

**August 8, 2010  
Genesis 15:1-21  
Creekside COB**

## **“Faith Mantra”**

**Joke: A little girl was asked in Sunday School, "Who made you?" And she said, "Well, God made part of me." "What do you mean God made part of you?" "Well, God made me real little, and I just grewed the rest myself."**

**Today we find ourselves right in the midst Abraham and Sarah’s faith journey. You know there are certain things that we go through where we find ourselves with in need of a deep faith. And in those times, we wonder if we are going it alone.**

**Abraham had the same problem. If any of you followed Abraham’s journey, you will know Abraham did not acquire his faith instantly or easily. He had some help.**

**It took much trial and error. If we look back into the life of Abraham and Sarah their lives may look a lot like ours. How is it that we come to have great faith like Abraham? It is in our Faith Mantras.**

**What does a faith mantra look like? A mantra is a chant that is used in mediation of prayer. A chant used to deepen your spirituality. Now a faith mantra is to build faith. I am sure everyone has one if they think about it. Well, I’d like to take you to the epistle part of the lectionary text today. It is from Hebrews 11 that we find a faith mantra starting with “By faith Abel, by faith Noah, by faith Abraham, by faith**

**Isaac, by faith Jacob and it names a myriad of saints who, in their journeys with God, may have developed a faith mantra.**

**Let me give you an example:**

**I developed this faith mantra as I was moving along in life and I adapted the Hebrews text and I created my own mantra.**

**By faith I decided to go to enter into the ministry and you opened the doors of my denomination.**

**By faith, I decided to go to seminary and not sure of how I would make a living and travel to school and you provided me with a school that had a program for people who work all week and pastors so that they can pastor and go to school.**

**By faith, I decided to move to Dayton and you provided me with great affordable housing.**

**By faith, I needed a job when I got to Dayton and I knew I needed to make a certain amount of money and You provided me with exactly the amount I needed to make.**

**By faith, I needed a ministry during the school year and you provided me with my first paid ministry in the Dayton Correctional Facility**

**By faith, I needed to have another ministry after the prison and you provided me with a pastorate in Southern Indiana**

**The list goes on and on and the circumstances that went with this mantra are amazing. There are so many twists that make the mantra more powerful.**

**Worship in the earliest form for the people of Israel focused on offering praise to God for God's many acts of faithfulness. As they worshiped they would identify the specific acts through which God had shown faithfulness. They would remember and they would praise God for God's faithfulness. As they did so, their faith was quickened and their worship left them with a greater sense of confidence regarding what God might do in their midst. Remembering the past always leaves God's people hopeful about what might come next.**

**Faith mantras remind us that we should be confident in our faith because our God is faithful**

**A young man spent his junior year of college on an exchange program at a university overseas. It was a time of great change for him. He lived in a new and different culture. The food was different. The people were different. The language was different. The school was different. Even his friends changed.**

**He discovered that the one constant in his life was the presence of God. It became a time of spiritual renewal for him as he focused on seeking God's will for his life. As a result of this new focus, he developed a sense of closeness to God that had been missing.**

**Our faith mantra reminds us that God is with us always that we are confident in today no matter what the circumstances.**

**We come into those circumstances remembering the past and what God has done for us.**

**We recite our faith mantra and we walk our faith journey in confidence unsure of our outcome but with God's faithfulness on our side. Our faith mantras remind us of our God's faithfulness to us.**

**In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy encourages Charlie Brown: "Look at it this way, Charlie Brown," she consoles. "These are your bitter days. These are the days of your hardship and struggle ..." The next frame goes on: "... but if you just hold your head up high and keep on fighting, you'll triumph!" "Gee, do you really think so, Lucy?" Charlie asks. As she walks away Lucy says: "Frankly, no!"**

**Faith Mantras remind us that we should be hopeful in our faith.**

**Do you remember Terry Anderson who was held captive for several years. Here is an excerpt from one of interviews given upon release.**

**First, when he was asked what had enabled him to survive this awful experience, he answered without hesitation, "My faith, my companions, and my stubbornness."**

