

Hebrews 11D (2014)

The Louvre museum in Paris contains over 380,000 objects and displays 35,000 works of art. It is said that if one were to walk through the Louvre and spend only 4 seconds gazing at each object, it would take you three months night and day to get through the whole museum.

- Our tour through the Hall of Faith has considerably fewer exhibits
 - But our tour probably seems like it's going to take just as long
 - And how can we NOT linger over this magnificent collection of examples of faith in action
 - We can talk about living-out our faith all day long, but as the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words
 - And each person captured in the Hall is a picture of faith driving both the thinking and decisions of ordinary people called by God to witness to Him
- We're finishing up the patriarchs this morning, followed by examples from Moses and the Exodus
 - Last week, I read through v.21, but I promised we would return to vs.20-21 and the examples of Isaac and Jacob
 - But when I introduced these guys, I mentioned that the writer's emphasis for all the patriarchs was on their faith in resurrection
 - And in a reward that awaited in the life after this world
- Let's reread those two verses

Heb. 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.

Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

- Isaac's blessing of Jacob and Esau regarding things to come is our first exhibit this morning
 - This is another well-known story from Genesis
 - Jacob and Rebekah were worried that Isaac was going to extend the blessing of the seed promise and inheritance upon Esau

- So, they conspired to trick Isaac to ensure the blessing fell on the right son
- In the end, the blessing went to Jacob, as it should, and bypassed Esau
- When Isaac bestowed his blessing upon Jacob, thinking it was Esau, he said:

Gen. 27:28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And an abundance of grain and new wine;

Gen. 27:29 May peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you;
Be master of your brothers,
And may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be those who curse you,
And blessed be those who bless you."

- Isaac spoke of blessings God would grant to the son who inherits the Covenant promise
- The fatness of the earth and the abundance of the harvest
- Of becoming the chief nation on the earth
- And of becoming master over the family of God
- Later, when Isaac and Esau realized they had been tricked, Isaac spoke of a different future for Esau

Gen. 27:39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him,
"Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,
And away from the dew of heaven from above.

Gen. 27:40 "By your sword you shall live,
And your brother you shall serve;
But it shall come about when you become restless,
That you will break his yoke from your neck."

- To Esau, Isaac acknowledged the reality of what lay in the future for this lesser son
- He would be denied the blessings of Heaven
- He would be a violent man with a violent family

- In the end, his people would live only to serve Israel, though not without rebellion
- In both the cases of Jacob and Esau, these pronouncements reflect a life of faith, as the writer indicates
 - Isaac speaks of future events that are the direct result of God's promises
 - Isaac was so convinced that what God promised would come to pass, that he spoke of these future things as predestined and unavoidable outcomes in the lives of his sons
 - To the son the Lord favored, Isaac spoke of the promises of the Covenant
 - To the un-favored son, Isaac spoke of the consequences of sin
 - In both cases, he delivered promises that were built on top of promises he received from God
 - Only if Isaac believed in these promises, would he have reason to speak of them to his sons
 - And more than that, notice that Isaac understood that he couldn't reverse what he had spoken, even after he discovered the deception
 - He was so certain that the promises of the Covenant could only be given to one son according to God's decree, that he could not offer Esau a solution
 - Once the promises had been granted to Jacob, they were out of Esau's reach forever
 - Though Isaac's intentions were not in league with God's plans, nevertheless, he was acting out of faith in God's promises
 - Isaac blesses Jacob with promises that referred to the Kingdom to come
 - And therefore, Isaac was looking ahead to a resurrected life with his son
 - We know Isaac had the wrong son in mind, but nevertheless he was acting with faith in resurrection and future reward
- Speaking of Jacob, he had his own moment of living in faith in Gen 47, as he considered his own death

- The writer says in v.21, that Jacob blessed his sons and worshipped at the head of his bed
 - This is a good example of how the New Testament writers commonly make use of Old Testament references
 - The point the writer is making is bigger than the short phrase he captured in Hebrews 11:21
 - He's using that reference to call to mind the larger scene that takes place at the end of Genesis
- In particular, the writer is thinking of the moment Jacob began to issue instructions and blessings to his family as his death approached
 - Here's how the scene began

[Gen. 47:29](#) When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, **[Gen. 47:30](#)** but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said." **[Gen. 47:31](#)** He said, "Swear to me." So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed.

