

This Little Light of Mine

Rev Felicity O'Brien 8 August 2011, all rights reserved.

Hebrews 11

Today I want to talk faith and the kingdom of heaven – how faith builds our hope for it, what we can hope for, and how we can be ready for the kingdom of heaven breaking out around us.

Our reading from Hebrews talks about faith, and how it builds our hope. (Heb 11:1) Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see. There is much in our Christian walk that we need to trust by faith. We weren't there when Jesus was walking in Galilee, and we didn't see the empty tomb. But faith tells us that we can trust those who were there, that we can trust the Bible. (Heb 11:3) Because of our faith, we know that the world was made at God's command. We also know that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen.

This is a straightforward faith, trusting the Bible, and the people who have taught us in our faith. When we look out the window at the clouds speeding by, or see a daffodil opening up, our faith tells us that God did that! Well, since we have faith in these things, we can also trust God to provide for us, both now and in the future.

Our Hebrews reading talks about some examples of faithful people.

(Heb 11:16) They were looking forward to a better home in heaven. That's why God wasn't ashamed for them to call him their God. He even built a city for them

God did indeed build a city for his people, but it's not just for after we die. Our Luke reading tells us not to be afraid, because It is your father's good pleasure to give you his kingdom. This is talking about the kingdom of heaven, here and now, in the middle of this messy and broken world, where things are not perfect. In the Lord's prayer we ask, your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven. How can it be like heaven, here on earth? Whenever we treat each other as Jesus would treat us, we are spreading the kingdom of heaven. Kindness, a smile, praying for someone, are all ways we can be the hands and feet of Jesus to those around us. Many of you may have examples of a time when someone was helpful and kind, unexpectedly, and how it made your day. There will be other times you remember when someone was mean, unkind, and it felt awful, and you knew that was not how God wanted it. The good news is, God wants us to have his kingdom here on earth, and he has sent the Holy Spirit to help us spread it, like a light in the darkness.

The passage from Luke talks about light – Be dressed for action, and have your lamps lit. Let's have a look at that image. We might think that it's easy to just light our lamps, a flick of a switch. It gets bright straight away –well, with the new energy saver bulbs it might take a few minutes. But Jesus was referring to an oil lamp. Oil lamps require constant attention. Wicks must be trimmed and oil replenished. A poorly maintained lamp will not light when you need it. Even a well-maintained lamp takes time to light — unsatisfactory in a real emergency. We can't always be physically awake and watchful, but this passage is talking about a readiness of heart. The old song sums it up "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."

If we're living consistently in a Kingdom way, -and there's lots of advice in the Bible to help us do that,- the Holy Spirit can use us whenever opportunities arise. We may not consider ourselves able, but if we are available God can supply the "able" part. Praying for a person, or a situation, or even a country, is a way that you can be a very important part of spreading God's kingdom. Remember, he wants you to be part of it, and by praying we are partnering with God. Situations change when Christians talk to God about them.

I think the attribute of heaven that stands out for me is being constantly in the presence of God, worshiping him. If he wants us to have his kingdom here, now on earth, God must want to be in it with us, walking alongside us, sharing our pain and our joy, our triumphs and our defeats. He is as close as your next breath – trust God, talk to him, and be part of his kingdom.