

Sermon Text for September 25, 2016

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Ruth 1:15-18, Genesis 46:1-7

“Great is Thy Faithfulness”

I hope you are excited to be here this Sunday morning and ready to hear and feel God’s voice and presence speak and touch you. Today we are going to look at God’s faithfulness as it is seen throughout Scripture and specifically as we see it played out in Genesis 46 in Jacob’s life. Remember, I said Jacob, not Joseph. Jacob the patriarch, the father of Joseph and Benjamin and the other 10 brothers. The one who was called Israel. We will see one last time God speaks to him as he did during his dream of the angels ascending and descending on the ladder. This time God comes to him at Beer Sheba where his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac had gathered to worship and bless God and hear God’s voice. Once again Jacob hears God’s voice and is able to proclaim God’s faithfulness.

Every now and then we need to hear God’s promise break through in our lives that He is faithful. I don’t care who you are, it is nice to hear God say to us: I love you, I want good for your life and I’m going to do everything in my power to make good things happen in your life. That’s where Jacob found himself today. He had lost one son, thought he had lost another, but now things have changed completely around. In the midst of his life God stops him on his journey down to see the whole family reunited just to tell him that he loved him.

Today we gather in this place of worship to be reminded of God’s faithfulness in our hymns and our prayers so that we can be equipped and ready to go out of this church confident of God’s great faithfulness in our lives and share that promise to others outside of these walls.

It is a little strange to feel like I need to prove God’s faithfulness. I know each of you could stand up here and tell us of God’s faithfulness in your own life. I know you don’t need to be convinced of God’s faithfulness but rather we find that we need to hear about it again and again. Our passage in Genesis we find Jacob who hears God’s voice and is reminded of God’s faithfulness. He didn’t need to hear it again. He had felt personally God’s faithfulness in the dream of the ladder, in his wrestling with the angel, in his marriage to Rachel and Leah, and now in the good news of Joseph’s presence and life.

But Jacob needs to hear of God's faithfulness again. Our Scripture begins with the beginning of Jacob's journey away from the land that God has promised to Abraham to go to a foreign pagan land. Jacob is probably thinking: what's wrong with this picture, this isn't part of the plan. But God calls him and says: Jacob, Jacob, and Jacob answers here I am. I am God, God identifies himself here much like he will to Moses and Samuel and other Old Testament people who are called to do an especially difficult and strenuous task for God. Then for clarification he states: I am the God of your father. And then as often happens when God reveals Godself he says: "do not be afraid." Then he addresses the question of going to Egypt and he says: I will go with you.

We find God addressing all of Jacob's fears and preoccupations with an assurance of his presence and his help. God's voice here to Jacob is a lot like our assurance of pardon during the service. We know that God forgives us our sins, but it is nice to hear it said. Likewise Jacob knew that God was with him, God had been with him and his family since he could remember. He knew God loved him and took care of him, but it was nice to hear it again.

Once Jacob hears God's assurance of his faithfulness and continual presence in his life: Jacob is able to act. I am God, the God of your father, don't be afraid, go because I will go down with you to Egypt. Then in vs. 5 we read Jacob set out and took his whole family into Egypt. Because of God being faithful and loving he was able to continue in what God had laid out for him.

How important it is for us to know and to be reminded over and over again of God's faithfulness. It is absolutely essential to know that there is no place we can go where God is not present with us.

Every Sunday, brothers and sisters, you come and hear the good news that Christ has won over death and suffering and that God has consistently been faithful in Scripture and will always be faithful to you in your life. Look to Christ as an example of God's faithfulness. Hearing this good news over and over again allows us to be uplifted, edified, convinced of God's actions in your life so you can go out into the world, out of this sanctuary with a smile on your face because you know how it is going to end. It is going to end with God's faithfulness to all generations.

We live in a time delayed world which doesn't know about God's continual faithfulness and that God will win in the end. We need to introduce God's real time

which announces to us that Christ has risen from the dead, that the victory is in Jesus. That God's faithfulness endures to all generations.

Scriptures are filled with these assurances. Ruth and Naomi is a perfect of example of how we see God's faithfulness in Scripture. Ruth tells Naomi, as God tells us, Where you go, I will go, where you lodge, I will lodge, your people shall be my people.

In Hebrews we read of how our faith in God is reinforced every single day by the mere fact that we see the worlds around us and recognize that God has made them for us to enjoy and be in God's presence. This past year our country has felt God's presence and faithfulness like never before. Does that make sense to you? This country has felt the most tragedy and suffering that it has seen in generations and yet I can stand up here and say that we have felt God's faithfulness like never before. It makes sense to me when I see the community of Tulsa rally together in the face of a senseless tragedy, even when Charlotte is on fire. A headline I read was: Why Charlotte rioted and Tulsa prayed. How can we not think of God's faithfulness to our country as we look to this nation's history and the men and women who have served our country with honor and service.

God has been faithful and never, never can we give up but rather because of God's faithfulness we can go on as Jacob went on. Now I can say that to those of us here in attendance. But what if our history had been different. What if our history had been one of slavery, where your great grandparents were brought to this country on a ship, chained. What if our history was one where as a teenager you couldn't go to the same schools or drink from the same water fountains. What if your history was that as a father you had to talk to your sons about what to do when you see a policeman, how to act, how to behave. I've never had that conversation with my daughters, I haven't needed to. Has God been faithful to the blacks of this country? They seem to think so, even in the midst of the tragedy that they have been served.

In Lamentations we read the weeping prophet Jeremiah, one who had every right to doubt God's faithfulness, he says with certainty: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided, great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.