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SERMON TITLE: Faith Can Indeed Move Mountains

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11, selections

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You are familiar with the concept of halls of fame. Sometimes these are actual halls or walks or museums, or trophies. A Hall of Fame consists of names of noteworthy people who have made significant contributions to their industry. Usually they are lifetime achievements awards, accompanied by important ceremonies. The lists are maintained by an organization or the person's community. For example, basketball coach Sandra Meadows in Duncanville.

1. Automotive
2. Aviation and space
3. The Arts
4. Business
5. City's award
6. Horseracing
7. Music
8. Sports

You are well aware of this—perhaps you have visited a Hall of Fame.

The Bible has its Hall of Fame—the Faith Hall of fame, which includes these noteworthy people:

- a. Abraham because he followed God's voice even to the point of offering up his son;
- b. Moses' parents, who hid him because they did not fear the king's edict that all baby boys were to be killed;
- c. Moses, because he left Pharaoh's household into which he had been adopted to identify with God's people even though they were in bondage;
- d. Moses, for relentlessly confronting Pharaoh until he let Israel leave Egypt;
- e. Israel's faith when they passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land;
- f. Joshua as he led Israel to march around Jericho until the walls fell seven days later;
- g. Rahab, for receiving God's spies in peace and helping them.

This is only the start. Let's read further: READ Hebrews 11:32-35

And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -- who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead

by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection.

What were some of the qualities of people who are listed in the Faith Hall of Fame?

1. Take risks and gain, when you hear God's voice open up opportunity
 - o Abraham believed God and it was counted as faith
 - o Moses identified with God's people
2. Be defiant in the face of oppression and wrongdoing
 - o Moses's parents refused to comply with the king's decree
 - o Moses insisted that the king let the Israelites go
 - o Rahab did not betray Israel's spies to the authorities; she hid them
3. Move forward into the unknown as led by God
 - o Abraham moved to a new place he had never been
 - o The people moved forward into a riverbed
 - o Joshua led a strange and uncommon attack
4. Unity among followers
 - o The people moved forward into the Red Sea together
 - o The people marched around Jericho together
 - o Abraham's family followed the vision of their ancestor for generations
5. Leadership with vision and commitment
 - o God's leaders did what they asked the people to do
 - o Moses identified with the people
 - o Abraham never gave up and years later when put to the test, he put God first, even before his own son
 - o Joshua saw the goodness of God and God's gifts and encouraged the people to do the same

These are the five points of faith.

Today is Independence Day when the leaders of our country declared the Thirteen Colonies free from the British Crown. They declared:

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator** with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."¹*

Notice, this is a statement of faith in the God who created heaven and earth.

¹ The Declaration of Independence

How did our founders access those elements of faith evident in Hebrews 11? Let's examine the founding of our nation this July 4th to learn how faith can move mountains. When we realize the efficacy of faith, then perhaps faith will continue to move our actions, too.

In the late 15th century, governments in Europe began to change from a feudal system to more centralized nations with France, England, Spain, and Portugal emerging. It was an age of discovery and innovation with gains in trade, traveling, ship designs, navigation, mapmaking, and wealth. Port cities grew and commercial activities increased. All this served to unseat the monarchies and individual rulers. That's when Christopher Columbus came on the scene. He was an experienced sailor determined to find a route to the east. He was finally sponsored by Spain.

You know the story. Sail east and you will discover the west.

Christopher Columbus was a man of faith who was determined to press on even when his crew nearly mutinied because after a month, no land! But he knew he calculated the mileage by reading the Bible and he stuck with it. And shortly after that, they hit land.

He led his crew in prayer every half hour. They sang vespers together each evening. Who are you leading in acts of faith? What people are you encouraging to approach their job under God's hand?

When Columbus finally reached America he saw four rivers flowing, and thought he had reached the Garden of Eden. He never knew where he had landed. Over the next 325 years, Spain sent some 15,585 missionaries to the Americas.²

Faith took action. How is your faith taking action in your daily life?

The church changed at this time as well. The upheaval created conflict and persecution and many believers sought religious freedom. But times were tough. As of 1624, despite 14,000 people migrating to Jamestown beginning in 1607, the population was barely 1,000. People were subject to disease, starvation, and eventually attacks by native Americans. But people pressed on. In Massachusetts, Pilgrims seeking religious freedom made the Mayflower Compact, the creation of a self-governing church. Because Britain had no master plan, each colony began to develop self-government and the distance made it almost impossible for Britain to rule. Obviously in a short sermon I cannot replay history and you probably know more than I. But the more that Britain tried to intrude and the longer the colonies got the taste of self-rule, the freedom of religion and self-government burned in their hearts.

After numerous conflicts, Britain tried to divide and conquer by closing Boston Harbor, and controlling their legal and economic system. This caused the other colonies to rally to Boston's cause. They created a Continental Congress to represent the interest of all the colonies together. That was in September 1774. It took great faith for these people, who had very little in terms of the world's goods, to stand up to the power of the greatest nation on earth.

But they had FAITH. God had seen them through to this point.

Their liberty threatened, courage rose and a profound shift happened. There was fear of being on their own—who could conceive of it? In early 1776 Thomas Paine wrote the pamphlet *Common Sense*, spawning the thought of independence. The leaders wrote the Declaration of Independence, not to stake out independent territories but to articulate self-evident truths that had been endowed by their Creator.

Let's look at what it took:

- Taking risks when God opens up opportunity
- Moving forward into the unknown as led by God
- Be defiant in the face of oppression and wrongdoing
- Unity among followers
- Leadership with vision and commitment

God gives freedom from bondage and unalienable rights to us. They can be realized when we commit ourselves to them and act by faith. The Declaration of Independence became a template for many nations and "has been admired around the world as one of the greatest of all charters of human dignity and freedom."³ But each generation has to live into faith for their time. It is our call. It is the call of God. It is a call that when we respond with faith, it can indeed move mountains.

Faith is the confidence that what you hope for will actually happen; it gives you assurance about things you cannot see. And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. . . .

Happy Fourth of July!

AMEN

² Thomas S. Giles, "Columbus and Christianity: Did You Know? Little-known facts about Christopher Columbus and Christianity in the Americas," in *Christianity Today: Christian History*, at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-35/columbus-and-christianity-did-you-know.html>, accessed June 29, 2021.

³ Wilfred M. McClay, *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story*, (New York: Encounter Books, 2019), 49.