Heb. 11: 20-22; Gen. 27:26-29; 39-40; By Faith, they Faced Death I. Isaac’s Faith II. Jacob’s Faith III. Joseph’s Faith

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, when a person is drawing near to death, it is very common for them to call for their family to come home. Perhaps you have received a phone call that said as much- “dad is not doing well, you need to come home.” One of the reasons that children gather around their parents at this time is so that they might say their final goodbyes. But it is also a wonderful opportunity for the parents to give parting words to their children. Your last will and words to your loved ones. And that is what we find in our reading from Heb. 11 today. The writer of Hebrew brings 3 men before us today. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These three men each focus on the future while giving their parting blessing to their own sons. So then, do we have hope for the future? I remember reading an article that stated this fact- Liberal women choose not to have children because they are concerned about climate change. I’m not sure if we think about it this way- but having children is an act of faith! We believe that our God is faithful- that Jesus is and will continue to gather, protect and provide for His church. And we believe that the God of the covenant will continue His work in the hearts of our children. More than that- our faith changes what we say and how we raise our children! In other words, we can have faith in God’s faithfulness concerning the next generation. We find this faith present in the 3 patriarchs of our text today. These 3 men had faith in the future work of God in the face of their own impending death. But before we look at each man, I want to start with a little application today. If you knew that you were going to soon die, what would you say to your family? What final words of instruction or comfort would you want them to hear from your mouth before your words were silenced by death? Not only is the way in which we die instructive- but the words we speak as death approaches also reveals what lives in our heart. It is true that sometimes the pain medication or the disease robs the elderly saint of their ability to speak clearly or rationally. However, I have also heard great and stirring words from Christians who saw death standing at the door. So then, what would you say to your family if you knew that your time was short? What words would you pass on to the next generation? So lets consider this theme: By faith, the saints face their own death and speak to the future works of God.

**I. Isaac’s Faith**

Our passage begins in v. 20 by taking up where we ended last week. By faith Abraham offered his son Isaac. And now, by faith, Isaac takes up the mantle of faith and passes it on to the next generation. Now when it comes to the blessing of Isaac’s sons, we know that his sons were marked by trickery and deceit. Who did Isaac bless? Well, Isaac first blessed Jacob. As you will remember, Isaac’s son was quite a deceiver- a heal grabber. Not only had Jacob stolen the birthright as Esau sold it for a bowl of red stew- Jacob also stole the blessing as we read in Gen. 27. Here Jacob covered his neck and arms with goat hair in order to trick his father. Isaac’s eyes were weak- dim- as they had grown tired through age. And Jacob used this fact to pull a fast one on his father. Jacob impersonated Esau- and swindled the blessing from Isaac. But as messy as this story is, Heb. 11 simply states the fact that Isaac blessed his son by invoking a future blessing on them. Now our reading from Gen. 27 states that Jacob will be blessed as a great man- a king- one who will be richly blessed with the fat portion of the land. People will bow down to him and he will be lord over his brothers. Esau’s blessing is a lot less. Esau will be little- he will live by the sword but eventually he will throw off the bondage on his neck. But here again, the specifics of the blessing are not mentioned in Heb. 11. Rather, the focus is on the hope that Isaac had- specifically the hope for a future. Back in Gen. 26, Isaac himself had been blessed by God. I will be with you, I will bless you, and to your offspring I will give this land. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. It is this blessing from God that Isaac passes to his children. Specifically, Isaac was holding on to the hope of future things- blessings concerning things to come- future blessings. Isaac and his sons simply receive the blessings of the covenant. It is evident that they were not worthy of this gift- to be sure Jacob was quite the deceiver and Esau was rebellious and refused to repent. But none the less, by faith Isaac embraced the covenant and passed on the promise to the next generation.

**II. Jacob’s Faith**

Next, in v. 21 we read of the faith of Jacob. Jacob has been loved by God- chosen by grace- and to him the covenant and promises have been handed down. Now Jacob, as you know, was a deceiver who was also deceived. He also wrestled with God and received in his body the mark of that confrontation. Renamed as Israel, the one who wrestles with God, Jacob himself had been swindled. Jacob was tricked into marrying 2 women- sisters along with their nurses. By 4 women, Jacob will multiply into 12 tribes. In Gen. 49 you can find all these sons and their corresponding blessings. In fact, many of the sons will be rebuked and rejected. But one son and his corresponding tribe will be elevated above them all. Judah will arise as the lion tribe- the son of Leah, no less, would be the tribe through which kings would come and the blessings of the covenant would be established. However, Heb. 11 does not say- by faith, Jacob blessed Judah. Nope- that is not the focus here. The focus is on the faith of Jacob at the end of his life. And specifically, faith in the presence of resurrection and restoration. As you will also remember, Jacob had a son named Joseph. Joseph was considered dead- killed by a wild animal. Jacob thought his second youngest son was lost. But in God’s providence, at the end of Jacob’s life this lost son is restored! By faith, when Jacob was dying, blessed the sons of Joseph! Now a major section of Genesis 39-50 deals with Joseph’s life. But let’s read from Gen. 48:14-16. So Jacob blesses two of Jospeh’s sons- Ephraim and Manasseh. And these two sons are grafted into the covenant line- taking Joseph’s place and receiving a portion along with all the other tribes of Israel. But again- this declaration and blessing is made at the end of Jacob’s life! He worshipped God by bowing his head as he leaned on his staff. An old man who had endured so much- who not only had caused but also received so much trouble! And yet- he worshipped God and blessed Joseph’s sons. In this we find that the life of faith is one that testifies to God’s presence and power in all circumstances. Listen to Psalm 71:18- even to old age and gray hairs, O God do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation and your power to all those to come. Jacob will tell the next generation- He will worship God in his old age and instruct his children’s children in the way of the LORD! As a brief application, you are never too old to worship God and to tell the next generation of His works!

