



ELIZABETHTOWN
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

PRACTICING PEACE, SERVICE AND OPENNESS TO ALL

Re-member

Hebrews 11 & 12

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HEBREWS 11 & 12

1

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

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice...

By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that the child was beautiful;

By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death;

By faith Noah,...

By faith Abraham...

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land,

By faith Rahab did not perish...

And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of 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.

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.

REMEMBERING

There is power in remembering. Today, we walk that bitter-sweet line of remembering as we celebrate the lives of those in our faith community who have died this last year.

We have all experienced loss in our lives. Many of us have lost a loved one. We have days when it hurts to wake up because

2 the pain is so deep. We have times when the agony of remembering is overwhelming. It is important to be gentle with ourselves. But it is also important to claim the power of remembering.

REMEMBERING, HEBREWS 11

The first few verses of Hebrews 11 are familiar to many: *Now faith this the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

Have you ever met someone who seems to have an assurance that everything is going to be okay, even when it seems like the world is crumbling? They possess a certain groundedness. It is not that they ignore pain or deny circumstance. But even in difficult situations it's almost like they know what will happen in the end. Yet if you talk to one of these people you discover that what they possess is not some secret insight into the future. But rather, faith, "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith that whatever happens, God is above all, in all and through all. And that with God, it is okay.

If only it were so easy to possess such faith. The rough patches in life have the power to leave us feeling defeated and faithless. The author of Hebrews knew that. After those first few verses, we are reminded that many have lived this life of pain and heartache before: a powerful monarch-to-be heard God calling and refused his life of privilege to live the life of an outlaw and lead his people (Moses); a band of Hebrew slaves heard God beckoning a better day (the Israelites); a common prostitute when given the chance to do something brave and extraordinary, did it (Rahab). These and many others lived lives of hardship, pain and desolation. Yet, in the face of misfortune they opened themselves to God and what God had for them, even in their pain and sorrow. It is an act of faith to open ourselves to God even in our pain; perhaps especially in our pain.

THIS GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES?

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The author of Hebrews calls these people a “great cloud of witnesses.” Among this cloud of witnesses are the heroes from the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. Those who, by faith, overcame great odds—people who lived as though there was something more than what appeared to the eye.

But it is not only the Biblical heroes who have opened themselves to God and now make up this great cloud. It is all who have gone before us and shown us a little something of what it means to live in God. It is those who we rub shoulders with in the pews Sunday after Sunday, take our orders down at the diner, and bumps into in the halls at school. Everyone who shows us at least some piece of what it means to live by faith. And of course it is those who we remember today:

It was by faith that **Merle Brenneman** raised a family, was a devoted husband, and worked his farm with passion as a cattle dealer.

By faith **Fred Rice** sang the song of life and led others in doing the same as a professional musician and choir director.

By faith **Pete Lockard** lived a life of dedication to his church, and his country.

By faith **Janet Lockard** loved her family through thick and thin, doting on each one while also serving her church and her community.

It was by faith that **John Martin** lived as a man of faith and prayer; a family man, tenderly attentive to the care of Vera, and missing his daughter, Heidi.

It was by faith that **Ruth Baum** walked the walk and talked the talk of faith and family.

It was by faith that **Millie Long** loved deeply those around her, taking in friend and stranger alike, caring and serving like Jesus.

By faith **Evelyn Reinhold** endured hardship and kept a kind and loving heart.

4 By faith we witnessed **Don Muston** battle illness and live life with passion and humor.

It was by faith that **Chuck Jackson** gave everything in life—wrestling, computer systems, deaconing, church leadership, and of course softball—his very best pitch.

It was by faith that **Connie Ziegler** courageously and successfully weathered storms of life with love, perseverance and gratitude.

It was by faith that **Don Bosserman** brought a can-do attitude to any challenge with a smile and a wink.

By faith **Anna Mae Watts** gave of herself to her family and community in love and service.

All of these people taught us something about faith. Not that they were perfect, but that in at least one area of their lives they lived with great faith—the conviction of things yet unseen.

We often think about what it is to be a member of a group. By definition to be a member is to be part of a whole. When we remember we not only think of the past. When we RE-member that great cloud of witnesses they become part of us once again. And they urge us forward into our lives of faith, with their faith, light and love as gifted by God.

They are examples for us, their exemplary qualities of faithful living are not beautiful objects placed high upon a shelf to be admired. But rather beautiful and strong strands of cloth or yarn to be woven into our lives, to give color and life and strength to the fabric of our community. This is the power in remembering. What a power it is. Thanks be to God.

We would now like to take a moment to re-member each one who has passed from us this year. I will read their name. If you are part of the family and friends representing this loved one, after I read their name, please come forward where Pastor Pam will present a small gift of remembrance.