- Notice what was on Jacob's mind as he lay on his death bed
 - He calls Joseph to his side and asks Joseph to swear an oath that Jacob would not be buried in Egypt
 - Instead, he wants Joseph to carry his dead body back to Canaan and bury him there
 - Once Jacob received that promise, he bowed and worshipped in thankfulness to the Lord that his body would rest in the Promised Land
- Why did Jacob care about where his dead body was buried?
 - He cared for the same reason that his grandfather and father had cared to remain nomads their entire lives
 - He wanted his earthly life, including the way he died, to be a testimony to what he believed concerning God's promises
 - He believed that one day his body would be resurrected

- And in that day, he would be granted all the promises God had spoken concerning the blessings of the Promised Land
- We know – and I think Jacob knew also – that it doesn't matter to God or the certainty of His promises where our dead body lies on earth
 - But he wanted Joseph to make this promise, because he wanted his burial to be a testimony
 - Because he believed and looked forward to resurrection and life again on earth, he wanted his body buried in such a way that it testified to his confidence
- Daniel speaks of the moment the Old Testament saints are resurrected to enter the Kingdom at the conclusion of the Tribulation

Dan. 12:1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

Dan. 12:2 "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

Dan. 12:3 "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

- We don't know how much of these details God revealed to Jacob
 - But we do know that Jacob expected these things to come to pass
 - And he wanted his body as close to the place of his future home as possible
- Notice again, how confidence in the resurrection is the key to Jacob's understanding?
 - Each time in the lives of the patriarchs, it was their belief that God's promises will await a new life in a new body that sustained them and informed their life choices
 - That's the writer's point for us as well
 - As believers, we don't just give lip service to our faith in Christ and what lies ahead
 - We must be prepared to live our faith in tangible ways

- Ways that reflect our confidence that what has been promised will come to pass
- Now the writer transitions to Moses, who receives the most mentions of faith in the Hall
 - While examples of the patriarchs centered on their expectation of resurrection, the examples of Moses emphasize faith's response to persecution

[Heb. 11:23](#) By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

[Heb. 11:24](#) By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

[Heb. 11:25](#) choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

[Heb. 11:26](#) considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

[Heb. 11:27](#) By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.

[Heb. 11:28](#) By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

[Heb. 11:29](#) By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

- The first example of Moses isn't really an example of Moses' faith at all, but of his mother's faith
 - We're told in Exodus 2:2 that Moses' mother hid Moses for three months, because she saw he was beautiful
 - The Pharaoh was killing all the newborn sons of Israel, so she tried to protect her son
- We know every mother thinks her own child to be beautiful, so it can't simply be his appearance that led her to hide her son
 - In fact, we can assume other Jewish mothers all saw their sons as beautiful
 - The particular Hebrew word translated as "beautiful" is *tov*, which means "good" or "beautiful" or "favorable"
 - But it can also mean "worthy" or "pleasing", as in pleasing in the sight of the Lord

- Now, the writer of Hebrews explains that her actions were the result of a faith that the Lord's promises for Israel would be accomplished through her son, Moses
 - She knew that Moses had been selected for this purpose
 - So she had the confidence not only to hide him, but also to deliver him to the Egyptian court
 - In fact, Josephus wrote that Moses' father had been given a revelation from God that Moses would humble the Egyptians
- Next, Moses exhibited faith when he was a grown man by refusing to be considered part of the Egyptian court
 - Instead, he chose to align himself with the Jewish people
 - When he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave, Moses came to the aid of the Jew
 - In doing so, Moses set his life on a new, far less comfortable course
 - As the writer explains in v.25, Moses' decision to renounce the Egyptian court meant he was hunted, exiled and later wandering with the people of God
 - We might ask why would Moses voluntarily forsake the comforts of Egypt and turn to live an austere and persecuted life?
 - You already know the answer: faith
 - Moses' faith in the eternal promises granted to God's people gave him the strength to pass up the momentary pleasures of sin
 - In place of that temporary, fleshly reward, Moses chose instead the eternal, spiritual rewards God holds out for the children who obey Him
- As the writer says in v.26, Moses understood his relationship with the Living God brought with it a new identity
 - That new identity was that of a Jew, one of God's people
 - And that meant living under the same persecution that God's people always know

