

By Faith – A Youth Led Worship Service Lectionary Text – August 18, 2013 Proper 15

It has been said that the opposite of faith is not doubt but certainty. Faith, the author of Hebrews tells us, “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). It is anything but certain. Did the Israelites step out into the Red Sea, certain that they would feel dry land beneath their toes? Did the Israelite army march around the walls of Jericho, certain that they would come tumbling down? Did Rahab, a woman ignored and abused by much of society, welcome Israelite spies into her midst, certain that her life would be spared when they left? Perhaps, but not likely.

For youth, there is very little that is certain. Each day brings with it indecision and ambiguity. As you prepare for worship together, help your youth to name the ways that they live each day “by faith,” leaving space for doubt and for questions. For it is in this wrestling that we are all blessed by God and come to understand more fully the people we were created to be.

Call to Worship

One: *By faith*, we trust that we were created in the image of God.

Many: *By faith*, we hope and dream and make plans.

One: *By faith*, we face our fears and insecurities.

Many: *By faith*, we till the soil of our lives and plant seeds of love.

One: *By faith*, we follow where God leads.

Many: *By faith*, we trust that God is present in our midst.

All: *By faith*, we gather in this place to worship God together.

Call to Confession

Faith, the author of Hebrews tells us, “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). It is *by faith* that we are able to confess our sins before God and each other. It is *by faith* that we trust in God’s love, mercy and forgiveness. Let us pray.

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God,

We are not always people who live *by faith*. We know that we were created in your image, but we treat ourselves and each other in ways that do not honor your presence within us. We know your laws and your commandments, but we choose to disobey you and to act in ways that harm our neighbors. We hear your call to reach out to those most in need, but instead we turn our backs on them and on you. Forgive us, O God, and help us day by day to become more faithful followers and the people you created us to be. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

One: What we have hoped for is true. What we cannot see has been made known. God's forgiveness is certain and sure. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

All: Thanks be to God!

Prayer of Illumination

God of Infinite Wisdom,
You have been faithful to your people throughout time. Calm our minds. Open our ears and our hearts this day that we might still hear of your faithfulness. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:29-12:2

Speaker #1: *By faith* the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned.

Speaker #2: *By faith* the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days.

Speaker #3: *By faith* Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

Speaker #4: And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, or David and Samuel and the prophets—who through *faith* conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Speaker #1: Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in caves and holes in the ground.

Speaker #2: Yet all these, though they were commended for their *faith*, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

Speaker #3: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Music Suggestions

Clouds by Zach Sobiech

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDC97j6lfyc>

Days of Elijah by Robin Mark

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

Presbyterian Hymnal #369

Lord, When I Came Into This Life

Presbyterian Hymnal #522

Here I Am, Lord

Presbyterian Hymnal #525

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