

**Hebrews 11:24-28** By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter when he grew up. <sup>25</sup>He chose to be mistreated with God's people rather than enjoy sin for a little while. <sup>26</sup>He considered disgrace for the sake of Christ as greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. <sup>27</sup>By faith he left Egypt without fearing the king's wrath, because he persevered as one who sees him who is invisible. <sup>28</sup>By faith he celebrated the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not strike them down.

As Lutherans we get understandably itchy when someone talks about making a choice. Too many Christian groups teach decision theology. They say that you have to choose to accept Christ into your heart. There's a big problem with that. The Scripture describes us as being spiritually dead on our own. The dead can't make choices. They just rot. I cannot choose Christ on my own. By God's grace he chose me and he chose you.

Now that we are believers there are choices that we need to make each and every day. Am I going to do what my sinful nature wants to do or I am I going to do what God wants me to do? Through the Word and Sacraments God has given every believer the ability to make the right choice. In the three lessons for today the people were faced with a choice like that. Some made a good choice. Some, sadly, didn't.

Hebrews 11 has been called the heroes of faith chapter. It lists all kinds of Old Testament examples of people who lived by faith. God equipped them to do that. They aren't impossible standards to try to live up to. The whole point is that the same God who enabled them to live by faith does the exact same thing for us. So Live By Faith Like Moses. Live for Christ, live without fear, and live trusting in God.

A little Bible history here is necessary. God's people had been living in Egypt for almost 400 years. Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, got worried that the Israelites were a threat to his rule. So he gave the order that if an Israelite woman gave birth to a male child, the midwives were supposed to throw the child in the Nile river. Since these Israelite midwives believed in God, they wouldn't do something that horrible.

Not long after Moses was born, it was becoming difficult to hide him from the Egyptian authorities. So his mother made a little basket/boat for him and put him in the Nile where she knew that Pharaoh's daughter often bathed. She saw him and took him as her own. Moses was raised in Pharaoh's house as if he was his grandson. The best education and all the wealth that came with being a part of one of the most powerful countries in the world were his.

So that left Moses with a choice. Would he spend the rest of his life identifying with the Egyptians and enjoying the good life, or would he choose to identify with his own people, the Israelites, who were being horribly mistreated as slaves? I think for most people the choice would be simple. Better to be rich than to be a slave, right? That's not the choice that Moses made. It wasn't because he thought it was more honorable to be a slave. It was because he knew the promise of a Savior that God had made to his people.

There are decisions that all of us have to make every day too. We live in two kingdoms. Primarily we live in God's kingdom which is Christ's rule in our hearts by faith. But we also are a part of the kingdom of this world, specifically as citizens of the United States of America. Sometimes those two kingdoms will come into conflict with each other. Then which one are we going to go with?

Every time I watch regular TV these days I get irritated. Political ads have run amok. Both sides claim that the other is the spawn of Satan and they are paragons of virtue. Neither are right. All the candidates are sinful human beings with their own particular good points and failings. Educate yourself and vote your conscience, but finally don't expect either side to save you. Remember what God told us, **"Do not trust in human helpers, in a mortal man who cannot save you."**

There are more mundane decisions we make every day. We do that every time we give our offerings. Will I make my offerings a generous response to God's blessings to me or will I be so paranoid about the future that I'll just hoard everything for myself? Will I risk being "outed" as a Christian or will I bury my Christianity down deep so that I fit in with the people in town or at work or at school?

Look at what Moses did because that's our motivation too, **"<sup>26</sup>He considered disgrace for the sake of Christ as greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt."** We live out of love for Jesus. Remember every day what he has done for you. He loved you so much that he took on our flesh and blood and chose to identify with his creatures rather than make a big deal out of the fact that he is true God.

He allowed himself to be rejected by most people as we saw so clearly in our Gospel lesson for today. He placed himself under the judgment of the Jews, the Romans, and even his heavenly Father. He not only suffered crucifixion but the punishment of Hell itself so that we won't have to. He gives us forgiveness, real life, and eternal life as a free gift. That is where we find the motivation and the strength to live for him.

Live By Faith Like Moses. Live for Christ and live without fear.

The next verse talks very briefly about the Exodus. God used Moses to lead his people from their slavery in Egypt to the new land that he had promised to give to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is the reason God had him trained in Pharaoh's house. He would understand how the kingdom works and who were the important people. He knew Pharaoh like we might know our grandfathers.

Thankfully my grandfather wasn't as big of a jerk as Pharaoh was. He was afraid that the Israelites might be a threat to him. You would think that he would be eager to see them leave. But he didn't want to lose all the free labor either. So he stubbornly hardened his heart against God until God hardened it for him permanently. Not even nine powerful plagues would change his mind. We'll talk about the tenth in a minute.

You would think that it would be terrifying for Moses to lead this nation of approximately two million strong away from the place that they had called home for four centuries to go to a place that he had never seen with his own eyes. So what gave him the confidence to go? **“<sup>27</sup>By faith he left Egypt without fearing the king's wrath, because he persevered as one who sees him who is invisible.”** He trusted in God's power and promises alone.