- Notice in v.27, the writer says Moses left Egypt, not because he feared the king, but because he felt the Lord calling him to endure this new life as a Jew
- Christ Himself told us that since we are not of this world, Satan's home field, then we should expect the enemy to attack us
 - The moment Moses aligned himself with the Jews, he came under attack
 - And to the extent we live-out our faith, we put ourselves in Satan's crosshairs
 - We stand to lose our wealth, our security, comfort and earthly peace, because the enemy wants to take those things from us
- But here's the key to remember: those are the only things the enemy can take from us
 - He doesn't have the power to impact our eternal future or inheritance
 - His power stops at the doorway into eternity
 - So he can torment us here and now, but once we die and enter eternity and receive our new bodies, his power is gone forever
 - Knowing that, a man or woman of faith can endure the persecutions of this life because we have faith that in the age to come, we triumph over the enemy's schemes
 - And we will be rewarded for that sacrifice and endurance
- Just as Moses understood that whatever he lost on earth was nothing, compared to the riches of Christ awaiting for him in eternity
 - Notice here again, how an expectation of eternal reward for our obedience and sacrifice is an elementary part of living in faith
 - Moses lived at the center of the richest nation on earth
 - But he walked away from all that, without looking back
 - And he did so, because it was a means to pleasing God
 - Which has as its reward, the riches of Heaven

- As the Exodus began, Moses exhibited faith in God's Word as he performed the Passover meal, just as the Lord prescribed
 - Moses took God's Word as a reality when the Lord promised to spare the sons of Israel if they applied blood on the doorpost
 - The promise of God was that judgment was coming
 - But those who accepted the sacrificial blood applied in faith would escape that judgment
 - Moses complied and instructed the people of Israel to do the same
 - And in so doing, Moses acted in confidence that God's Word was true, even before the events came to pass
 - And he did so, convinced that his obedience would be rewarded with the sparing of the lives of Israel's sons
 - And of course, in the process, he creates the most powerful Old Testament picture of the atonement of the Messiah
 - Further proof that when God's people obey in faith, we become part of telling the story of God's mercy and grace to the world
- And then finally, Moses led the people across the Red Sea, perhaps Moses' greatest moment of faith
 - He led Israel into a dead-end in the desert, because he followed the Lord as the fire and cloud
 - And as Moses and the people stood on the brink of destruction, as Pharaoh's army closed in, Moses spoke these words

Ex. 14:13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.

- Moses knew the Lord's promise to bring Israel out of slavery and into the Land
- So though the situation appeared bleak and hopeless, faith is never without hope
- Not a hope in speculation or wishful thinking

- But a hope rooted in the truth of God's promises and the reality of God's faithfulness
- So Moses declared that God was about to do a miracle, even before it happened
 - Then, as Moses lifted his staff, the waters parted
 - So the Israelites went through on dry land
 - But the enemy was swallowed up in the waters
 - Because the promises didn't apply to them
- Moses must have been afraid as he stood there with the lives of 2 million people in his hands and the enemy bearing down
 - He must have entertained moments of doubt
 - But when the time came to take a stand, he stood in faith with the promises of God
 - He trusted that God would rescue the people from the Angel of Death
 - And he trusted that God would rescue them from the power of the Egyptian army
 - And in both cases, God was true to His Word
 - As Moses did these things, he created a picture of confidence in resurrection and expectation of reward
 - In the Passover, the picture is of surviving the judgment of God and escaping the slavery of sin
 - And in the Red Sea, the picture is of passing into a new life, leaving the old behind
 - That doorway into eternity is one opened by faith in Christ
 - And those who pass through are rewarded in eternity
- The Lord may decide to grant us a life like the patriarchs, one of peaceful existence in the world with plentiful supply until we die
 - And if that's us, then the test of faith for us is whether we will live as strangers and wanderers

- Will we let peace and prosperity rule our lives?
- Or will we rest by faith in the promises of God?
- Will we place an emphasis on enjoying the rewards of this life?
 - Or will we remember that our inheritance can't be found on earth?
 - That will be our test
- Or the Lord may test us, as He tested Moses, driving us away from comfort and peace into a life of trial and want, where service comes at the expense of great self-sacrifice
 - And if that's our course in life, then the test of faith will be one of endurance and patience
 - Can we endure the persecution, the deprivation, the scorn?
 - Knowing that the Lord Who has promised is faithful?
 - Knowing that the enemy can't touch what awaits us in eternity
 - Whichever path God assigned to our life, our faith will be tested
 - And our call is to allow our faith in God's promises to inform our choices and decisions
 - So that our life is a testimony to what we know to be true
 - So that we might please the Master Who bought us