

Table Group

Week of May 11, 2020

Hebrews 11:1-3, 32-40 (MSG)

¹⁻² The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.

³ By faith, we see the world called into existence by God's word, what we see created by what we don't see. [...]

³²⁻³⁸ I could go on and on, but I've run out of time. There are so many more—Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets. . . . Through acts of faith, they toppled kingdoms, made justice work, took the promises for themselves. They were protected from lions, fires, and sword thrusts, turned disadvantage to advantage, won battles, routed alien armies. Women received their loved ones back from the dead. There were those who, under torture, refused to give in and go free, preferring something better: resurrection. Others braved abuse and whips, and, yes, chains and dungeons. We have stories of those who were stoned, sawed in two, murdered in cold blood; stories of vagrants wandering the earth in animal skins, homeless, friendless, powerless—the world didn't deserve them!—making their way as best they could on the cruel edges of the world.

³⁹⁻⁴⁰ Not one of these people, even though their lives of faith were exemplary, got their hands on what was promised. God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.

Hebrews 12:1 (CEB) says: So then, with endurance, let's also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us.

That cloud of witnesses didn't stop in the first century. They continue on today. So this week, think of all those people who have been examples of faith for you. Likely you haven't seen them in a literal lion's den, and undoubtedly they were not perfect - but in their life struggles and celebrations and amidst their failings and shortcomings - who has been part of your cloud of witnesses? How has their story encouraged you? How can you take your own struggles and demonstrate acts of faith for whomever is watching you?

Journal your thoughts to the following questions:

How is your relationship with God?

What life-giving habits are helping to grow your connection with God?

How might the Holy Spirit be working for renewal in your life?

What are you allowing to consume your time and/or your thoughts that keep you from life-giving habits that draw you more deeply into God's call?