

By Faith - Pastor Chad Vandervalk - July 26, 2020

Pastor Chad 0:02

So our sermon title this morning is a question. And it's: what amazes God? You might not think that there's very little that would amaze God. And you're you're right. Actually, there is very little that amazes God. But the one thing that it says that the Scriptures tell us amazes God, actually, it tells us it amazes Jesus. But since Jesus is the second person of the Trinity incarnate, we can by extension say that it amazes God and that is faith, faith or trust in Him and in his ability to do what he says. He can do. strong faith, the kind of faith that leads to an unflappable life. Now this is not a term that's used all that often anymore, but it's something that has stuck with me as an image of someone that can withstand the storms of life and it doesn't seem to knock them off course they don't seem to over-react at times they still react to what's going on. But they seem to take things as it comes and then kind of move on with life. It reminds me actually. And one of the images that I love to use when I think about an unflappable life is the image of an improv actor. So something that works in the improv industry, whether that be short or long term improv, some kind of Improv Theater, not necessarily improv comedy, although it works there too. I've taken a few courses, or a few classes in improv and it's not as easy as it looks. And to see some of these people on stage like maybe from Whose Line is it Anyway or other places, maybe you've been to an improv show. And you can see someone that really has the gift of just being able to take everything in and they're so engaged with what's going on that a suggestion is made and they immediately say yes, and this is what comes because of that or this is how it happens. And as things change, you can see they just move and go with the flow and they immediately react to what's going on. They're never thrown off base, they don't go off crazy because they're, they're not expecting something to happen. And that's kind of the image that I have of someone with a strong faith, an unflappable life, a life in which they can engage fully in what's going on around them, but they can also move with what's happening. A life that's full of confidence, and the ability to truly work to change the world.

I think many of us would love to have that kind of life, wouldn't you? I know, for me, there's times in which I recognize after the fact, of course, that something that has just happened has caused me to become way more angry than it should have or vice versa. There's something in my life that has kind of caused me to Be really upset or really unsure of what's going on caused me to question kind of everything that happens. Or that has been happening in my immediate circumstances.

Many of us have commented on how unflappable the chief medical officers seem to be across Canada and really around the world, how confident and calm they seem to be as they're expressing the need for caution and for concern. And I can't imagine what's going on in the background, the different kinds of information that they're getting from different kinds of people. Some doctors are saying this is no big deal. Other doctors are saying this is the worst thing in the world, how they're getting information and reports coming in from Spain and Italy that is really crazy and from other places where maybe it doesn't seem to be as bad and then they try to figure out how to manage like in Alberta, how to manage massive outbreaks in Calgary and Edmonton. But then it doesn't really seem to be that bad and other kinds of places and how do you How do you maintain a full provenance and you know, allow for some movement and different kinds of things to balance that with, with economic concerns, and I'm sure they're getting all kinds of things back from all kinds of people, just general people in the public, who are either attacking them or praising them and that they seem so calm and so cool and so engaged in what they're doing.

And I think most of us would love to have a life like that. A life that can respond to disaster or to goodness with either thankfulness or with a quiet confidence that God will see us through or we can have a crisis and not be overwhelmed by our circumstances.

Now, one response that many people go towards is a, an ancient philosophy called Stoicism, and you kind of see it in some Eastern religions and Eastern spiritual As well, this idea that the farther we disconnect ourselves from kind of what's actually happening in the world, if we can disconnect ourselves and provide some distance, then we can stay a little detracted from what's happening and not allow what's going on here to change what's going on in here. So it involves a bit of maybe disconnection, it's might be kind of that old stiff upper lip of the British or the Dutch, where the emotions are just not shown. And you don't let these things be shown. Life is just life life is what it is and you just move on. That's not quite what faith is. But that's, that's kind of what that Stoic idea was, is that you can't step into the same river twice, because as soon as you step in and step back out of the water flows and move some of the stones things change and and to accept that they say is key and to not be so worried about it is key.

