



Love is Faith in Action – An Invitation to Be Ready

Proper 14C || August 10, 2025 || 9:30am St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Hanover, MA || Isaiah 1:1, 10-20; Psalm 50:1-8, 23-24; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40 || The Reverend Amy Whitcomb Slemmer, Esq.

What a gift we have in our scripture readings this morning – we've made a quick confession in our opening prayer that we are a people who cannot exist without God, and we've asked for God's help us so that we "do always what is right."

Our Epistle reading from Hebrews offers us a concise, clear definition of that amorphous concept faith. This morning we are offered that faith is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." and as though our writer knows that it is summer, and we'd be forgiven for being a bit fuzzy headed, we are offered vivid examples that make this concept and definition tangible.

This morning's poster people for faith are Abraham and Sarah, who ached to have children but were, by any measure — ancient or modern — far too old for such a possibility. And yet...

Abraham and Sarah truly lived the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.

And the writer doesn't stop there — they go on to paint a picture of the fruit of that faith, with a pretty funny, gossipy aside: "From one person, *and this one as good as dead*, descendants were born, as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

What a wonderful reminder of how faith works. God's timing is not our timing. God expects us to be patient and to know that our demonstrations of faith today may not yield visible results until far in the future — perhaps even beyond our own lifetimes.

Luke's gospel reminds us that what we do while we are waiting — how we invest our time, energy, and love — matters deeply. The ways in which we spend our days and set our priorities tell the truth about what we value.

Last week, we heard the cautionary tale of the Rich Fool, who kept his own counsel and was not generous in his community, but instead hoarded his abundance for himself.

His priority was protecting his “stuff” — far more than he could ever need — only to discover that his life would end that very night. He died without ever tasting the joy of giving, without ever seeing how generosity could change the lives of others.

Last week's facet of God's love was Love that Endures — the experiences, relationships, and acts of kindness that live on long after we do. This morning's gospel is the perfect “But Wait, there's more” because Luke reminds us how we are to live, in order to have a meaningful legacy that survives for generations. We are to live ready, expectantly. We are to live generously, and we are to live with our hearts connected to and committed to God's Kingdom on earth.

“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit,” Jesus says. We are to live in such a way that when an opportunity arises to “make kindness loud,” as we love to do at St. Andrew's, we're not scrambling around for our shoes — we're ready to jump in.

Faith is not a spectator sport. It's not about folding our hands and waiting for God to do everything. Faith is active and engaged. Faith is trusting that God is at work in ways we cannot see, and that living into God's expectation that suit up and hit the court because we are part of that work.

Having our lamps lit is a spiritual posture and demonstration of our faith. It is a way of standing in the world that says: I am awake. I am watching. I am ready to step into the work of God's kingdom whenever and wherever I am called.

Our readiness, our internal spiritually tended lamps have nothing to do with frantic busyness or anxious striving. In fact those pursuits are distractions, or at worst, perhaps aimed at achieving social or family approval, or worse – God's approval. Having our lamps lit, and being dressed for God's action is about keeping our hearts tuned to God, focused on Kingdom values so that when the Holy Spirit comes knocking or nudging, we don't miss it.

There was a fad a few years ago – books were written, perhaps a movie produced, focused on the discipline of saying “Yes”. Instead of a scarcity mindset of “no, I can't”, the approach was taking on a practice of “yes”.

This concept might offer a great foundation for faith in action – being a consistent Yes to God’s work. Yes to welcoming the newcomer. Yes to visiting a neighbor in need. Yes to offering the better seat. Yes to babysitting for a family with tired parents who would seriously love a nap. Yes to praying for someone who has hurt us - Yes to loving our enemies.

Being ready is not about fear of being unprepared. It’s about joy — about living each day in such a way that we’re not just waiting for God’s kingdom, we are participating in it here and now.

We are blessed to be surrounded by marvelous examples of what living with our lamps lit, living with our shoes laced and ready to go, looks like. Members of this community donate food or quietly stock the shelves of the Hanover Food Pantry. We have friends who knit prayer shawls and baby blankets. We have fierce volunteers who make Rosie’s Day at the Beach happen by showing up with supplies and open hearts and listening ears. We have faithful colleagues who make coffee hour happen week after week, preparing our shared space for conversation, care and strengthening our community connections. We have members of the Altar Guild who prepare this space for worship with love and reverence. This is what faith in action looks like.

Parishioners are living out their faith – their “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,” by hoping that people are fed at the Food Pantry, and here at Church. Hoping that unhoused women are seen, valued and heard. That babies or lonely elders, or sick or infirm neighbors are warmed, soothed and connected to this community – connected to the loving hands who knit the shawls, and baby blankets.

Hope that all who worship in person or on-line find nourishment and spiritual sustenance in this beautiful and historic sanctuary.

If you hunger for that spiritual connection or are not clear about whether your time and attention is being invested in God’s Kingdom, you are in the right place. By merely asking that question, you are one step closer to living ready and expectantly. By bringing your full self to worship on Sunday, and to service throughout the week, you are offering your “Yes” to God’s call and invitation.

We prayed at the beginning of this service for God’s help and guidance to always do what is right. May we spend the few reflective moments that follow asking for God’s guidance and obvious presence to sustain our efforts, to make us bold so that we may demonstrate love consistently as our faith in action.

Amen+