my time here at High Desert, one of the biggest lessons for me has been to learn to walk in faith. Many mornings during my quiet time, after reading the Bible and my devotionals, I will write in my journal: “Walk in faith; take one day at a time, trust in the Lord and see what He will do.” I know that I wrote that a lot this past week with all the demands and problems I had to deal with.

Now our scripture text for this morning is one simple, but important verse taken from 2 Corinthians 5:7 - “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” The *Message* paraphrases it this way: “It’s what we trust in but don’t yet see that keeps us going.” Another translation of the Bible states: “For we live by believing and not by seeing.” This verse emphasizes the importance of faith in our lives, even though we cannot physically see God. It reminds us as believers that God has a purpose for our lives, even in difficult times.

We all have times in our lives when we must walk in faith and trust in the Lord. There are times when we have to deal with an unexpected trip to the ER, an unwelcome diagnosis and illnesses such as cancer, Parkinson’s disease, or heart conditions. There are those times we are waiting for a loved one to come out of surgery, for a loan to be approved, or for the results of a medical test. Some of us are going through some very difficult times right now. It’s at times like this that we must walk in faith and trust in the Lord.

So how would you define faith? Once a minister asked a woman: “What is faith?” To which she replied: “Well, I’m not that smart or educated, but to me it is taking God at His word.” Not a bad definition. In the classic movie *Miracle of 34th Street*, Santa Claus says: “Faith is believing in things when common sense tells you not to.” The Bible defines faith in Hebrews 11:1 as follows: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Faith

is the ability to trust what we cannot see. Philip Yaney said that faith means trusting in advance what will only make sense in reverse.

So, what have I learned so far about walking in faith? Notice that I said “so far,” because I’m still learning; I’m still trying to walk in faith! For me, it’s a day-to-day journey. Well, the first thing we need to do is stay in touch with the Lord. That’s why I continue to encourage you to have a daily quiet time of prayer. This time alone with God gives you the opportunity to talk things over with God. And you can bet that God and I do a lot of talking. I sure hope that He is not getting tired of me asking why certain things happened the way they do. Over the past few years, I have found that these conversations have helped me grow in my confidence and assurance of the promise of Romans 8:28 that all things will work out for those who love and trust Him. Someone once said that a test of faith is whether you are surprised when your prayers are answered.

In the 18th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus shares the story of a widow who keeps going to a judge seeking justice. Initially the judge rejects her request, but after a while he gives in and gives her what she wants, not because he is merciful, but because of her persistence. As we walk in faith, we need to be persistent in our prayers.

But prayer without action is useless. Someone said that when we pray, the Lord expects us to have tools in our hands. In other words, action must accompany prayer. Notice that I said that we should “walk in faith,” not “wait in faith.” Walking implies that we are moving forward, taking one step at a time in faith. We are called to step out in faith each and every day. We walk by faith. We don’t stay still, drowning in our misery.

Prayer is not a substitute for doing, thinking, watching, suffering, or giving; prayer is a support for all other efforts. Faith in Jesus doesn’t wait until we understand; if that was the case, it wouldn’t be faith. But God expects us to keep moving forward and not sit back and wait; to keep walking. We cannot sit back and idly wait for things to happen; we must work at the issue that we are dealing with based on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Now many people are experiencing fear these days. As I noted earlier, many of us are concerned about our health, our loved ones, family relationships, financial situation, and the future. Unfortunately, fear is a natural part of life. It defines our lives in many ways. The letters for fear, F-E-A-R, can stand for “False Expectations Appearing Real.” Remember what President Franklin D. Roosevelt said during World War II: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Someone once said that we should not fear tomorrow, because God is already there. To emphasize the importance of faith and trust in the face of uncertainty, Corrie Ten Boom said: “Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”

Faith in God is the Christian response to fear. One of the most frequent quotes throughout the Bible is “Do not be afraid.” This phrase appears at least 80 times from Genesis to Revelation depending on the translation. From the mouths of prophets and angels we hear these words of encouragement throughout the Bible from God to His children. In Isaiah 41:10, God says: “Fear not, for I am with you: do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand.” In John 14:27, Jesus assures us: “Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” I once heard a preacher on TV say: “Pray, don’t panic.”

