

By Pastor Jens Seliger, Kirchhorst near Hannover

Music  
Welcome  
**Hymn**                    **There is a longing**  
Prayer  
Reading                    Romans 5,1-5  
**Hymn**                    **God loved the world**  
Reading                    John 6, 16 - 21  
Apostles' Creed  
**Hymn**                    **Freedom is coming**

Sermon Hebr 11,1-3.8-10 Pastor Jens Seliger,  
Kirchhorst  
**Hymn**                    **3x Mercy is falling**  
Announcements  
**Hymn**                    **Stay with me**  
Prayer of intercession  
The Lord's Prayer  
**Hymn**                    **We are marching in the light of**  
**God**  
Blessing  
Music

Sermon: Grace to you and peace from God, our Father,  
and from Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen

Today we celebrate the Sunday Reminiscere Ps 25:6 "Remember, O Lord your great mercy." And I am wearing my white robe and stole in remembrance of my ministry, working as a Missionary in South Africa for 10 years.

\*The theme for the Sunday connecting all the readings is:

**in Trouble - but there is hope**

Listen to the Sermon text out of Hebrews 11, 8-10

*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know, where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.*

*For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Dear Congregants,

Imagine your child would ask you: "Mom, Dad, what is faith?"

– how would you explain it?

A starting point could be, that you read Hebr. 11.1

*"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see."*

And you could continue that

- **Faith** is the foundation our hope is build on

- the firm conviction and expectation,

that God will do whatever he promised through Christ

- the strong believe that through his suffering we are saved,  
will be raised and get into heaven

- **faith** encourages our soul to enjoy those things now;

- it creates a new reality or gives foretaste of things to come
- Faith proves to the mind, the reality of things that cannot be seen by our eyes  
Like all things which are holy, just and good in life.

**But would this abstract explanation satisfy your child? Does it satisfy you?**

**No, because faith is nothing abstract,**

**but it can be recognized looking at other people.**

Therefore we Christians read the stories in the Bible, the OT & NT, in which people who have lived long before us, believed in God, trusted his promises and therefore did everything he asked them to do, even if it meant going through some tough times.

The people in the Bible starting with Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, Noah and Abraham are witnesses for our faith in God. And it is good for us to read about their lives, so that we can learn from trouble and hardship they went through, but also from the blessing they received.

**Looking into the past doesn't mean talking about the "good old times", but to learn from the past how to deal with our own present situation and how to plan for the future.**

During my ministry as a Missionary serving in the colored, Indian and black townships surrounding Durban in SA I was involved in the struggle for freedom and democracy in the first truly free elections in South Africa.

Thinking about about people of faith **Nelson Mandela** comes to my mind. His life and faith changed the future of a whole nation and was recognized by the whole world. He struggled for freedom, was imprisoned for 27 years and truly walked the long walk to freedom, being released in 1990 and becoming the first black president of SA in 1994.

Amandla – awethu - the power is with us!

He was raised in the rural Eastern Cape in the African tradition as well as a Christian in the Methodist church. In prison he realized, that he could not win against the white apartheid regime and accomplishing equal rights for all people by means of violence. But he insisted on his human rights in nonviolent resistance to those in power, always showing others the respect he asked for himself, standing up for the truth but always willing to reconcile with his enemy.

Withstanding the call for revenge – one settler one bullet – Mandela helped to build the rainbow nation of all of God's people in SA. And when he died last December all South Africans – both black and white people – wept because of Madiba – their father.

He never talked much about his faith, but instead put it into practice every day of his life.

But thinking about faith, also ordinary people come to my mind:

**Alice Hughes**, a colored lady in my first congregation in Durban, about 60 years of age, divorced from her drinking husband who abused her and had other relations. Bringing up her 3 sons and 1 daughter all by herself. Having lost her job in a factory, she sold sweets to the school children. Later she cared and brought up also her grandchildren. Faithfully she attended the church service as well as the prayer meetings at people's houses. She was a simple woman with little education – but with an impressive faith and big heart!

I remember **Uncle Willie Armu**, an Indian, about 70 years old. Also a simple man with not much of an education, but able to talk in Zulu, the language of the natives of KwaZulu. So he went into the black townships and risked his life talking as an Indian to the Black people.

He proclaimed the gospel in simple but convincing words, counseled and prayed for people.

You might have your own memories of **people, whose faith made had an impact on your life**: Your mother or father, grandparent, Sunday school teacher, pastor or youth leader.

Looking into the past like our sermon text does with the example of Abraham, we discover **one more important thing about faith**:

**The history of God's people is also a history of suffering and hardship, right from the beginning:**

- Abel was murdered
- Noah belittled by people as he build the ark
- Abraham had to leave his home
- Sarah couldn't conceive a child
- Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac, his only son
- Joseph was sold by his own brothers, as a slave in Egypt,

And in the **New Testament we read**

- **about Jesus Christ** who suffered and was crucified for our sins
- the **apostles** endure hardship and persecution spreading the gospel
- and **Christians till today** are persecuted because of their faith in the Middle East, Africa and Asia

**Seeing all this suffering - endured by people believing in God - we ask ourselves:**

-What is the reason for all this suffering?

-Is there any hope for our life, seeing all this suffering in the life of God's people as well as everywhere around us?

Paul says in Romans 5:3-6

**"...suffering produces endurance, {4} and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, {5} and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.**

But the starting point is Faith

**Faith - that is the firm believe, that God is almighty, and will do everything to lead us safely through the dark valleys of our live.**

Abraham believed and trusted this God's promise despite all the difficulty and hindrances on his way

Abraham's story teaches me

-suffering, pain, hindrances, difficulties and being separated from loved ones are part of life

-but to set my hope on God's promise - no matter what, come hell or high water

-if that means suffering as well - so be it:

- because I know why and what for I am doing things

-behind the suffering there is more: a certain hope in God's promise through Christ

**Paul is convinced and says:**

**My present suffering is nothing compared with or in the light of the future glory in God's kingdom**

-that gives me strength to pull through when the things get tough

-that going through suffering will build my endurance, will make me tougher for the task at hand

-that the more I manage my difficulties, the stronger my character will be at the end

The Sunday Reminiscere teaches us

- to **remember God's blessing** in the past

- in order to **give us strength to endure** our present hardship

- because we have a **strong faith believing in God's blessing in our future**

And I hope and pray that this will be of help for you, to face your own suffering with the same hope, to get you through the tough spots in our life.

So may the love of God, which is far beyond human understanding keep your heart, mind and soul safe in Jesus Christ. Amen.