**III. Joseph’s Faith**

And then, we come to v. 22. By faith, Joseph at the end of his life made mention of the exodus and gave directions concerning his bones. (Gen. 50:22-26) Joseph looks to the future and instructs his family concerning the things that are to come. He not only pronounces a blessing but he gives a very clear prophecy. Now the life of Jospeh is one that stirs the heart. A classic rags to riches- slave to ruler- story is found here. But then again, the focus is on Joseph’s hope for the future! A theme of God’s providence runs through the life of Jacob and Joseph. God was at work- working all for His glory and for the good of His people. God did not abandon Joseph in the pit or in prison- and God would not abandon Joseph in the grave either! God would not break His covenantal promise! As we saw last week, the hope of the resurrection was held to by these patriarch! Why would Jospeh car about his bones? Why must the box carrying the remains of Joseph be brought to the promised land? For 2 reasons, because Joseph trusted that God was faithful concerning the exodus and because he had hope concerning the resurrection. First then, Joseph prophesied concerning the exodus. The people of Isael now enjoyed peace in the land of Egypt. But before the next person in our Heb. 11 series is born, some 400 years will pass, and the Israelites will be oppressed slaves! So what happens from Joseph to Moses is that the people increase, time passes, and the Egyptians enslave the Israelites. But Jospeh will have his family remember! The land of Canan would belong to the children of Abraham one day. Do not give up hope- look to the future! Trust that God will deliver you and bring you home! The land of Egypt is not your home- you are a pilgrim in this land. And the second reason is that Joseph looked forward in faith was his hope that one day his own body would be raised! Joseph longed to walk in the promised land in the flesh! And the burial of his body in the promised land proves his hope! I want my body to be brought home- I want to be laid to rest in the promised land! Egypt was not the promised land.

We note that at this time, Joseph was incredibly rich and powerful. But he does not allow the privileges of this world to distract him concerning the future! The power he enjoyed at Pharaoh’s side would not diminish his desire to dwell in the true, land of rest! Added to this, the past injury that he has endured has not hardened his heart. He does not let the sins committed against him- the wicked actions of his brothers- cause his faith in God’s power and promises to faulter! Here again, we catch a glimpse of the covenantal promise and the hope of the future passed on from generation to generation. As Abraham received and believed God’s promises, so he also passed that promise to his son, Isaac. Isaac received and believed the same- passing these promises on to his sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was loved by God, and it was his faith in God that moved him to bless his sons and the sons of Joseph. God has always been pleased to work along family lines! He uses faithful mothers and fathers to instruct the next generation concerning the person and work of God! We can also see an interplay between the covenant and election. Jacob was loved and Esau hated- and yet both received the sign and the promise of the covenant. All of the children of Jacob were circumcised- all received the sign and the promise of the covenant, but to some it did no good. All of this is to say, the promises that we receive must be believed! True faith is conviction and assurance- a confidence that all of God’s promises will be fulfilled! By faith we know that God’s promised blessing will be received and enjoyed! Without faith, we cannot please God! Without faith in Jesus we will not be brought into the promised land! It is this conviction that moved these patriarchs to pass on the message of salvation and the promise of the covenant to the next generation! It is by faith that we can run the race and finish well!

To conclude, there are many things that we hope to pass on to our children. Skills we want to teach them, lessons we want them to learn. But of all things that we pass on, knowledge of the covenant must be primary! We cannot change the hearts of our children, but we can teach them what God has said along with the promises and requirements of the covenant. The brevity of life reminds us that we all have a limited amount of time to teach our children. So if you knew that you would soon die, what would the last words to your children be? Would you make sure to tell them where your money was held and which account numbers they needed? Would you be sure to teach them how to run the family business? Would you talk about the weather? Or would your last words be to remind them of the covenant? To bless your children in the name of the LORD. To make sure that they know the way to salvation and life is found in trusting Jesus alone? Well, you do not need to wait until you are old to bless your children in this way! And even if you do not have physical children, you can still be a spiritual father or mother who blesses those around you! By faith, the saints face their own death and speak to the future works of God. So may we all believe the promises of God- and by faith receive the blessings that He has promised- as we share this good news of great joy which is for all people! A Savior has been born- He is Christ the Lord! He is now in heaven preparing a place for you- and in Him you too can have resurrected life in the promised land!