Forward Facing Faith

Luke 16:16  *The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*

- Today we stand at the pinnacle of 40 years of Apostolic Ministry in Lake City.
- We are where we are today because of the sacrifices, and effort of those who have gone before us.
- And we have paused, for the last month, to look back on our roots with respect and appreciation.
- However, today, it is my goal to challenge your faith to believe that our best days are not behind us.
  - The best that God will do for us is yet ahead of us.
- The biblical posture of faith is always forward facing, yearning and reaching for something beyond, something better, some promise or some reward that has not been reached yet.
- Abraham lives out his days, in the Promised Land, but he never settled for the promised land.
- He lives out his days in tents while those around him lived in permanent dwellings with stone foundations.
- Abraham was an oddity in their culture. He was an object of curiosity. Because he was the stranger that refused to adopt their customs. He was the outsider that never really fit in.
- You know, if you are Abraham, and you realize that this is the land that God has given to you and to your children’s children for thousands of generations,
• then you might think that it would be all right
  • to go ahead and make this land your home,
    o but not Abraham.
  o Abraham, refuses to settle for the promised land,
    • he refuses to make his home there,
      • The writer of Hebrews tells us
        o that he lived out his days in a tent.
        • Why?
  o Because he has caught a glimpse of a city,
    • whose builder and maker is God
      • and he recognizes that he will never
        o be at home in this world.
  o When Abraham pitched his tent he was saying
    • this may be where I’m living,
      • but this isn’t what I am living for.
    • This may be where I’ve settled
      • but this isn’t what I am settling for.

• That is the biblical posture of faith.
  o Always reaching,
    • It never gets bogged down in the present
      • or anchors itself to the past
    • but rather it looks forward to the future
      • with a longing and desire
        o for something more.
  o I want to preach for a few moments this afternoon
    • about forward facing faith.

• It is a faith that,
  o while holding fast to the foundations
    • of past blessing and past experience,
      • presses through the difficulties
        o and trials of the present
          • and continually reaches forward
            • to the promise of the future.
  o Forward facing faith peers into tomorrow
    • to catch a glimpse of a promise fulfilled
      • and refuses to settle
        o for what it presently has.

• It is a faith that refuses to believe
  o that our best is behind us.
• A faith that refuses to accept
  o that our present circumstances
• are as good as it gets.
  • A faith that longs for
    o and desires after the future.
  • A faith that enables the mind to believe
    o that there is a better day ahead;
      ▪ that the best is yet to come.
  • This is the kind of faith
    o that we must cultivate in our lives.
      ▪ It’s a kind of faith that is always looking ahead,
        • that is never satisfied
          o with what we have
            ▪ but is always reaching
              • for something more.

The foundations that we’ve been given are great.
  • Our glorious past is wonderful.
    o The heritage that we continue
      ▪ is a priceless treasure.
    o But I must extend my faith to believe
      ▪ that God isn’t finished with us yet!
  • The past is to be saluted and honored,
    o and we’ve tried to do that this month.
  • But, on the final Sunday of our August RESET,
    o I want to remind you
      ▪ that I still believe
        • that the end of this thing
          o will be better than its beginnings.
    o I hear the words of my master
      ▪ echoing in my ears,
        • "Truly, truly, I say to you,
          o whoever believes in me
            ▪ will also do the works that I do;
              • and greater works than these
                o will he do..." (John 14:12)
  • Greater works and better things are still before us.

Our main problem is that we live in the present.
  • The here and now is often overwhelming.
    o The past is a distant memory
      ▪ and our future is out there somewhere ahead of us,
        • but today’s worries, doubts and fears,
          o demand the majority
            ▪ of our time and attention.
      ▪ The details;
• the circumstances;
• the struggles;
• the battles;
  • even the mundane tasks;
  • our present cries out for our attention
  • and attempts to dominate us.

• But forward facing faith lives in a tent.
  • The important thing about a tent
    • is that it is not permanent.
      • Nomads live in tents.
  • Because they may be here today
    • and gone tomorrow
      • and nothing here is holding them in place.
  • In matter of moments
    • they can strike their tent
      • and move on.
  • I want you to understand, today,
    • that faith dwells in a tent!
      • It says, "I refuse to accept things as they are."
        • I may have to endure the present,
          • but my hope is in the future.
        • I may be stuck with this lot in life,
          • but I refuse to stop
            • and build a house here
              • because sooner or later,
                • I’m traveling on.

