

Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less

Onward and Upward (Week 2) - A Liminal Journey:



1) We began yesterday by returning to an old friend, Hebrews 11, and what it highlights as commendable about Abraham of old (see Heb. 11.8-10).

2) At the age of 75, God, from whom he'd never heard before, asked him to do something unusual (leave his father and homeland), something unsafe (travel to and take up residence in a foreign land), and, thus, something very unknown.

3) Just three verses later, Hebrews says that we're kinda like Abraham, and will be our whole life long (11.13-16): we're all just foreigners and strangers, with a deep sense that we're not home yet, and, in fact, it is that sense that makes God proud to be our God (see the 2nd half of v. 16).

4) There's a word for this kind of nomadic, itinerant faith: liminal, which means, to be traveling between two points, and often without being able to perceive what's ahead of you.

5) Both Richard Rohr and Susan Beaumont have written recently about liminal spirituality: their first tip is to be willing to move from a posture of knowing to unknowing, which is a signature component of humility.

6) Over and over in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, it is the proud or smug - the knowers - who end up falling flat, but the humble and teachable - the unknowers - find honor and wisdom (Psalm 25.9 would go further and say that humility is a prerequisite to receiving God's guidance).

7) The humility with which we're living is often best revealed in the questions we're asking, not the answers we're assuming or protecting: as poet Tracy K. Smith puts it, a question is pursuit, invitation, and movement, whereas an answer is static and a stopping point.

8) A second tip for our liminal faith journey is to realize that anxiety is inevitable, so we must take responsibility to manage the tension and worry that are unavoidable.

9) A third and last tip is to realize that our security and peace of mind cannot come from the familiar; it can only be found in the God who travels with us through the unfamiliar.

10) Psalm 16.8 says that we'll find ourselves unshakable and secure if God is in two places at once in our lives: before us, leading the way, and right beside us at our right hand.

More to Explore

1) In yesterday's sermon, Pastor Chris read a small excerpt from a series of devotionals that Richard Rohr wrote about liminal spirituality, back at the start of the CoVid pandemic in 2020. As promised, here's a link to that entire week-long series - you can link to individual entry from this page: [Liminal Space](#)

2) Hebrews 11 calls Abraham an example of liminal faith. So maybe spend a little time with him this week, both how God called him initially in Genesis, and then the New Testament's reflection back on him as such an important figure:

- Genesis 11.31-12.9: [Genesis 11.31 - 12.9 NRSV](#)
- Romans 4: [Romans 4 NRSV](#)
- James 2.18-26: [James 2.18-26 NRSV](#)
- Galatians 3.6-14: [Gal 3.6-14 NRSV](#)

3) Another key resource behind yesterday's sermon was Susan Beaumont, who has written a good deal about leadership during liminal times. Here's a brief summary article of the book she's written on that subject: [How To Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going](#)

A Prayer for the Week

John Birch (Faith and Worship):

For the gift of faith which sees beyond the present moment and looks ahead into Your Kingdom, we thank You, oh God.

For the gift of faith, small as a mustard seed, which has great power in such simple form, we thank You.

For the gift of faith, bestowed on those who would simply come, hearts open in humility, we thank You.

Give us a small, powerful faith that sees clearly and comes to You readily, this we ask, amen.