

A Leap of Faith

Introduction:

- Faith –vs- common sense and conventional wisdom
- A leap of faith –vs- a leap /jump of desperation. Not so much with hope but out of desperation fearing that the alternative is much worse. An example is when someone jumps out of a burning building.
- But ever since the first moments of creation God has been inviting us to walk with him, join him, and become partners in creation. We are invited to join but doing so requires faith.—In fact joining most any movement or organization requires some faith based commitment.
- Both of our scripture passages this morning contain examples of people putting their trust in the Lord and making a leap of faith. Let's take a look.

P1 2 Kings 4:1- (The Widow's Oil)

- This is a little known – or at least infrequently preached from passage/story.
- V-1 (*The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves."*)
 - In this first verse the widow states her case. There are three important facts in her story. The first two are that her husband had received the Lord and now he was dead. There is neither indication or nor even a suggestion that the two are related in a cause and effect way, but they are related in one important way. The first makes the point that because her husband had received the Lord and had been part of Elisha's company that made her family. She was one of them and she was one of God's people. The second point she makes is that her husband is dead and by Jewish law and by most family standards they have an obligation to her because she is family.
 - The third fact is that because he is dead she is poor, in debt, and in fact the creditor is coming to take her two boys as slaves to pay the debt.
 - Her husband is dead, she is destitute, and she is family. There are many lawyers who cannot state their case as concisely and as powerfully as this woman has just done in one verse.
- V-2a (*Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?"*)
 - Elisha being a sensible man as well as a compassion man he does the logical thing. You have a problem, let's see what is available, what we have to work with so we can figure this thing out and find a solution. So in the second half of the verse he asks her.
- V-2b (*Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil.*)
 - Can you see God at work in all of this? Elisha has got to be pulling his hair out and thinking to himself, or maybe even saying it out loud, "Come on lady, work with me here, give me something to work with. I am just a simple profit trying to do the right thing and here you are expecting me to do the impossible with nothing. Only God can do that – and therein is the Ah Ha! Moment.
 - We are limited but God is not. There is only so much that we can do – but there is nothing that God can not do and we are about to see that in action.
- Elisha told her to go around the neighborhood and borrow as many empty jars as she could. Then he tells her to go inside and close the door. This was to be a private miracle not a public spectacle.
- V-6 (*When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing*)
 - She started with a tiny little bit of oil – not enough to even be worth mentioning under normal circumstances. But with God's help it is enough.
- Whether it was a leap of faith or an act of desperation the woman did as Elisha had told her. And shazam – all the jugs were filled. There was enough oil to repay the debt with enough left over for her and her son to live on.
- It seems there are two points worth noting.

- One is that to the world, to the unbelievers her actions must have looked like an act of desperation. But it was indeed a leap of faith because she had faith and was willing to act on it.
- The second point is how much she expected. If she had half-heartedly gone and asked a few neighbors and had only borrowed three or four jars the outcome would have been differently. God is able no matter what the challenge – but some times we are not able to grasp the scope of God’s power

P2 Joshua 2:1-13 (Rahab and the two spies)

- God’s people are once again asked to/invited to take a leap of faith and across the river Jordan and take possession of the Promised Land. They have been there before only the first time they made a decision based on human strength and human abilities instead of taking a step of faith trusting in God’s word and God’s power.
- V-1 (*Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.*)
 - This seems a reasonable thing to do. And it mirrors the action of the previous generation. And it is also a clear indication that God doesn’t necessarily expect us to rush into things head long with no thought, no plan other than hoping and praying. Remember our relationship with god is a partnership. God does the heavy lifting and performs all the miracles but we still have a part to play.
 - So Joshua sends a few spies across the river to check things out, get a feel for the land, and maybe make a couple maps so when everyone joins the parade he can lead them in the right direction.
 - Although I suspect that they were not very good spies. It appears that the first place they headed to was a brothel. Even worse it seems that just about everyone knew there were spies in town and just where they were to be found.
- V-2 (*The king of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land."*)
 - See what I meant? The king already knows there are spies in town.
- V-3 (*So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land."*)
 - Not only does the King quickly learn that there are spies in town; he knows just where to find them. He didn’t send squads of guards to look for them. Just sent a message to Rahab to turn them over.
- V-4 (*But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from"*)
 - Its crunch time. Rahab has to make a decision. There is no straddling the fence here. There is no middle ground; you are either on one side or the other.
 - And so Rahab makes a leap of faith. She lies to the King and I suppose in the strictest sense of the word she betrays her city and her neighbors. She says they were here but they have left already, points towards the main gate saying, “They went that way and if you hurry you can catch them”
 - Lets jump ahead to verse eight and see just what a leap of faith she took that day.
- V-8/11 (*Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof*)
 - Rahab admits that she has heard of The Lord God of Israel, even refers to him as simply the Lord
 - She admits that the Lord has given the land, her home, to the Israelites.
 - She even confesses that they have heard of all the things The Lord has done to support the Israelites and quite frankly it scares the be-jesus out of them. Their hearts have melted, their courage is gone.
- V-12 (*Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign*)
 - Only now, after having admitted her utter helplessness and having acted on her hope that the Lord will be merciful does she ask for something. Asking that she and her family be spared.
 - Talk about a leap of faith.

Conclusion (A call to action)

- There are lots and lots of stories in the bible about men and women whole hearted God's call, who put their trust in the Lord God and when the time came they made a leap of faith just as the two we have read about this morning.
- There are countless millions more who's stories are not recorded in the bible and for the most part have gone unnoticed by the world – but not by God.
- The good news, the comforting news is that when you take a leap of faith – trusting God – you are never alone.
- In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.