

*Read also Psalm 18:25-35. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

On the street across from Penn Station in New York City sits the James Farley U.S. Post Office. This is the post office which began answering letters to Santa Claus, and still does. Built in 1912 and covering two blocks, on its famous facade these words are engraved,

*Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.*

This is not the official motto of the U.S. Postal Service, but it has often been used. After the 9-11 attacks, it was included in their annual report to Congress. This variation was used in a television commercial following anthrax attacks which, when put in letters killed five Americans:

“We are mothers and fathers. And sons and daughters. Who every day go about our lives with duty, honor and pride. And neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night, nor the winds of change, nor a nation challenged, will stay us from the swift completion of our appointed rounds. Ever.”

All the uncertainty during this hard time caused mail delivery to be disrupted. The Post Office wanted Americans to know they recognize their responsibility in continuing to provide this fundamental service.<sup>1</sup>

That is commitment. It’s not the creed written on the building that makes it true. It’s the postal workers who make it happen. They go out and do their jobs with diligence and persistence, regardless of the obstacles. Can you think of the last time your postman skipped delivery?

Postal workers and community volunteers make Operation Santa Claus happen where letters are answered and gifts are sent to the needy children who write. It is more than a nice idea. People see to it that something happens. People have been faithful to the program for over 100 years.

For the next two weeks we are talking about keeping the faith as displayed in the most famous “faith chapter” in the Bible. Let’s hear it. READ Hebrews 11:1-16

The passage says “without faith it is impossible to please God.” And it says we are rewarded for our faith! So let’s see if we can figure out what faith is about for our lives and for 2016.

**Step One of Faith** – faith is to see God who is unseen.

This week I met with pastors and others to pray for Duncanville. We believe prayer matters. One man prayed, “God, bless me! Let me be known as a man who loves Jesus.” How many of you pray and ask God to outright bless you because you believe? Some people don’t pray for themselves—but, if that’s you, change that! It’s scriptural to ask for God’s blessing because prayer shows you “see” God who is unseen. That’s faith! And faith pleases God.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Postal Service, *2001 Comprehensive Statement on Postal Operations*, “Compliance with Statutory Policies: Fundamental Service to the People,” 1.A-1 at <http://about.usps.com/strategic-planning/cs01/c1a.htm>, accessed 4/27/2016.

- Abel showed his faith by giving his best sacrifice. It pleased God. When we tithe, it shows faith and God blesses.
- Enoch showed his faith by walking with God. It pleased God. The same is true for us.

**Step Two of Faith** – believe that God rewards those who seek him.

We read in Psalm 18, “To the faithful you show yourself faithful.” King David attributed all his success to God.

*God arms me with strength, makes my way perfect, he makes me surefooted, enables me to stand. God trains me and strengthens me in my work.*

**Step Three of Faith** – Order your life around God, who is unseen.

Notice it does not say God rewards all those who *say* they believe. I can sit down in a chair and say all day long that I have faith but this passage is filled with action verbs:

Abel gave

Enoch walked

Noah heard God and built a boat

Abraham obediently traveled to a place unknown

Isaac and Jacob lived in tents on the same foreign land

Sarah believed the promise, even though old and barren

They didn't do things perfectly. They made mistakes. But they didn't give up. Their lives were devoted to the unseen reality of God. They marched in the same direction. And their faith produced faithfulness.

For example, the post office says, “We are committed, in snow, rain, heat, or gloom of night.” Do you have faith in them? Only if they produce. Only if they come through. Just the statement can't prove faith.

A pastor friend mailed his Greek language dictionaries to a new pastor in far north Minnesota. \$350 worth of books. The Post Office lost them. He didn't get insurance so it was a total loss to him and the recipient. Don't ask him if he has faith in them! But, faith can be rebuilt. When we fail, which all of these people did, the thing that makes you successful is persistence.

People who seek God can never retire from the requirement to have faith.

**Step Four of Faith** – Seeing the bigger picture in the future

*Faith is the confidence that what you hope for will actually happen;  
it gives you assurance about things you cannot see.*

Faith is personal and subjective. Faith happens when you try it. That is not unusual for this church. Remember Eunice Pike? In the 1930s after graduating from nursing school, she followed her brother, Ken Pike, also a member of this church, to Mexico to begin a career in linguistics. She was the first single woman to go to the field. That didn't stop her. She had faith in God's call

that she was to love him and serve him with all your heart. She was a 20<sup>th</sup> Century person who took the Scriptures personally:

“The heavens and earth . . . all belong to the Lord God. Yet the Lord chose your ancestors as the objects of his love. And he chose you” (Deut. 10:14-15a).

So since God had chosen her, she got up and did something that she believed would make a difference. She believed that “it would actually happen.” There was a little complication. She didn’t have a cent.

For most of us, this puts us in a predicament. What are we supposed to do with that? Many of us would negate the call because we couldn’t overcome the impossible. But like our friends in Hebrews 11, Eunice stepped out in faith. She would join her brother, Ken Pike, in Mexico. He had hitchhiked there all the way from Connecticut! So she must have figured to take the train was a luxury.

Many folks at Wycliffe thought she was a little crazy. They told her there were bandits. They informed her she didn’t know the language. They cautioned her about trying to go alone. But she went to the train station anyway. And a man named Cameron Townsend showed up and met her on the platform. He pulled out a twenty dollar bill and slipped it into her hand.

He was walking by faith, too. It took a lot of faith to think that you can start an organization that translates the Bible in every language, which he did in 1934. Amazingly, his vision, which was far off into the future and without any idea of how it could be accomplished, is well on its way, with Wycliffe’s goal that translation work will be started in all languages needing it by 2025.

Folks like Eunice Pike and Cameron Townsend are the 20<sup>th</sup> Century version of Hebrews 11.

You may think, not everyone is called to be a missionary. And that is true. You are called simply to act out your faith. You are called to trust God and do what you do. That’s what earns you a good reputation with God. What do you feel passionate about? Are you the 21<sup>st</sup> Century version of Hebrews 11?

Having faith is not for cowards. The Scripture tells us “All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. Abraham didn’t see the millions that would be in God’s family from then ‘til now; Isaac and Jacob never owned the land. Moses never saw the completed Torah.

**Step of Faith Five** – Let the journey with God be enough.

C. S. Lewis was a professor at Oxford. His job was to teach literature and write some books. After being saved he made his subject matter defending the faith. He was often shunned by his colleagues because of it, not getting the promotions he deserved. He felt on the outside. But God did not leave him. He was very popular with the students, and he started a spiritual revival in England. Unbeknownst to him, this obscure, middle-aged frumpy bachelor rejected by his peers would be heard. In 1947 he was on the cover of Time Magazine for a little book he wrote called *Screwtape Letters*, and he became instantly famous because he had a message the world needed to hear and God determined that it would happen.

A year later he was head of the Socratic Club at Oxford, where he was publicly beaten in a debate with philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe, which was quite humiliating. He quit writing apologetics and turned to writing children's books, *The Chronicles of Narnia Series*.

Who would imagine—certainly not C. S. Lewis—that two of his books *Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* and also his life story would become Broadway plays, playing all over the nation, and that *Screwtape Letters* will play in London beginning this fall. And who would imagine that his *Chronicles of Narnia* would be made into a film series, and that his work would circulate vibrant as ever today?

When we act in faith God does amazing things because God rewards faith.

Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Sarah, the Pikes, Cameron all agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

What steps of faith are you willing to take in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to honor your Lord?

AMEN