The Excitement of Faith

Third in the series: Catch the Easter Excitement

# Scripture: John 11:1-45

# Key Thought: Jesus’ example of faith for resurrection inspires us.

# Intro idea

## Jesus’ faith is our example

“The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Luke 17:5 NIV

This is our prayer too.

The best place to learn faith is by watching Jesus. And Easter time is one of the best seasons of the year for increasing in faith.

The writer of the book of Hebrews speaks of the power of Jesus’ faith is the days leading up to his death

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2 NIV

So, I would like us this morning to think about the faith that Jesus had in his heavenly Father. We think of Jesus doing things on his own. But he repeatedly told his disciples that he did not. He did things with the Father (John 7:28, 8:28). When we observe the faith of Jesus, it will greatly inspire ours.

## Believe is a key word in Jesus teaching

In our study in the Gospel of John we have discovered that one of the key words of that Gospel is the word “believe!” During his ministry, Jesus challenged the Jewish leaders because they did not believe. In Mark’s gospel, he applauded the faith of the centurion (Mark 7:5-13) and the Greek woman born in Syrian Phoenica (Mark 7:24-30) who were not Jewish but showed that they believed completely in what Jesus could do. Jesus constantly encouraged his disciples to believe. For example, in John 10:22-11:54 the word ‘believe’ is used 15 times. The word focuses on John’s main purpose for writing his Gospel.

 “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 NIV

It may well be that the miracle of Lazarus’ resurrection is not the main point of chapter 11. The faith of Jesus and his desire to instill that faith in others is really the main point.

# The excitement of Jesus’ example of faith

## Confidence in His Father

As we look at Jesus faith, the first thing that we note is that Jesus had complete confidence in his heavenly Father’s power, sovereignty, and activeness in our world. This confidence came completely naturally to him. It was instinctive and underlay all that he did and said. It is reflected in his attitude and his words.

 “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. John 10:29 NIV

 “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”
 John 5:17-18 NIV

## Confidence in his relationship to His Father

Building upon Jesus confidence in the nature and character of his Father was his close relationship to his Father. Jesus had complete confidence in this relationship. Consider these examples just from John 8-11.

* The Father is with me – 8:29
* The Father knows me – John 10:15
* The Father loves me – John 10:17
* The Father has set me apart as His own – 10:36
* The Father has sent me – John 10:36
* The Father is in me – John 10:38
* The Father hears me – John 11:41

## Confidence for Lazarus’ resurrection

One of the important observations that we need to make as we read John chapter eleven is about the confidence that Jesus shows ahead of the miracle in what is going to be the outcome. First, before Jesus even goes to the home of his friends, while he was still on the other side of the Jordan river, he tells his disciples confidently;

“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” John 11:11 NIV

Next, after he arrives, he confidently paves for a miracle of resurrection with this teaching;

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:23-26 NIV

Then at the tomb itself, Jesus first confidently brushes aside the objection that there will be a bad odor if the stone is moved by saying,

“Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” John 11:40

Next, Jesus prays to his Father, but the words of his prayer are so faith-filled that it seems like the asking is almost a formality because the request is already granted, and Jesus knows it.

So, they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. John 11:40-44 NIV

## Confidence for His own resurrection

The confident faith that Jesus had is also evident during his ministry as he looked ahead toward the cross. In fact, the Bible tells us in Hebrews that Jesus looked beyond the cross.

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:2 NIV

Jesus showed confident faith that after the crucifixion, God would raise him from the dead. While his human nature dreaded the suffering as anyone would, yet he knew that the suffering would give way to triumph. Consider these announcements of his that are recorded in the Gospel of John.

 “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." John 10:18 NIV

 “I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.” John 16:20 NIV

 “On the third day he will rise again." Luke 18:33 NIV

What an example of faith in the plan of God! He could look past the difficulties because the final result had been promised to him. What a wonderful precedent for us!

# The excitement of learning to have faith.

One of the goals of our spiritual growth is to be people of faith, not just faith for salvation, but faith for God’s work that is happening in our lives each day as well.

“When one has the faith attitude, there sets in what may be called spiritual initiative. Things happen around such lives. They become morally and spiritually contagious.” E. Stanley Jones The Christ of Every Road p. 254

## Jesus is our example of faith and we catch faith and the excitement of faith from him.

### Think about the people involved in these chapters.

#### Jewish people were divided over Jesus (10:19)

Many did not believe – 10:25,26

Some were asking honest questions John 11:37

Many others saw what he did and believed 10:42

#### The disciples, though they have been with Jesus are struggling in their faith.

In 11:8 some question his travel plans because of the danger to him.

In 11:16, Thomas is openly sarcastic about the danger to the disciples.

None of the disciples are thinking about an opportunity to minister.

#### Martha and Mary

The sisters had some faith (11:21; 11:24: 11:32).

But they struggled with moving the stone – 11:39.

### Jesus pleaded with the people and encouraged them to believe.

 “Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. 38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." John 10:37-38 NIV

 “Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26 NIV

Jesus pointed out that one of the key purposes of this kind of event is that people may believe

 “So, then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."
John 11:14-15 NIV

 “I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." John 11:42 NIV

No matter where we are in our faith journey, Jesus is encouraging us to grow in faith.

## We want to catch his confidence in who our heavenly Father is

First we need catch from Jesus his confidence in his heavenly Father.