The problem with that is it actually detracts us or detaches us from life. Some of the people that I've known that are like that kind of have that outlook on life or live their life that way seem to really be disconnected from what's actually going on. It seems as

though they just go about their business, but they seem to be isolated from what's happening. And sometimes this can lead to places where massive injustice is just ignored, because that's just the way things are. And there's no point in getting upset about it. Because it's just meant to be that way. And that's just the way it is. And we have to stop being so angry about it and just let things go. But that's not what God calls us to. That's not the way I really want to live my life. And I don't think that's the way you want to live your life either. We want to be connected, we want to see and engage with the world. We want to feel the highs and the lows of what's happening in our experiences, but we want to do so also without becoming overwhelmed by. That's, well, life of faith can really give us Is there a way to remain fully engaged with the world? And yet at the same time, remain unflappable?

Well, yeah, the Bible says, and it's called faith, or maybe a better way to put it is trust, trust in God. And here's a bit of an aside. I've wondered about this for a while because for many of us, faith and trust seem to be two different kinds of things. If you say, Well, I have faith in God that gives one particular perspective. But if you say, Well, I trust God that seems to bring up different kinds of images, at least it does for me. I wonder if it does for you too. And I wonder why that is because originally in the Greek and the Hebrew, faith and trust really mean the same thing. And a life of faith is a life that is lived as if you trust God. Faith shows it up in our lives by trust. look at verses one and two of chapter 11. So this is Hebrews chapter 11, verses one and two faith, he says is confidence in what we hope for, and assurance about what we do not see. says it's it's confidence that what we hope for will happen now. He's gone. threw a whole bunch in the front of this book to explain what it means to hope for and what we actually are hoping for because of what Jesus has done hoping for a return of the one who now sits the right hand of God will make all things new, not necessarily hoping for some personal Good things come in the future. It's not about like, you know, God having a Ferrari and all you have to do is be confident and he'll get it for you so you can drive and that's not what this is about. This is about confidence in the things that we hope for, that Jesus and the father have promised will come to pass and assurance, this sense of peace. That what we do not see is still there. This says the writers with the ancients were commended for their trust in God and His promises. Allow them to be confident and to be thankful. so confident when things go wrong, thankful when things went well, to stand up to injustice, and wrong and even admit when they were wrong. This list, as you'll see in a little bit, is not full of people that were perfect. In fact, it's full of people that didn't fully trust God all the time. And yet they did trust him enough to live their life in such a way that you can see God active in it. And their trust in God or

their faith in Him, allowed them to be fully engaged in what God had called them to do and the restoration that he had promised would come and is bringing here now

Verses 3 to 13. So by faith, he says, we understand that the universe was formed at God's commands so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. So God made everything that we can see. He says, We do that by faith, trusting that that is true by faith. Abel brought to God a better offer than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous when God spoke well of his offerings. By faith Abel still speaks even though he is dead. It was his faith, his trust in God that was commendable, not a difference in the kind of sacrifices that he brought, like faith. Enoch was taken from his life that he did not experience that he could not be found because God had taken him away. It's a quote from the Old Testament from before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God and without faith, it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek him without faith. It's impossible to please God because pleasing God involves having a relationship with him, being connected to him, and every relationship involves trust. You can't have a relationship without trust. In fact, most if not all of the breakdowns in all of our roads. Ships I don't use universals very often, but I would say, I would say this could be. This might be true anyway. That all of the breakdowns in all of our relationships are first and foremost a breakdown in trust.

Trust, by faith, or by trusting God, Noah when he was warned about things not yet seen and holy Pharaoh built an ark to save his family, by his faith. By his trust in God he condemned the world because he showed that they did not trust God and became heir to the righteousness that is in keeping with faith

By faith, Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, he obeyed and he went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents as if Isaac and Jacob who were heirs with him have the same promise. He trusted God's promise when God came to him made certain promises and his children did the same. Because he was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architects and builder is God, he trusted that God would come true on his promise to build a nation and a kingdom out of him and his offspring. And because of that trust, he was able to leave his home in Babylon to leave Heron to go to a new place to leave behind the riches that his family had and to live as a nomad out in the wilderness with herds and flocks.