**Second, one reporter said, "Terry, you have said that you don't hate your captors. Can you help us to understand that?" Terry Anderson replied, "It's really very simple. I'm a Christian. The Scriptures teach us to forgive. I don't hate anybody."**

**And the third, he was asked, "Terry, did you ever lose hope?" Terry Anderson said, "Hard question... Of course, I had some blue moments, moments of despair, but fortunately, right after I became a hostage, one of the first things that fell into my hands was a Bible. Over the last 6 ½ years as a captive, I have spent a lot of time with the Bible... and that helped me so much because it's about hope; it's about trust in God, and that's what gave me the strength to make it through each day." And then Terry Anderson said, "You do what you have to do. Faith helps you to do what you have to do. I spent a lot of time with the Bible and it reminded me to do the best I could each day... and to trust God for the future."."**

**I remember reading another interview about Terry Anderson he told of his being an agnostic before he was captive and he talked about having found a button and held that in his hand that represented his hope for as long as he was captive.**

**We all go through those times of hardship. Maybe not as difficult as his was. We all go through those times of financial problems (unemployment, bankruptcy), relationship problems (schisms in the family, long time relationships ending in divorce or death) problems with children and parents, dreaded illness. There are so many hardships.**

**I can imagine the faith mantra Terry Anderson would recite when coming to a place where he needed reminded. I can imagine yours. Our faith mantras remind us to have hope for our futures. That we shall not give up or doubt. That is what was happening today with Abraham . He doubted God's promise for him. He became afraid of it not being fulfilled.**

**Our mantra still works even in our fear and unfaithfulness. I want you to hear this. So many people, when asked, "How are you feeling about this?" They will say fear. I ask, "What are you afraid of?" I am afraid of the not knowing. Even in our fear. Abraham was afraid, God says to Abraham today, "Do not be afraid." I am your shield. (I am your protector) God knows our humanness. He knows all about us.**

**Even in our unfaithfulness, God is faithful. Abraham made mistakes. He moved away from God in His deceit in Egypt where he told everyone that Sarah was his sister. He was afraid they would desire her and if they did they would kill him and take her as their own. By telling them she was his sister, they would take her and he would remain alive. Oh, what a tangled web we weave. This worked for**

**awhile with Abraham until the Pharaoh found out and kicked them all out of Egypt. They left but more prosperous than when they came.**

**So many people believe God is so wrathful when it our own sin consequence that puts us in bad places. It is our own choices that change our lives.**

**During my CPE, I was called in the middle of the night to a situation of a sudden death a husband and the wife was hysterical. In my ministry to her, she told me that her husband and she had had an affair when they both were married and she believed that her husband's death was her punishment, God's wrath upon her.**

**It took me a little while to get her to understand it doesn't work like that. God is not a wrathful God but a faithful God. She was suffering from her own guilt, her own remorse, her own shame. But God remains faithful to us through our repentance of sin.**

**Let me show you an illustration. I had a seminary professor that explained God's faithfulness like this. Put your arm in the air and spread the fingers of your hand apart. Now I want you to imagine your arm as your faith journey and your hand as a crossroad in your life choices. In these choices, you have what is best for you and what is worse for you and all choices in between. Even when you make the worse choice, God's faithfulness still brings you back to your arm, your faith journey and you are back on the path of God's will in your life.**

**Even when you make decisions out of fear or disobedience, God remains faithful.**

**You see 2 Timothy say that even when we are unfaithful, God's remains faithful, he can't deny Himself. Let me just say that again. God is faithful because that is who God is and God doesn't change. God remains the same.**

**Just as God made a covenant with Abraham, we too enjoy the same covenant.**

**And in that covenant, we see God's greatest act of faithfulness, God reveals to us his most holy act of faithfulness, in Christ.**

**That God loves us so much that he made Himself flesh and dwelled among us.**

**He loved us so much that He sacrificed Himself so that we enjoy the same promises as the Hebrew people.**

**I ask all of you to begin to remember the faithfulness of God in your lives and proclaim the Good News to all that need to hear it.**