Paul had done this. He testified:

 “I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.
2 Timothy 1:12 NIV

The Psalmist David had definitely done this. I think of his repeated testimony to the character of God. For example:

The Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations. Ps 100:5 NIV

and

Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep. Ps 36:6 NIV

My wife, JoAnne has been reading some of A. W. Tozer’s writings. He had a deep confidence in the character of God. He wrote:

 “We have confidence and boldness in Him because He is God and we have learned enough about His character to know that we can lean upon Him fully….Faith does not rest upon promises. Faith rests upon character. Faith must rest in confidence upon the One who made the promise.” (A. W. Tozer in Tozer Pulpit Vol. 3 p. 49)

There is a key concept in Tozer’s statement – our confidence, our faith rests upon the character of God! His compassion, his forgiveness, his sovereignty, his faithfulness, his love of truth, his graciousness do not change. The more we know God, the more faith we will have.

Another exciting fact for our faith to grasp is that Jesus’ Father is our Father too! He is ever the God of love, and mercy, of righteousness and forgiveness, of justice and holiness. His character is still the same. This knowledge fuels our faith.

## We can learn confidence in our heavenly Father’s relationship to us

At the same time as we are learning to have confidence and faith in the character of God we are also learning to have confidence in his relationship to us.

 A frantic mother called her pastor one day—she was upset about something, extremely worried and barely in control. The pastor overheard her little child in the background and asked whether the child was also worried. “Of course not” she answered. Why not asked the pastor? “I guess she puts her trust in me and lets me do the worrying.” Was her reply. The pastor gently admonished, “but you are a child of God, just do the same.” (Knight’s p. 703)

He knows us, He loves us, He hears us, He has placed his own Spirit in us. He has made the same power with which He raised Jesus from the dead to be at work in us today (Eph. 1:19,20)

### We can have confidence that our Father understands us

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:15-16 NIV

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.
Romans 8:26 NIV

### We can have confidence for the challenges we face

 “Faith creates nothing; it simply reckons upon that which is already there.” A. W. Tozer Pursuit of God p. 5

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. John 14:12 NIV

Go back for a moment and look at the list that I gave you that described Jesus’ confidence in his relationship with his Father. It occurred to me that God has given us promises that parallel every one of the relationship promises in that list.

* The Father is with me – Heb. 13:5
* The Father knows me – Psalm 139:1
* The Father loves me – John 3:16
* The Father has set me apart as His own – 1 Peter 1:1, 2
* The Father has sent me – 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; 6:1
* The Father is in me – John 17:23
* The Father hears me – Psalm 145:19

We can indeed have confidence in God as Jesus did!

## Confidence for the works God calls upon us to do today

 A woman was well known in her area for her simple faith and great calmness in trials. Another woman who lived some distance away heard of her inspiring example of faith and came to seek her out. Upon finding her, she asked, “Are you the woman with the great faith?” The woman replied, “No, I am not the woman with the great faith; but I am the woman with a little faith in a great God.”

On two occasions, Jesus spoke abut how even a little faith can have big results.

 "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. Luke 17:6 NIV

He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20 NIV

The excitement of faith is that God can to help you with the challenges that face you today. Think of some of the great faith stories of the Bible.

The three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were challenged by King Nebuchadnezzar to worship an idol. They steadfastly refused and gave testimony that if God so chose, he was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace and even if He did not do so, they would still not give in and worship the idol. God honored their faith and delivered them through the fire. They came out without even being burned to the astonishment of everyone (Daniel 3:17, 18, 26, 27).

I think of Peter in the NT times, as recorded in the book of Acts. He and John were going up to the Temple to pray and there was a lame beggar there asking for money. Peter looked at him and uttered the famous testimony,

“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you, in the same of Jesus of Nazareth, walk!” Acts 3:6 NIV

And the man got up and went into the temple with them, “walking and jumping and praising God” (Acts 3:8).

Sometimes God gives us grace for circumstances that are too much for us. It doesn’t look like a big miracle. But it is strength for the day to help us through. Paul spoke of this kind of strength. Paul had a physical affliction that he wanted God to heal. But God chose not to and told Paul instead,

 “My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Other times we need to lift our eyes and recognize that God has possibilities for us that we have never glimpsed.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV

## Confidence for our resurrection too, by faith

### We can have confidence for our own victory over death.

When we catch the excitement of Easter, when we learn from Jesus to have faith in God, then we can have faith for resurrection; our own and that of those we love. It was in view of his own coming resurrection that Jesus could say to Martha;

 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26 NIV

A few chapters later in the record of the Gospel of John, Jesus makes a similar promise to his followers.

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. John 14:19 NIV

This is an amazing promise for us too. Because of these statements of Jesus and other promises like them in God’s Holy Word, we can be confident that we too will be resurrected to new life through Jesus.

Methodist pastor Dr. John B. McFerrin on his deathbed. His son John, also a Methodist pastor was beside him. On Saturday, the son was reluctant to leave. The venerable old minister said, “My son, I feel a little stronger, you had better return and fulfill your appointment. If while you are away, John, I should happen to slip off, you know where to find me.”
Knight’s p. 703

In our church in Kirkville, there was a man named Otto who was in his eighties and was a founding member of the church. The doctors said his cancer was very serious and his medical situation had become very bleak. Otto spoke confidently to his family and church family, “If this is my time to go, then I will see all of you in heaven.” By the grace of God, he was granted a miraculous healing which his doctors could not explain. He lived several more years.

#### Friends, Jesus died believing that His Father would raise him from the dead and He did. Because of Easter, He will do the same for you and for me as his followers!

# Conclusion:

Today I encourage you:

## CATCH THE EASTER EXCITEMENT!CATCH THE FAITH EXCITEMENT!CATCH IT FROM JESUS!