



Calvary Presbyterian Church
Sunday, October 29, 2023

"Christening Calvary: Raising the Sails"

Rev. Eyde Mabanglo

Dedicated to Collin and Lisette's Mom

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16/New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

The Meaning of Faith

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³By 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.

The Faith of Abraham

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he set out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹By faith, with Sarah's involvement, he received power of procreation, even though he was too old, because he considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

¹³All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, ¹⁴for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better homeland, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

SERMON

A friend recently asked me to teach them more about this love that I preach about every Sunday. Even as I paused to think about what I knew, or thought I knew, about love, the scripture kept resounding in my heart and soul and mind was "love seeks not its own way" –

A phrase from first Corinthians 13, a chapter in our holy scriptures called *the love chapter*.

Verse 4 and 5:

*Love is patient. Love is kind.
It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud.
It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking,
It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs.*

Love seeks not its own way.

This describes Agape Love, Philo Love, and Eros Love.

It is a ***not-about-you-all-about-the-other*** kind of love. It isn't self-hating, self-critical, or self-loathing; on the contrary, it honors our truest self - the self-grounded in the love of God - so grounded, so attuned, so content that it overflows with the love of Christ outward to bless others, serve others, and love others - all others on behalf of the one who is the embodiment of this pure, holy, not self-seeking love.

And we can know this love... and scripture tells us that this was the same steadfast faith of our spiritual forebearers like Sarah and Abraham. For their

trust and love for God was so sure, their confidence in God so solid, their faith so tangible that it is the very foundation and genesis of our faith today. It is their faith that is now our present reality as we sit together as a humble, expectant gathering in 2023 - thousands of years later. We sit here because we believe - we know - that our God is faithful. His love endures...for how long? Yes, forever. And God's love is never self-seeking. This is just the start of learning about God who is himself love.

Many of us are curious about this love. Others are desperate to know this love. Some have known this love so long, so well, so deeply that they are the poets and the prayer warriors and the prophets in our lives who bless us with words of encouragement, stories of faithfulness, and acts of divine kindness to remind us of a God who has never - and will never - let us go.

In her 7th chapter of **Sailboat Church**, pastor Gray reiterates the importance of a relationship with the wind - that is God's Spirit, moving in and through our lives with the certitude and strength and holy purposes as on the day of Pentecost, when the spirit of Christ blew through the crowds and launched the acts of the disciples, our Christian faith movement, and God's plan to reconcile and heal the world into motion.

What is your relationship with the wind, the spirit of Christ? God's heart longs for your heart to know him, trust him, love him. Pastor Gray says that our intimate relationship with God is always transformative - that hoisting our sails metaphorically is really raising the intimacy of our relationship with God through prayer and obedience to the Spirit's calling in our lives. This is just as true for us as individual sailors as it is for us as a church - a crew of sailors, trusting in the wind of God's Spirit moving in and through us today just as it did thousands of years ago. The faith of Sarah and Abraham was that God would bring God's people to a *better country* a divine heavenly land where they would dwell with God and with one another. Abraham would never see this land in his lifetime, but he still grounded his hope that God's promise would be fulfilled for his own descendants.

Our passage today highlights the faith of Abraham and the faithfulness of God. The word assurance means tangible - as in you can touch it. I think about people when they say it's so close, I can taste it. I wonder if this is how

Sarah and Abraham felt about their promised land... they couldn't see it, but they knew it was there because they knew God.

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So close I can taste it! Isn't this what makes communion so meaningful for us? The Lord's supper was a sacrament in our faith tradition since the beginning. We take bread because Jesus took bread. We drink from a cup because Jesus poured the drink for us. He is so close to us at the communion table that we can taste the closeness of God. It is the very intimacy experienced in our prayers and in our baptism and in our breaking bread together. God is so close, love is so close, that we can taste it.

Pastor Gray says that to be a sailboat church means raising the main sail as prayer, practicing a trusting, abiding conversation with God throughout our days, throughout our years, throughout our lives - to know God, to learn from God, to examine our hearts and minds, and to love God as we attend to the power and direction of his wind.

And as a church, together as a sailing crew, watching the wind just beyond our vessel called Calvary, we can discern what God is calling us to be and do in the coming year. With *the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen*, we can trust God (and one another) as we sail towards the future for Calvary and the future of the children of this community.

We are part of a faith lineage. We are part of a family of human siblings that hope for a *better country*, our faith is built on hoisting sails of prayer and seeking God's purposes in everything we do, whether we see the fruits of our efforts or not. God has promised us, as he promised Sarah and Abraham, that we would dwell in the House of the Lord forever... that we would be led to a homeland where Christ would sit with us at table, and as we sail together toward the future, let us consider that this homeland is itself the very relationship that God wants with each and every one of us now. Friends, our promised homeland is the intimate relationship with God. It is the waiting on the wind, it is the tangible presence of Christ in our lives today. This homeland relationship is heaven on earth - it's God's plan for your life and for my life. It is the future of Calvary, and it is what it means to be a sailboat church. The homeland that God promised Abraham is that each of us - and all of us - become the embodiment of a love that is patient

and kind - A love that does not seek its own way, but the way of God's holy wind.

We are in the middle of a season of stewardship, and this requires all of us to trust in God, to trust in the future that we cannot see, but to also trust in a God who has never left us. Calvary, pledge as an act of faith.

We are also learning to sail together, to trust the Spirit of Christ and the power of a God who set all of creation in motion. We can build this trust by hoisting a main sail of prayer in our own lives, asking God to teach us and change us and use us. Calvary, pray for transformation.

We are also learning how to love and serve our neighbors, because a church was never meant to be a series of walls keeping us separate from our town and community, but to instead be a gathering space filled with fellowship tables and a communion table in which to listen better, learn with, and love more. Calvary, seek not your own way. Be patient. Be kind.

We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds our future. Let us love. Let us trust. This wind.

Conclusion: **Oscar Romero's Prayer**

Because we are so far from living out Jesus' dream for the future, does that mean both we and Jesus have failed? As if anticipating that his followers might be tempted to think so, Jesus spoke often of inconspicuous beginnings – the small amount of leaven that produces fifty pounds of bread (Matt 13:33), the tiny mustard seed that grows into the largest shrub (Matt 13:31) or the few seeds that land in good soil and produce an astonishing hundredfold yield (Mark 4:1-9).

Archbishop Oscar Romero, who (like Jesus) was killed because he dared to challenge the domination system of El Salvador, understood Jesus' trust in small beginnings. The following prayer, "Prophets of a Future Not Our Own," was written by Ken Untener in 1979, but is commonly known as "Oscar Romero's Prayer":

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision. . . .
This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an
opportunity for God's grace to enter and to do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the
master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.*

SOURCE:

www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/practices/view/28469/oscar-romeros-prayer

May it be so,

