
Sermon Notes

July 23, 2017

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Faith in Action: Celebrated Saints Hebrews 11:30-40

Collage

- ❖ In the final verses of Hebrews 11, the author moves us from a “family photo album” to a collage
 - large pieces of Israel’s history are pasted next to each other
 - the men and women whom God uses to advance His plan are lumped together in large groupings
- ❖ Like those portrayed for us in these final verses of Hebrews 11, faith gives us courage to face trials, persecution, ridicule, and disaster with unwavering courage

Courage to Conquer: In the Midst of Struggle

- ❖ Life is full of struggles
 - because God’s way is NOT the world’s way
 - our struggles come because of our faith
 - only by faith can our struggles be conquered

- ❖ Two examples of these truths
 - *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down*
 - Israel: “the Next Generation” is finally ready to enter God’s Promised Land
 - God’s plan for conquering Jericho relies entirely on the faith of God’s people
 - it is often so much easier to fight than to have faith
 - ◆ faith will always look foolish in the eyes of the world
 - ◆ God delights in decimating the pride of people
 - Rahab, the prostitute, is an unlikely candidate for inclusion in “Faith’s Hall of Fame”
 - Many notable people of faith (vv. 32-34)
 - the emphasis here is on faith, NOT office or accomplishment
 - none of these are perfect, a few are deeply flawed
 - whatever the need, the power to accomplish these things comes from God, and that power is received by faith

Courage to Continue in the Midst of Suffering

- ❖ Verses 35-38 add the images of many different forms of suffering to our collage

- suffering takes its toll on us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually
- suffering should not be minimized or dismissed
 - short-term, long-term, lifetime forms of suffering
 - sometimes it is God's will for people to continue in their suffering
 - sometimes affliction is inescapable; sometimes it is not
- ❖ God gives power through faith to enable His people to persevere through trial and trouble, not to escape it!
 - *tortured* (*tumpanizò*, timpani)
 - Isaiah sawn in two, Jeremiah the weeping prophet
- ❖ There are all sorts of various kinds of affliction that God's people face and are often called to endure for Him

Courage to Keep Counting on God for Salvation

- ❖ The ultimate promise of a redeemer, God's Messiah
 - the One who would make them righteous before God
 - until Jesus' atoning work on the cross was finished, no one's salvation was complete
 - they looked forward to a promise being fulfilled
 - we look backward to an historical fact us

- apart from us, they could not be made perfect
- they share with us and we share with them all the riches of our inheritance in Christ
- ❖ Gathering for worship week by week is like gathering together for a great family reunion
- ❖ Learn from their examples, BUT fix your eyes on Jesus!

Personal Application

1. Do you have courage to conquer in the midst of struggle, courage to continue in the midst of suffering, courage to keep counting on God for salvation? Of the three, which seems most present in your life? Which is least present? What will help you grow stronger in that area?
2. What is your personal reaction to the following statements: Sometimes it is often so much easier to fight than to have faith. Sometimes it is God's will for people to continue in their suffering. Sometimes affliction is inescapable. How well does your reaction align with the men and women of faith noted in vv. 30-40?
3. How will you try to remember that when we gather for worship each week, we are gathering for a family reunion that involves thousands of people from every era in history?