• Forward facing faith refuses to be constrained
  • within the limits of what can be seen
    • and understood
      • at this present time.
  • It refuses to define tomorrow
    • in the terms of today’s abilities
      • or inabilities.
  • It refuses to trade the warmth of hope
    • for the stark coldness of reality.

With a boldness that can only be drawn from hope,
• forward facing faith
  • embraces a promise
    • that has not yet been fulfilled.
• It sees the future,
  • not through the lens of the present,
    • but, rather, through the prism of promise.
  • It is a faith that invests itself
• in a hope for a better tomorrow.
  o A faith that yearns
    • for the better things
      • that have been spoken
        o but haven't yet been fulfilled.
  • It’s David with a king’s anointing
    o and a shepherd’s staff.
      • Content to be a lowly shepherd,
        • but never forgetting the promise
          o of Samuel’s anointing oil
            • as it poured over his head.
    o It’s the little old lady
      • looking at the prophet and saying,
        • “All is well!”
      • Even as she knows in her heart
        • that her son lies dead in his bed.
          o That’s the kind of faith
            • That I am talking about.
  • It’s that inexhaustible faith
    o that is fully vested in the possibilities that exist
      • only as mirages on the horizon.
    o It refuses to be bound to reality.
      • It refuses to accept the limits
        • of its present reality
      • because it has caught a glimpse
        • of a promise that is greater than the present.

This is the kind of faith
• that eventually lays ahold
  o of the promises of God.
• This is the kind of faith
  o that isn’t content to grow comfortable
    • in the present
      • but reaches into the future
        o and pulls itself into a promise.
  o It’s the kind of faith that believes,
    • without compromise,
      • that if God said it,
        o he’s gonna bring it to pass.
  o It’s the kind of faith that acknowledges
    • that God is sovereign,
      • he’s in control,
    • and it places its trust fully in Him
      • to open the doors that no man can open
and to make a way
  • where no man can make a way,
    • to do what only he can do.
o  It is the kind of faith that recognizes
  • that the one who made the stars,
    • and called them by name,
o  He is on my side!
  • He walks on the wings of the wind.
  • He caused manna to fall from the heavens.
  • He placed the earth on its foundations
    • and established it
      • that it can not be moved.
  • He speaks of that which is not,
    • as though it were.
  • He knows the end from the beginning.
o  And he is well able
  • to bring me into his perfect will
    • for my life!

It’s the kind of faith
  o that looks upon tomorrow
    • and sees it through the perspective of hope,
      • believing fully
        • in what only God can bring to pass.

Our text, Luke 16:16 says,
• "The law and the prophets were until John:
  o since that time the kingdom of God is preached,
    • and every man presseth into it."
• Another version (ESV) says that
  o "... everyone forces his way into it."
    • The ESV also offers in a footnote
      • this alternative translation,
        • "...everyone is forcefully urged into it."
• When I read that scripture
  o something stirred deep down on the inside.
    • Everyone that wants to be
      • a part of God’s promises
        • has to possess
          • this forward facing faith.
  o Because everyone that becomes a part
    • of the Kingdom of God
      • has to relinquish their hold on their present
        • and their past
          • and PRESS their way
• No one is saved by accident.
  o No one comes into this thing by chance.
    ▪ You can’t just coast along
      • and hope to be a part
        o of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said that every man
• that hopes to gain entrance
  o to the Kingdom of God,
    ▪ presses his way into it,
      • or forces his way into it.
• Not everyone lays ahold of
  o the promises and blessings
    ▪ of the good news of
      • of the Kingdom of God.
  o But, without exception,
    ▪ those that do get it
      • have a deep-seated faith
        o that forcefully urges them
          ▪ into the promise of God.
• There is something within them
  o that becomes so stirred
    ▪ that it absolutely refuses
      • to accept their current condition
        o as the end of the story!
  o You will never step into
    ▪ the promise of tomorrow
      • as long as you are content
        o in the circumstances of today.