By faith, even Sarah, who was past childbearing age was enabled to bear children. Because she considered him who was faithful who made the promise. And so from this one man and he as good as dead came descendants as numerous stars sky and as countless as a sand. on the seashore all these people were still living by faith when they died, they did not receive the things promised they only saw them and welcomes them from a distance admitting that they were foreigners and strangers in this world. See, it's not like they had it easy. The writer says these people they received all of these promises from God and then they didn't even really experience them in their lifetime and yet they still trusted. Abraham trusted for so long before Isaac showed up. And when Abraham died, the land the promised land that was promised and was not his The only land he owes was a tomb for his wife, Sarah. He was a foreigner in the land and yet he trusted. And that trust led him to be engaged in what God is doing and led him to help Lot, and to rescue those kings, that led him to welcome God as He came to visit him that helped him to wrestle with God about whether it was just to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, even though there was so much wickedness there. It led him to be engaged in the world and to participate in what was going on. Because ultimately, he trusted that the one who made the promises was true and would do what was best. They trusted and that led to incredible lives. Look at verse 15. If they had been thinking of the country, they left, they would have had an opportunity to return. So if Abraham after he had been called out of Heron, and out of that area, if he had been thinking about that land and that thing that he had left behind, he could have just gone back. plenty of opportunity. But he didn't. Because he trusted. But did he make mistakes along the way? Yes, absolutely. We see these all over the story of Abraham. We see these all over and the stories of these other people as well. It's it's not that they don't make mistakes. It's that ultimately they lived their life from a place of trust.

If they had been thinking of a country they had left they would have had opportunity to return instead they were longing for a better country. A heavenly one, one that we can't produce on earth ourselves.

Therefore, the writer says God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared a city for, that God is not ashamed because they trusted in him. Because they trusted his promises enough to live a life that was fully engaged with what he was doing in the world. He is not ashamed to call their God. It makes me wonder because I've, I've never really thought of that. Actually, before I was really studying through this passage, I've never thought about the fact that maybe, maybe God is sometimes ashamed to be called our God. Maybe when we live a life, claiming that he is our God, and yet not showing or exhibiting the kinds of trust or trust or faith. Him that actually

leads to a life that is that is grounded that is secure, that is engaged, that is loving that is pushing back against injustice, maybe, maybe when we live a life trying to secure our own future through our own endeavors by gathering as much power and influence as we can regarding as much money as we possibly can, or by trying to create a family and working hard to keep it together so that that future can be guaranteed, maybe when we do that, we try to work out our own salvation, is one way to put it we try to guarantee our own good life. Maybe God is ashamed to be called our God.

Makes sense, though, isn't it? Think about that, if if I were still dating, not married, so it's a little different when you're married? Well, let's say If, if my wife claimed to love me, which she does, by the way, don't don't get this wrong, but if she claimed to love me, and she claims to believe and trust and have a good close relationship with me, and yet didn't trust me, continue to check up on where I've been continued to do the things that I have, or follow through maybe reading my text messages or going through my phone or whatever. Now, if you have reasons to do that, that's, I'm not saying that they're don't but she doesn't have any reason to do so. But if that were the case, right? So there's no reason for her to go through my things because I'm not doing anything outside of our relationship. And if she claims to love me and to have a close relationship, but he is doing all of those things, well then i don't know if ashamed is the right word, but kind of would be ashamed to have her say that we had a strong relationship, because it wouldn't be true to what is actually going on in our lives.

And I think the same is true of God. Right? Every relationship requires trust and trust is built over time as people are faithful to their promises. Absolutely. And if we don't actually live like we trust God, then maybe he's ashamed when we claim to have a close relationship with him, claim to actually be in a relationship with him. Because he's not ashamed when this list of people live, as if they trust Him, that's borne out in the way that they live. He's, he's amazed at the life that comes through when, when we actually do show that we trust.

So remember, some of the first times when, as a young couple, we got married young, right? I was 18 when we got married, and I hadn't even known my wife for a year before we got married. And so it took a while for us to, to gather the kind of trust that we have now after we've been married for 21 years. And so those first few years were a little bit rocky and I remember, I remember times, both for myself and for her of choosing to trust the other person now that trust could have easily been broken. And there's too many times in our lives when that is happening and when relationships are broken, because the breakdown of trust and I'm so sorry, if that has happened to you.

But if it does get broken, that trust continues to build leads to some incredible things leads to a life that even God is amazed at.

