Sermon Guide

November 1: Hebrews 11:39-40

What stood out to you most from the sermon? Why?

Key Takeaways:

1. Faith is not confidence that God will give you the life you want. It is confidence that God will keep the promise he made.
2. The heroes of Hebrews 11 were imperfect, flawed people who lived as though God's promise was already real, even though they never saw it fulfilled in their lifetimes.
3. Hebrews 11 presents two groups side by side: those who were miraculously delivered and those who were not. Neither group had more or less faith than the other. Both were approved.
4. God never promised perfect health, financial security, an easy marriage, or a trouble-free life. Believing he did sets us up to mistake unfulfilled expectations for broken promises.
5. The actual promise of God is the renewal of all things through Jesus Christ: sin defeated, death overcome, bodies raised, and God's people dwelling in his presence forever.
6. The resurrection of Jesus is the measuring stick of God's faithfulness, not our personal outcomes.

Discussion Questions:

1. We tend to be results-driven rather than promise-driven people. Before diving deeper, can you think of a recent moment, large or small, where you caught yourself evaluating God's faithfulness based on a specific outcome you wanted?

2. Many of the people named in Hebrews 11 were deeply flawed. Abel was murdered for worshiping correctly. Moses never entered the promised land. Rahab was a prostitute. Why do you think the writer of Hebrews included people with such complicated stories in what is often called the "hall of faith"? What does that say about what faith actually is?

3. Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as living as though what God has said is already real. How is that different from optimism, positive thinking, or simply hoping things work out?

4. Verses 33 through 38 present two contrasting groups: those who were miraculously delivered and those who suffered terribly. Both are described as acting in faith. How does that challenge the idea that strong faith always leads to positive outcomes? Have you ever been taught or assumed otherwise?

5. The people in the second half of Hebrews 11, those who were tortured, imprisoned, and killed, are described as people the world was not worthy of (Hebrews 11:38). What does that phrase mean to you? How does it reframe the way we think about suffering?

6. "The problem is not that God broke a promise. It is that you believed a promise he never made." That is a difficult statement to sit with. What promises do you think Christians most commonly assume God has made that are not actually found in Scripture? Where do those assumptions come from?

7. When you look at the full arc of God's promise, from creation to the fall to the arrival of Jesus to the resurrection to the final renewal of all things, does seeing faith in that larger story change the way you think about your own current circumstances?

8. Drawing from Hebrews 11:39-40, which says the saints of old would not be made complete without us, what does it mean to you personally that you are part of a story that spans all of human history? Does that feel comforting, challenging, or both?

9. Of the two groups of people in the room: those living in what it called "the first half," experiencing answered prayers and evident blessing, and those living in "the second half," carrying unanswered prayers and quiet doubt, which season are you in right now? How does the message of this sermon speak to where you are?

10. "God has never once broken a promise that he actually made." Is that easy or difficult for you to believe right now? What would it look like for you to live this week as though it were true?

Practical Applications:

1. Audit your expectations. Take some time this week, privately or with a journal, to identify specific things you have expected God to do for you. Then ask honestly: is that a promise God actually made in Scripture, or is it an assumption you have been carrying? Bring what you find back to the group next week.
2. Read Hebrews 11 in full. Pay attention to both the victories and the sufferings described. Notice how the writer treats both groups with equal weight.
3. Memorize or meditate on one anchor. Hebrews 10:23 "He who promised is faithful." Consider writing it somewhere visible this week, a mirror, a phone wallpaper, a notecard on your dashboard, and let it interrupt your thinking when circumstances feel discouraging.

4. Pray for someone in the second half. Think of someone in your life who is carrying a heavy and unanswered prayer right now. Reach out to them this week, not with answers, but simply to let them know they have not been forgotten. Pray with them if they are open to it.

5. Consider the table. Picture a banquet table where a seat has been reserved for every person who belongs to Jesus. If you are uncertain whether you belong to him, do not leave that question unanswered. Reach out to a pastor, a group leader, or someone you trust and have that conversation.