There is a faith that presses its way into the promise of God.
• This is the common characteristic
  o of every person that receives God’s promises.
    ▪ They abandon the anchors of their past
      • and the constraints of the present
        o to press their way
          ▪ into the promise of the future.
• This is the one thing
  o that every seeker of God must have
    ▪ in order to receive the blessings of God
      • in their life.
  o Without it you grow complacent
• and eventually complacency turns into apathy
  • and apathy yields to a
    o lukewarm, backslidden heart.
  • It is the yearning of forward facing faith
    • that keeps you in the fight;
      • that keeps your eyes on the promise;
    o and keeps your ear tuned
      • to the sound of a trumpet!

The past will endeavor to tell you that you can't change.
• The past will endeavor to tell you
  o that everything has to stay
    • the way that it always has been.
  o The past will do its best
    • to hold you down
      • and hold you back,
  o it will remind you
    • of all the other times
      • you've tried and failed.
  o It will remind you
    • of your inconsistencies,
      • of all your Faults and failures.
• But there's something
  o in forward facing faith
    • that refuses to be anchored to the past.
  o It forcefully compels you
    • to reach out to the promise
      • of a brand new life.
  o It forcefully compels you
    • to invest your hope
      • in the precious blood of Jesus Christ;
      • to believe that He can do for you
        • what you could never do for yourself.
  o It compels you to cast off
    • the hold of your past
      • and believe that you CAN change;
        o that you can be different;
          • that there can
            • and will be
              o a better day in your life.

Your present will endeavor to entangle you and snare you
• to try to keep you
  o from realizing God's plan
    • and God's will for your life.
It will distract you with the problems and cares of the day.
It will bog you down with the tedious details that must be taken care of.
It will endeavor to tie up every waking moment with the effort to solve the present problems that are around you.

But there is something about forward facing faith that forcefully compels you to set aside these present concerns and pleasures in the pursuit of a much greater blessing that has yet to be revealed.

This was the attitude of that little lady with the issue of blood.

Her past said you’ve been sick a long, long time.
You’ve spent all your living on doctors and remedies.
You’ve proven over and over again that your circumstance is hopeless, the story has no happy ending.

But she refused to listen to the voice of the past.
Forward facing faith said, if I can just get to where Jesus is, there is still hope.

The Bible tells us that there was a great multitude pressing in on Jesus that day.
I can just hear the voice of her present circumstances declaring to her that this is useless, there’s no way you are ever going to get the attention of the master.
He’s so busy and he’s surrounded by so many people.
There’s no sense in even trying.
But forward facing faith said, "If I can only touch the hem of his garment..."

The scripture tells us that she came in behind him, through the press.
She pressed her way through the crowd to obtain the healing that she longed for.

Can I tell you this afternoon...
that the only way to lose God's promise in your life
  • is to press your way into it!

You've got to press for this thing,
  • it doesn't come by accident
    • and it doesn't happen by chance.

The promise is yours
  • but you must be determined to pursue it.

• The only way to get what you want and need from God
  • is to press your way into the kingdom.

• You need to let
  • that forward facing faith compel you
    • to press your way into God's promise.

The Psalmist said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after."
  • That's the voice of forward facing faith.
    • It is a singular faith
      • that has a single desire
        • for the promise of God.
  • It says, "I will seek it as long as I live,
    • and I will not give up
      • until I obtain it."
    • It's a strength of desire
      • that outweighs all the limitations
        • of this present world.

• It compels us,
  • it forces us,
    • it presses us
      • into the promise that God has for our life.
  • It is a faith that says that I won't be satisfied,
    • there must be something better for my life!

Luke 16:16 declares to us
  • that everyone that obtains the Kingdom of God
    • possesses that kind of faith.
  • It's the kind of faith
    • that compelled Abraham
      • to live in the promised land,
        • in a tent.
    • This is the faith
      • that it takes to move the sinner
        • from the pew to the altar.
    • But it is also the same faith
      • that pushes a child of God
        • beyond the mediocre
• and into the promise of God.

• It’s a faith that we must have
  • in order to even become
    • a part of the kingdom of God.
  • But it is also a faith
    • that we must maintain
      • if we hope to grow in the kingdom.
    • It is the vital sustenance of your spiritual life!

• I’m afraid that this is where
  • many miss out on God’s promise
    • for their life.
• They taste the fervency
  • of forward facing faith
    • at an alter of repentance,
      • but discard that passionate pursuit
        • somewhere along the way
          • and settle for less
            • than God’s best for their life.

