

## Worship, Grow, Serve: The Faithfulness of God and Ourselves

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Generosity Appeal: Week 1

Hebrews 12:1-10 1Therefore, 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. 3Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. 4In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children — "My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts."

7Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? 8If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. 9Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness.

*God is faithful. God does not leave us in times of need. God gives us all we have and all we need. Our response to God's faithfulness is faithfulness in return. (Gratitude next week)*

**God is faithful! God is faithful! God is faithful!** For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations. (Ps 100:5)

To dig into the concept of God who is faithful, let's get back into the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, to remind ourselves of some stories we might have learned long ago. Or if, we never learned them, we will get the quick Tic Tok version today!

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Remember the story of the Flood? Genesis Chapters 6-9. God saw humankind, that God had created. They were wicked in God's sight and it grieved God. But Noah was a righteous man. God instructed Noah to build an ark and put two of every living creature into the ark. Noah followed God's instructions and then the flood came to wipe away every living thing from the face of the earth.

Then God remembered Noah and all the animals with him in the ark. God made the rain stop and put an ark into the sky. God made a promise to Noah: I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature...never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth... I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.” (Gen 9:8-16)

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Abraham and Sarah. Also in the book of Genesis, God promises to Abraham and Sarah two things: land and descendants. This is critical because from these two covenantal promises everything else follows.

Genesis 12: The LORD says to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you, so that you will be a blessing.”

Genesis 15: After Abram continues childless, the LORD says, “Look toward the heaven and count the stars if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be.” And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Abraham and Sarah are in their 90’s at this point. Old folks who have never had a child. Yet God is faithful, and Isaac is born. From Abraham and Sarah, God’s people move to a new place, to the land God gives them. They are the patriarch and matriarch of God’s people. They too, are devoted and faithful to God. They leave everything they know, their family, and follow God.

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As we move down the family tree, Jacob has twelve sons and Joseph is his favorite son. This makes Joseph’s brothers jealous. They throw him in a pit to die and then sell him off to some Ishmaelites who took Joseph into Egypt. There Joseph, an interpreter of dreams, tells the king there will be a famine and the people should begin storing grain. The king makes Joseph a deputy of Pharaoh.

When famine comes to Joseph’s brothers back home, they go to Egypt to get grain, not knowing Joseph is alive or of his new position. In God’s faithfulness, God not only provides for Joseph’s family and all of Egypt, but allows Joseph to forgive his brothers and be re-united. God is faithful! We are faithful to God!

Remember Daniel in the Lion's Den? David and Goliath? Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego in the fiery furnace? All of these stories show us the faithfulness of God to rescue and save people in their distress. They also tell us of people who in opposition to forces around them, are true and devoted to God alone.

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Of course, the best example of God's faithfulness to us, is Jesus Christ. Who before His arrest, knew what was coming and had His own doubts. God, in Jesus, devoted to His own Father, would die on the cross in love for us.

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But then, God resurrected Jesus the Son through this incredible love for all of God's people, then and now. That Easter morning is the most compelling story of God's faithfulness! God is faithful.

We don't have time enough to tell the stories of all the disciples after Jesus' death like Peter or Saul who became Paul. But with each one, God was faithful. Each trusted God and was obedient, learning lessons along the way about devotion to God.

But if you ever need encouragement that others have been dedicated to God and God to them through thick and thin, read Hebrews Chapter 11. Then we read these words, "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..."

We've all been in a stadium before...think back to High School. The crowd is on their feet as the track runners come around the bend. It's loud, it's proud!

You and I stand on the shoulders of everyone who has believed and trusted in our devoted God for centuries. They are cheering us on from the other side. Cheering us to (slide) run with perseverance this faith race we are in! God is faithful! You are too! God is faithful! You are too!

Can we hear them? The more we understand that God is devoted to us, provides for us, watches over us, is in it for the long-haul with us...yes, the more we understand God is full of faith for us, then we have trust to be obedient and follow.

If God provides all we have and all we need for this race, then it's easier to be generous with what we've been given.

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A person went through a hard divorce. Trying to make ends meet was truly a challenge. There was anger and sadness and it felt like her fists were always closed tight ready to fight. More than once when she needed money, she would go to the mailbox and there was a check inside.

She gradually understood, God was providing for her. Gradually her fists opened not only to receive, but then eventually to share as well.

Faithfulness goes hand in hand with generosity. God is faithful to all generations.  
Amen.