



Glendive and Wibaux United Methodist Churches  
June 21, 2020

Welcome to worship with us this morning. I am joined by Kathleen Linder on music and vocals. On this third Sunday I also want to recognize that today is Father's Day. Did you know that under the US Code concerning flag etiquette Father's Day is a recognized day to fly the American Flag?

Thanks go out to Kathleen, Jake Wilder and Marlene Linquist for sharing some home cooked meals with Larry and me while we're been in the hotel. They have been a godsend away from restaurant and microwaveables.

Just this past Friday and Saturday, we attended the online Annual Meeting of the Mountain Sky Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Vernone Spencer joined me here and Mary Alice Barthel and Bonnie Wood joined in from Wibaux United Methodist Church. Much of what we did was the business of the conference, but we enjoyed wonderful worship and words, too. You can find most of the recorded sessions on the Mountain Sky Facebook page.

There was some sad business to take care of too. Four churches were officially closed by the action of the conference. These churches had become so small and financially unsustainable over the years. Worshipping with 5-10 folks is hard to sustain. Happily, two of the churches will be put to renewal as a new United Methodist church plant and a community. There were two other congregations who voted decided to disaffiliate from the Mountain Sky Conference and United Methodist Church. The progressive and all-inclusive theology of inclusion for all God's children including LGBTQ siblings played a part in both of their decisions. and a community center.

**Prayer of illumination:** I want to thank Caldwell Presbyterian Church for this Prayer for illumination . Gracious God give us humble, teachable, and obedient hearts, that we may receive what you have revealed, and do what you have commanded. Amen.

<http://www.caldwellpresby.org/docs/resources/Prayers%20for%20Illumination.pdf>

### **Genesis 21:8-21 The Message Translation**

The baby grew and was weaned. Abraham threw a big party on the day Isaac was weaned.

9-10 One day Sarah saw the son that Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, poking fun at her son Isaac. She told Abraham, "Get rid of this slave woman and her son. No child of this slave is going to share inheritance with my son Isaac!"

11-13 The matter gave great pain to Abraham—after all, Ishmael was his son. But God spoke to Abraham, "Don't feel badly about the boy and your maid. Do whatever Sarah tells you. Your descendants will come

through Isaac. Regarding your maid's son, be assured that I'll also develop a great nation from him—he's your son, too."

14-16 Abraham got up early the next morning, got some food together and a canteen of water for Hagar, put them on her back and sent her away with the child. She wandered off into the desert of Beersheba. When the water was gone, she left the child under a shrub and went off, fifty yards or so. She said, "I can't watch my son die." As she sat, she broke into sobs.

17-18 Meanwhile, God heard the boy crying. The angel of God called from Heaven to Hagar, "What's wrong, Hagar? Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy and knows the fix he's in. Up now; go get the boy. Hold him tight. I'm going to make of him a great nation."

19 Just then God opened her eyes. She looked. She saw a well of water. She went to it and filled her canteen and gave the boy a long, cool drink.

20-21 God was on the boy's side as he grew up. He lived out in the desert and became a skilled archer. He lived in the Paran wilderness. And his mother got him a wife from Egypt.

### **Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17**

1-7 Bend an ear, God; answer me.

I'm one miserable wretch!

Keep me safe—haven't I lived a good life?

Help your servant—I'm depending on you!

You're my God; have mercy on me.

I count on you from morning to night.

Give your servant a happy life;

I put myself in your hands!

You're well-known as good and forgiving,

bighearted to all who ask for help.

Pay attention, God, to my prayer;

bend down and listen to my cry for help.

Every time I'm in trouble I call on you,

confident that you'll answer.

8-10

There's no one quite like you among the gods, O Lord,

and nothing to compare with your works.  
All the nations you made are on their way,  
ready to give honor to you, O Lord,  
Ready to put your beauty on display,  
parading your greatness,  
And the great things you do—  
God, you're the one, there's no one but you!  
So look me in the eye and show kindness,  
give your servant the strength to go on,  
save your dear, dear child!  
Make a show of how much you love me  
so the bullies who hate me will stand there slack-jawed,  
As you, God, gently and powerfully  
put me back on my feet.

### **Romans 6:1b-11**

So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land!

3-5 That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.

6-11 Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

## **Matthew 10:24-39**

“A student doesn’t get a better desk than her teacher. A laborer doesn’t make more money than his boss. Be content—pleased, even—when you, my students, my harvest hands, get the same treatment I get. If they call me, the Master, ‘Dungface,’ what can the workers expect?”