• It is my desire, today,
  • to challenge you to pick back up
    • that fervent forward facing faith
      • and pursue, yet again,
        • the promises of God in your life.

  • He’s not finished with you yet!

• The same faith by which
  • you pressed your way
    • into the promise of God.
  • The same faith
    • that compelled you into
      • a breakthrough at the alter.
  • Is the same faith
    • that must be maintained in your life
      • in order to make heaven your home.

• The problem is that we allow
  • the fervency of our faith
    • to fade over the years.
  • We quickly settle back into contentment
    • and we lose that desire
      • that compelled
        • and pushed us
          • into the kingdom of God.

• It’s my job today to challenge you
  • to extend your faith once again.
Its my job to challenge you
  • to break free of the present
    o and extend your faith
      ▪ to press for a better future.

God has plans for us,
  o God has a purpose for us.
    ▪ God knows where he's taking us
      • and what he wants to do for us.
    o But its only going to happen
      ▪ if we determine to press our way into it.

We must make up our mind
  o to press for what we have not yet obtained.

It doesn’t matter
  o if you are coming to an alter for the first time
    ▪ or if you've been in church your whole life,
  o the thing that compels you into the promise of God
    ▪ is the raw edge of powerful,
      • pressing,
        o forward facing faith.

There is a faith that presses its way into the promise of God.

  • It’s the only thing
    o that will ever lay ahold of the blessings of heaven.
  • I’m hungry for revival.
    o This kind of faith
      ▪ is the only thing that will loose it.
  • It’s time to start seeing our city
    o and this church
      ▪ through eyes of faith.
  • Its time to start looking upon
    o our neighborhoods with faith.
      ▪ It’s time to press our way
        • into the promise of the future.

Close

When Marine Corps General Chester Puller
  • made his landing in Korea
    o his advance scouts quickly informed him
      ▪ that the Korean army
        • was positioned in front of him.
  • A few moments later his scouts returned from his flanks
    o with the news that the Koreans
      ▪ were positioned both
• to his right and his left.

• Surrounded on three sides
  o and with the ocean behind him,
    ▪ General Puller addressed those around
  o and said,
    o “The good news is,
      ▪ they’re not going to
      ▪ get away from us this time!”

There is a certain kind of faith
• that simply refuses to be shaped
  o by what it sees
    ▪ but instead invests itself fully
      ▪ in the promise that has yet to be fulfilled.

• I want to challenge you today
  o to turn your vision to the future.
    ▪ I want to challenge you
      ▪ to take your eyes off of your past.
    ▪ I want to challenge you
      ▪ to look beyond your present struggles.
    ▪ And extend yourself, in faith,
      ▪ to believe in what God is getting ready to do.

• Let’s strive together.
  o Let’s press together.
    ▪ Let’s reach for the kingdom of God, together!

• The scripture says
  o that when Zion travailed
    ▪ she brought forth.
  o Travailing requires pressing.
    ▪ Revival tarries
      ▪ because we fail to press.

• We are too comfortable.
  o We are too satisfied.
    ▪ We are too content.
  o We need to get a hold
    ▪ of the kind of faith that will push us
      ▪ and compel us
        o into pressing our way into the promise.
  o We need a revival of that spirit of pressing.

• I don’t know what you need from God this afternoon,
  o but I do know that you won’t get it
    ▪ if you’re not willing to press for it.
  o You won’t receive your promise
• if you don’t determine to
  • o press your way into it.
  o We, as a church,
  • won’t see the revival that we are hungry for
    • until we make up our mind
      o to press our way into it.
  • We will reap from fields we did not plant.
    • We will experience revival
      o that others, before us,
        • have wept and prayed into existence.
  • But we will not obtain that promise
    • until we press our way into it!
• I wonder if there’s anyone today
  o that is willing to break the mold of the ordinary
    • and press your way into a blessing?
  o I wonder if there’s anyone
    • that’s willing to ignore what your eyes can see
      • and what reason tells you
        o and press your way into a promise?
• This altar is open.
  o The kingdom of God is preached, the scripture said.
    • But it is up to every man, woman, or child to press your way into it.
  o What about you today?
    • Are you willing to press?