

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2025 Trinity 8. Benefice Holy Communion, Gilling.

Some words from our Epistle, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

Much has been written about these few words by commentators and theologians, and I guess it comes down to the question, what exactly is faith? How is your faith today? I ask that question because there are events, times, and seasons in each of our lives when everything we thought we knew or believed is called into question when the narrative of our life has been ruptured, when we no longer know what we believe about God, life, or the world, when we're not sure where to place our trust or in what to hope. These events may leave us wondering, “If this kind of thing can happen, then how do I live now? How do we move forward and where is my faith?”

“If only I had more faith.”, we might conclude in defeat. I have never worked out how to get more faith, so, we might turn to others who however well meaning, might say, “Just have faith,” “Pray more”, “You need a stronger faith.” Is that helpful after tragedy strikes, our heart has been broken, our world shattered? It is not as simple as ordering up some faith.

Like many of you, I grew up with the idea that faith meant me accepting and agreeing to ideas about God, even if they maybe didn't make sense. Faith was about *my* belief in God. That's often how we hear today's Epistle that the events of Abraham's life are about Abraham's faith, but it doesn't say “by Abraham's faith”, it says “by faith”.

What then if it was by God's faith in Abraham that Abraham set out for a new homeland even when he didn't know where it was, how he would get there, or what he would find? Haven't there been times in your life when

someone encouraged you, comforted you, stood by you, believed in you, had faith in you? You then might have achieved more than you thought you could, or overcame what you thought was impossible, or got through a situation you never thought you would. If that is possible with a friend or loved one, how much more will it be the case with God who knows and loves us more than anyone?

Perhaps what we are being told is that faith is more about what God believes about us than what we believe about God. We might lose faith in God, but He never loses faith in us. What if faith is our experience of God desiring us, calling us, connecting and reconnecting with us? What if God's faith in us is a call to live fully in this moment? What if faith isn't about having or even needing to have the answers but having the courage and trust to ask deeper questions that help us discover meaning even in the hardest situations and events, and live at peace? It is this gift of faith that provides a still point in an ever-changing world, that there's a peace despite all the turbulence that might be going on around you, to know that you're not a solitary individual amidst other solitary individuals, but part of a great sea of faith and being, we call the Trinity. It's the sense that our identity doesn't just rest within me, or you, but in the divine presence, within our creator, the One who made each and every one of us and knows us more than we do ourselves.

Jesus says in today's Gospel, "Do not be afraid, for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the Kingdom.". God gives the Kingdom and He gives us faith and God doesn't change! Faith isn't something we acquire or earn for ourselves but something we've been given, something innate to us, the true way of being.

If that's what faith is like, then what are the deep questions in your life today? And what would it be like to ask those questions and seek answers, and not be afraid? What if

doubts and questions aren't failures of faith but prayers and invitations for the Holy Spirit to offer a word of wisdom, guidance and comfort? Confirmation of God's faith in us. If we believe that faith, is not so much our faith in God, but more about God's belief in us, we will find we have the courage to deal with our fears and come through difficult events. Faith may not eliminate our fears but will instead, show us that something else is more important than what we fear. That something is God's faith in us that comes from His endless, faithful Love of His children and that gift of faith from Him reassures us that you and I are more important than what we fear. Thanks be to God. Amen.