I don't think that any of us will have to face challenges even approaching what Moses faced in his lifetime. But we are sinners living in a world filled with more sinners so guess what we're going to have to face? The funny thing to me is that when Christians see examples of sin in action around them they act surprised. What did you expect? The surprising thing shouldn't be that people do dumb, wicked, or downright awful things. The surprising thing should be that we have a moment's peace in this life.

I already talked about the election. We will have a new president elected in November. I'm amazed at the amount of angst about it online. But I suppose if people trust in other human beings instead of trusting in God you will get worked up about everything under the sun because your heroes will always fail you. They promise the world, but neglect to mention that none of that will ever happen unless a whole lot of other people in Washington agree with them.

Worries hit closer to home too. I don't know if there's anything more frustrating than going into the doctors knowing full well that something is wrong but they can't seem to figure out what it is. Even getting bad news would be better than no news at all. We worry as family members get older and frailer. People die and then suddenly the ones that we looked up to aren't there to guide us and help us anymore. It feels pretty lonely.

But like Moses we see the one **“who is invisible.”** I'm not claiming to have seen God with my own eyes, but we have all seen him clearly with the eyes of faith. All those wonderful truths about the love that Jesus showed us through his life, death, and resurrection are facts that most of us have known since we were children. If he was willing to go through all of that for us is it possible that he would just abandon us now? Of course not!

Remember what Jesus said right before he ascended into heaven, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** There is one who is in charge of all of history and his name is Jesus Christ. He is all powerful. He cannot be voted out of office. All the decisions he makes are the best ones possible. He does everything for our eternal good. Since all of that is true, and it is, then what are we worried about again?

Live By Faith Like Moses. Live without fear and finally live trusting in God.

The last verse of this text talks about the Passover which became the most important date on the Jewish calendar. It's all about that tenth plague that I talked about earlier. God was going to strike down all the firstborn males of both people and animals throughout the country. That would be devastating for them in a number of different ways. The deaths would be one thing. The firstborn males were the ones through whom the family name would be passed down. It would include Pharaoh's heir-apparent.

But God wanted to spare his own people. So he had them take a year old male lamb without any spots or injuries and sacrifice it. They were to roast it and eat it along with some unleavened bread and some bitter herbs to remind them of their years of suffering. Then they were supposed to smear blood from the lamb on their door frames so that the destroyer would see it and pass over their homes, sparing their firstborn males.

The author of this text wrote, **“<sup>28</sup>By faith he celebrated the Passover and the sprinkling of blood.”** Why “by faith”? Well, Moses had no visual proof that God's plan would work. Pharaoh had rejected everything else. He also had to trust that God's plan for them would work. Smearing lamb's blood on their door frames didn't seem like a great defense mechanism. But he took God at his Word.

The Passover had even a greater purpose than being the way God would tell Pharaoh in no uncertain terms, **“Let my people go.”** God had an even greater rescue planned for them and for the whole world through our Savior Jesus. Just like that lamb that was sacrificed had to be spotless, so also Jesus would be spotless—without any sin at all. Just like the lamb's blood spared the firstborn males from death, so also Jesus' blood spares the whole world from sin, death, and Hell.

When Jesus started his ministry, John the Baptist pointed to him and said, “**Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**” As soon as any faithful Israelites heard those words, their mind would immediately go back to the book of Exodus and think of the Passover lamb. That sacrifice had been offered for generation after generation. Now the one who would fulfill it was here!

Just like it required faith on the part of Moses to trust in God’s plan and promise, it also requires faith on our part to trust in God’s plan and promise through Jesus. Logically it doesn’t make sense that one guy who died in the Middle East 2,000 years ago could have any impact on my life today at all. People have come up with all kinds of ideas on how to be right with God, including ignoring him altogether. By faith we know that the only way that will work is God’s way.

This is why we still study the Old Testament today. Even though this text is from the New Testament, it talks about the events of the Old. It unites us with Moses and all the believers from the past. There is not and has never been two churches: Old Testament and New Testament. There always has been and will always be one—the Church of God. Their faith was in the Savior who would come. Ours is in the Savior who has come.

Sometimes people look at faith as being like a leap in the dark. It is not. This is how the author describes it at the beginning of this chapter, “**Faith is being sure about what we hope for, being convinced about things we do not see.**” Faith is not blind. It sees clearly. Faith rests on the power and promises of God. People make mistakes, sometimes deliberately. No one lasts forever. God is perfect and eternal. Trust him forever.

Live By Faith Like Moses. Live for Christ, live without fear, and live trusting in God. We didn’t decide to become believers. God took care of that through the Word and Holy Baptism. Now he enables us to make the choice to live like believers every day. God doesn’t want us to be mere robots who obey him because we have no other option. He wants our obedience to be free and motivated by his love alone. Choose wisely.