Now, that brings me back to what I said earlier in terms of what amazes god what's a life of strong faith and I, I get that amazement word from the story in Luke chapter seven. Chapter Seven starts off with a story of a faith of a Roman centurion. When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who are listening, he entered Capernaum, which was kind of the place where he was living at the time, and there a centurion servant whom his master value highly was sick and about to die. So there is a Roman centurion so a leader of a garrison of Romans, probably in Capernaum, in order to guard that particular section of road because now that road marked a border between two of the Roman provinces and across that border, there was a toll booth that toll booth that Matthew where Levi sat at the tax collectors booth. Was there until this century was probably there to guard that particular booth? isn't sure you'd heard of Jesus and since some of the elders of the Jews to him asking him to come and heal his servants, when they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, this man deserves they said to have you do this because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue. So this guy apparently had had built a synagogue there in the city for the Jewish people to have maybe as a way to solidify his influence in that place, maybe as a way to, to kind of guarantee that they would be generous towards him. Maybe he didn't go out of good faith and he simply wanted to bless the people because he had been blessed for whatever reason the Jewish leaders said, Look, he deserves this.

So Jesus went with him. And he was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him Lord, don't trouble yourself for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. He recognizes his place in this right? It's not because he did something for the Jewish people and he deserves to get something from Jesus. He recognizes He doesn't deserve anything and yet he still trusts Jesus will do something. I don't deserve to have you come under my roof. That's why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word and my servant will be healed. I still trust so even though I'm not worthy. I can't expect anything from you. I do trust because of what I've heard about you that you will do something, say the word, my servant will be healed for I myself and a man under authority with soldiers under me. I tell this one go and he goes, and that one come and he comes I say to my servants do this, and he does this. So this man understands what it means to have authority. He knows there's people above him to tell him What to do, and he better do it. And there's people that he are, that are below him that he tells them what to do. And they better do it right, you go guard, that tomb, and if something happens there, you will lose your life. You go

take that prisoner to some particular place, and if something happens, you're probably gonna lose your life along the way, you guard that toll booth. And if any money goes missing, you'll forfeit your life because of it. So they do what they say because he is a man in authority because of the place that he stands. And he recognizes that Jesus has authority he sees in Jesus, the same kind of power, like you're not the same kind of power, because again, it's just like I say, go to people, and they go because there's a threat of death on them. But he recognizes in Jesus authority over illness, over sickness, over all the wrong that's going on in the world. He sees the authority of God Himself present in Jesus and he says, look, you don't need to come do anything fancy, you can just say it, and it will happen. And when Jesus heard this, this is Luke chapter seven, verse nine. When Jesus heard this, he was amazed, the Greek word is [Greek Word], which literally means to be amazed to be shocked. This statement and this kind of confidence or trust in Jesus amazed him. And he turns around to the crowd following to them and he says, I tell you, I have not found such great faith, even in Israel. Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

So what amazes God? A life of faith. And this is what a life of faith is, as we see this list of heroes, so called heroes in Hebrews, I encourage you to read through the rest of chapter 11 Pastor Dayna, next week, we'll kind of wrap up that chapter and then give an application to our lives, but go through that chapter, see the people that are listed there. They're not wealthy or powerful. That's not why they are chosen or why they are listed there. They're not listed there because of some great achievements that they did on their own. They're there because they trusted God. And a life of faith is a life that recognizes for us in the New Testament, particularly and this is what the writer to the Hebrew says, is the life that recognizes that Jesus is in control. It's a life that trusts that God wants what's best for us, that Jesus is the image of God and we see exactly what God wants from us in Him. It is a life that trusts God and that he will bring about what's best for us. Maybe not in our time, but he will do it. It's a life that stands up to wrong and injustice and is fully engaged in the restoration that God has promised and is bringing right now here in this world and we'll bring again when he comes in the last day.

Faith says the writer in Hebrews 11 verse one, faith is confidence in what we hope for, and assurance about what we do not see. So how might you increase your faith or your trust in God? And how will that shape the way that you live? Being fully engaged in what is going on working to make the world a better place? Experiencing the highs and lows of life, being thankful when things go well and confident when things go poorly.



Living a life that is unflappable where you are not overwhelmed by what happens?  
What would it take for you to live a life like that?

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