Jesus promised in Matthew 28:20 that He would be with us even to the end of time. Because of this, we have hope as we face whatever life throws our way. Now God may not deliver us from whatever situation we are in, but He does promise to be with us no matter what we are facing. In Psalm 55:22 King David writes: “Cast your burdens on the Lord, and He will sustain you.” He didn’t say: “Cast your burdens on the Lord and He will immediately fix everything that troubles you.” He says that God will sustain you, support you, and help you endure. Remember God is with us; He is in control; and He will get us through whatever we are facing at this time.

The thought of God watching over us reminds me of a story of a church luncheon. In the buffet line next to the apples there was a sign that said: “Apples – only take one per person. Remember God is watching.” A little farther down the line next to the cookies, someone had written with a crayon: “Cookies – take all you want; God’s watching the apples!”

Now when you try to walk in faith, especially for a long time, there is the tendency to get discouraged. As the days, weeks, and even months go by without any progress or news, you begin to wonder if your prayers are ever going to be answered. As I noted earlier, my daily quiet time has been critical in my attempt to walk in faith. Not only has the time in prayer been essential to my walk, but so has taking time each day to read the Bible. I remember a quote by Dwight L. Moody where he said that when he prayed, he was talking to God, but when he read the Bible, God was talking to him and it was more important for God to speak and for him to listen.

When you are struggling with doubt and discouragement because nothing is happening or getting better, it is amazing how often a scripture passage will speak to you and give you hope. Martin Luther, the Great Reformer, said: “The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.” In this world of constant information and news, I have found that the Bible is the only real word of truth and encouragement. Let the Word of God be your constant companion as you walk in faith.

Another way to overcome discouragement is to keep going. There’s the old saying: “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” The Apostle Paul understood this when he wrote

Romans 5:1-5 – “We also rejoice in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.” Unfortunately, whether we like it or not, it all starts with suffering. One translation of the Bible refers to this as “troubles.” Of course, this is something that we all know something about and have in common. We all know what it is to experience troubles and the need to trust in the Lord and walk in faith.

As Christians we face all kinds of problems and troubles every day – bad news, strained relationships, sorrow, disappointments, illness, and loneliness to name just a few. Paul says that all this stress produces perseverance. Now the Greek word used here means more than simple endurance. It means a spirit which can overcome the world; it means a spirit which does not just passively endure, but which actively overcomes the trials in life. In John 16:33, Jesus says: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” We are encouraged to keep pressing on, trusting in God even in the worst situations. For example, consider the postage stamp; its usefulness consists on its ability to stick to one thing until it gets there.

Over the years, one old gospel song has been a source of encouragement to me. Do you remember Cristy Lane’s classic song *One Day at a Time*? She often referred to this song as her philosophy of life. Listen to these words: “Show me the stairway I have to climb. Lord for my sake, teach me to take one day at a time. One day at a time, Sweet Jesus, that’s all I’m asking from You. Just give me the strength to do every day what I have to do.” That’s how you walk in faith and face what you are dealing with; taking it one day at a time, as you step out in faith trusting that God will take care of you.

Walking in faith also requires that we stay focused on our objective, what we are trying to do. It so easy to get distracted by the problems and obstacles that keep coming up. The writer of Hebrews in the 12th chapter states: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” In other words, keep going; stay focused; and trust in the Lord.

A grandfather asked his grandson each day after school what he had learned. After a few days of this, the little student said: “Grandpa, I wish you would stop asking me that question. When I learn something, I’ll tell you.” It’s important that we learn from our experiences in life.

Finally, it is important to remember that God has a plan for our lives. One of my favorite Bible verses is Jeremiah 29:11 which provides us these words of assurance: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” The paraphrase in the *Message* states: “I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out – plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.”

This verse reminds us as believers that God has a purpose for our lives, even in these difficult times. Rick Warren said “Living by faith isn’t living with certainty. It’s trusting God in spite of unanswered questions and unresolved doubts.” So, no matter what you are dealing with right now or may have to face in the future, walk in faith, take one day at a time, and trust in God. He loves you and will always take care of you. Amen