26-27 “Don’t be intimidated. Eventually everything is going to be out in the open, and everyone will know how things really are. So don’t hesitate to go public now.

28 “Don’t be bluffed into silence by the threats of bullies. There’s nothing they can do to your soul, your core being. Save your fear for God, who holds your entire life—body and soul—in his hands.

### **Forget About Yourself**

29-31 “What’s the price of a pet canary? Some loose change, right? And God cares what happens to it even more than you do. He pays even greater attention to you, down to the last detail—even numbering the hairs on your head! So don’t be intimidated by all this bully talk. You’re worth more than a million canaries.

32-33 “Stand up for me against world opinion and I’ll stand up for you before my Father in heaven. If you turn tail and run, do you think I’ll cover for you?”

34-37 “Don’t think I’ve come to make life cozy. I’ve come to cut—make a sharp knife-cut between son and father, daughter and mother, bride and mother-in-law—cut through these cozy domestic arrangements and free you for God. Well-meaning family members can be your worst enemies. If you prefer father or mother over me, you don’t deserve me. If you prefer son or daughter over me, you don’t deserve me.

38-39 “If you don’t go all the way with me, through thick and thin, you don’t deserve me. If your first concern is to look after yourself, you’ll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you’ll find both yourself and me.

These are the inspired words of God for the people of God. And the people say, thanks be to God.

**Doxology:** Praise God .....

### **Message**

I am taking some pastors privilege on these last two Sundays before I leave. I won’t be speaking to the lectionary scriptures but to two of my favorite verses. Several weeks ago, in preparation for the online annual conferences and all things getting ready for retirement, I was asked by someone to share my favorite scripture verse. I had two. I highlight this passage in bibles I give as gifts. Today I am speaking on Hebrews 11:1.

Hebrews 1:1

I first learned to love it from the NRSV translations

### **NRSV**

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

## **The Message**

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see.

## **The Voice**

Faith is the assurance of things you have hoped for, the absolute conviction that there are realities you've never seen.

## **CEB The Common English Bible**

Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see.

Why do I feel so connected to this passage? I have discerned it is because faith is so difficult a concept to get a handle on, that folks can't describe it. We can only share experiences with it. I have faith, but what is faith beyond trust? I have faith. If it is only trust, than in what or whom do you trust? I have faith. But faith in who or what? I have faith. But what if I don't have all the answers to life? I have faith. But in trying times like this, where does my faith help me when I can't buy groceries or pay the rent? I have faith. Sadly, there are trying times for someone every second of every day of every year, somewhere in the world. I have faith.

I am perfectly comfortable with not knowing all the answers to life. Yes, I have a master's in forensic science and have completed five years of theological and practical Course of Study, but that doesn't prove I have all the answers. I do not understand the virgin birth. But I have faith in that story even though I can't explain it nor much more prove it. And faith in the story of the virgin birth does not diminish or contradict my understanding of human evolution.

I have faith that the Holy Spirit is our advocate and counselor. I cannot see it or touch it. But I have felt its presence in unexplainable and unexpected experiences. Things have happened in my life that only faith can explain. I don't need to have the answer. The proof is in what I don't see.

I have faith that when I hope for something, it will come to pass in the fullness of God's time, if it is to be. I have faith that I am not a marionette in God's hands being dangled to and fro but connected to the Creator with an unseeable tether. I can't see or feel it physically, but I walk in faith with confidence that it is there. And that comforts me.

Hebrews 11:1-3 NRSV says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup>Indeed, by faith<sup>1</sup> our ancestors received approval. <sup>3</sup>By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible."

One commentator puts Hebrews 11:1 in this context.

"Hebrews 11:1–3 defines faith using words which are frequently quoted, and also frequently misunderstood. As with the rest of the book of Hebrews, context is critical. In this passage, the writer demonstrates that godly faith is really "trust." What we have seen of God's nature and character should lead us to trust Him, and trust naturally leads to obedience. This is not an endorsement of "blind faith," especially since it comes after a lengthy

discourse full of evidence and logic. Instead, the writer presents the idea of "faith" as a confident look to the future, based on reliance on God's promises." <https://www.bibleref.com/Hebrews/11/Hebrews-11-1.html> June 16, 2020

Can you see my faith? Can you see love? Perhaps not in a way that is describable by color or texture, taste or smell, substance, but certainly through my actions and words or as John Wesley calls them Acts of Mercy and Acts of Grace.

I have faith. I trust in God. I can't know why that is, but it is. And I am so blessed to believe this.

Amen and Selah

**Hymn:**

**Announcements:**

**Sending forth:**