

## Wrington & Lynch Chapels Minister's Website Article December 2020

When you read the Christmas story, do you ever wonder about the faith of Joseph and Mary, of the shepherds, of the Wise Men. Their worlds were turned upside down, but they had a measure of faith to respond rightly.

Faith is a funny thing, isn't it? It can mean belief, and it can mean a willingness to trust. We can use it as a noun, as in *'The Faith,'* when Christians mean the good news of Jesus Christ. Matthew 24 talks about *'the faith'* as something from which one turns away; and Jesus asks, in Luke 18, *'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?'*

Or, we use it in *'My faith,'* when we either mean *'I believe in the Christian good news'* or as a quantity such as *'I haven't got enough faith.'* It's an odd, devious word that seems to stretch to how we feel.

The Bible has different avenues for faith. Hebrews 11 says, *'Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'* In Matthew 8, Jesus says the centurion had great faith, because he believed Jesus could heal his servant from a distance. Elsewhere, Jesus rebukes his disciples for being afraid of a storm, rather than having faith in him. On many occasions, healings either happen or do not, depending on someone's faith. Yet, Jesus says you only need faith as small as a mustard seed to do marvellous things.

Faith also seems to lead to other improvements. Acts 26 talks about being *'sanctified by faith in [Jesus]'*; Romans 1 says obedience *'comes from faith for his name's sake'* and righteousness *'is by faith from first to last.'* Romans 5 says, *'...we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.'*

So, it's a flexible word. But where does that leave us? In times of stress we worry about whether we have enough faith. But can we have enough? Should we try to get more faith? I suggest we need not fret. After all, Romans 10 says *'...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.'* So faith can appear as a by-product. Acts 3 talks of *'...the faith that comes through him [Jesus] that has completely healed him...'* This hints that the faith we have may not be dependant upon our own efforts. Then, to make this clear, Romans 12 says we should think, *'...in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.'*

I could go on, but this isn't a thesis, and I'm no theological scholar. To me the important thing to remember is that the bible say faith comes from God. He gives it by his grace. It is a free gift. As with every gift from God, we can either abuse it, ignore it, or let it grow. I suggest that letting it grow is a mixture of living out the life of Jesus, trusting him, walking his way of love, and spending as much time as possible building a relationship with him and his people. It's a way of faith, given in grace. Don't ignore it. Don't let it be swamped by this world and its cares. Carry on, walking the way of Jesus.

Every blessing this Christmas

Duncan