



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
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Good Shepherd Church - January 15, 2012

Sermon Title: Living, Looking, and Longing

Sermon Text: Hebrews 11.13-22

Related Texts: Jeremiah 31.31-34; Revelation 21.1-4; Genesis 22.1-18; 27.27-40; 48.9-20; and 50.22-

### I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

What are some things you are looking forward to in the future?

### II. Introduction

The Hebrews author continues to encourage the Hebrew Christians to be faithful. The author demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the "heroes" of faith and continues to point to these people as examples to follow. From Noah, Abraham and Sarah - those who were "sure of what they (we) hope for and certain of what they (we) do not see" - the author moves on to Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and their examples of faith. Here the author/preacher develops another aspect of faith - looking forward through the eyes of faith. Not only did these people live by faith, but they looked forward to the fulfillment of God's redeeming activity in this world, and longed for that "better country" that is to come when the promises of Jeremiah 31.31-34 are fully realized.

### III. Study the Text – Read Jeremiah 31.31-34

- 1) Let's begin by looking back to the promises found in Jeremiah 31.31-34. This is a passage that underlies the Hebrews author's recognition of Jesus as the one who has established this new covenant. What would this world look like if everyone in it had intimate knowledge of and lived in obedience to God? Do you find yourself longing for that kind of world?

### IV. Study the Text – Read Hebrews 11.13-22

- 1) Let's begin with verses 13 through 16. The author refers to "these people" and when we look back we see that includes Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. They were "still living by faith when they died." How does the author explain what that means? The imagery of being aliens who look for a country of their own and long for a better country is profound. How do verses 15 and 16 help explain what these heroes of the faith were looking and longing for?
- 2) Revelation 21.1-4 paints a picture of the new world that is to come when Jesus Christ returns. Do you find yourself looking and longing for this "new heaven and earth" in which the dwelling of God is with humanity and in which God's righteousness is fully realized? Do you sometimes find yourself feeling like an alien or stranger in this present world?
- 3) How would verse 16 be an encouragement to the Hebrew Christians who are weary, persecuted, and ostracized for their faith in Jesus? How does knowing that God is not ashamed of you and delights in you (implied in verse 16) encourage you?

- 4) Verses 17 - 19. According to verse 19 what underlying conviction did Abraham have as he willingly offered Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22.1-18)? How does believing that God can raise the dead underlie and shape your faith and hope?
- 5) Verse 20 draws from Genesis 27.27-40 in which Isaac is deceived into giving the birthright and blessing to Jacob rather than to Esau, the older brother. The birthright was a legal conveyance of the wealth of the family to the oldest son. The blessing conveys the father's vision and hope for the son, and in this case it also includes conveying the original blessing given by God to Abraham that he would bear a multitude off descendants more numerous than the stars and grains of sand on the shore. We can't escape the idea that God's covenant promises are also conveyed in this blessing of Jacob. What seems odd is that once the deception is found out there is no reversal of the birthright/blessing bestowed by Isaac. Despite the treachery and deceitfulness of Jacob and his mother, Rebekah, what has been done is done and there is no undoing the birthright/blessing transaction. With all this in mind, how does Isaac's act of faith look forward and long for God's purposes to be fulfilled?
- 6) Verse 21 gives us a similar example of faith that looks forward and longs for what is to come, found in Genesis 48.9-20. Did you know that Israel blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who with their families are given land in Canaan along with the families of ten of Israel's sons (The Levites did not have a specified area in the promised land). The point is Jacob (Israel) looks forward and longs for God's promises to be realized.
- 7) Verse 22 refers to Joseph's faith. Look at Genesis 50.22-26. What did Joseph look forward to and long for according to Genesis 50.24?

#### V. Apply It –Reflect and Respond

- 1) Reflect on the models of faith described in this passage. How would you compare your faith - faith that looks forward to and longs for God's righteous reign to be fully realized - to that of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel) and Joseph? Do you have this kind of vision and longing?
- 2) The hope of resurrection is a significant element in our faith (what we hope for... what we do not yet see). How does the promise of resurrection to eternal life and ultimately being given a body that will dwell with God in a completely renewed and redeemed world, help you to live by faith now?
- 3) God's covenant promises were carried out through the sons and grandsons of Israel. What does that suggest to you about the things God can do through your children and grand-children? Will you pray for your descendants to be drawn close to God? To become sincere followers of Jesus? And to participate in God's redemptive activity in this world?

*I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

*Revelation 21.2-4*