

**“IT AINT EASY”****Pastor Mike Corwin****TEXT: HEBREWS 11:29- 12:2****GOD’S WORD: LUKE 12:49-56****I – CHILDREN:**

Have you ever considered the commitment you make to have children? This is one of those matters of life that to do it right you are making a commitment to bear, love, raise, and help that little person through all of life.

The act of pregnancy itself is not easy is it? There are changes to your body. You swell up like you ate a watermelon, and your eating habits become strange to say the least as you consume food in combinations never before known to your household. Then let us not forget how your hormones rage and turn you into a beast that no one has ever seen before. I get upset when someone says men don’t have to suffer during pregnancy. WHO DO YOU THINK IS ACTING AS YOUR WHIPPING POST WHEN YOU’RE GOING THROUGH IT!!! To this day I believe Stephen King wrote some of his best horror novels based on my wife’s third trimester. And I’m pretty sure that was my hand she was trying to rip off during her contractions.

But then the little one arrives and all is replaced with joy, but for a short time. It lasts until you realize that all they know how to do is eat, cry, and fill their diaper. They become a continual user of your time. They demand your attention at all hours and when they get older it doesn’t change. They need you all the time to help them with their homework, to pick their clothes, to make sure their nutrition consists of more than dirt. It’s you that gets to hold their hands and walk them through the breakups of school romance. And then it’s you who is supposed to be a listening ear and offer support and advice as they go through it all as adults themselves.

This is all a huge commitment and lasts until the day you die and pass on to your heavenly home. But I’m guessing most of you would never undue any of it in your life.

**II – CHILDREN OF GOD:**

If you can wrap your minds around all of this, which most of you can do so because you’ve lived it, then you can understand what God has gone through to make you one of his children. How he created you and the place you call home in your human existence. He watched you go

through your growing pains until you eventually turned on and rebelled against him. He still wanted you to love him so he sent his one and only Son, Jesus, to be a sacrifice for your sins so the love between you and him could be reestablished. And yet there were still problems...

In this morning's reading from Luke we see some of this. Jesus himself calls it out. He has come to be the Messiah. The one the people had been waiting for so long. The one who would save the Jewish people from their problems. The one who it was eventually prophesized would save the whole world and all of humanity from their evil ways and bring them back to God. The one who was hoping to bring love and peace to God's creation.

And here he says it isn't going to happen. That his earthly ministry will result in deep divide. People will chose sides being either for him or against him. That families would be ripped apart because some will believe and others will not. He knew that being a disciple of himself would not be easy and they would be subjected to a hard life. He had come to bring peace but the aftermath of his ministry would be division, strife, and fiery crisis.

The coming of the Kingdom of God would require decision and commitment and it can always be decisive. The work of Jesus results in some responding positively and some negatively. He knew it wasn't going to be easy.

### **III – TEXT:**

We see this same thing this morning in the text from Hebrews. The writer knew what Jesus was talking about. You either have faith or you don't. You either put your whole trust in God or the world. It's your choice and it's not always easy...

### **Hebrews 11:29 – 12:2 (NLT)**

<sup>29</sup> It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned.

<sup>30</sup> It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.

<sup>31</sup> It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

<sup>32</sup> How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. <sup>33</sup> By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. <sup>35</sup> Women received their loved ones back again from death.

But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. <sup>37</sup> Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. <sup>38</sup> They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

<sup>39</sup> All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. <sup>40</sup> For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. <sup>2</sup> We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

He starts out with reference to the story of the Exodus. Where the faith of the people made a huge difference and resulted in their deliverance through the Red Sea instead of their destruction. He moves on to the story of Joshua and Jericho where God delivered the whole armed and fortified city into the hands of the Israelites. He gives us the vision that nothing, no walls, no armies, no other powers can stand up against the power of our almighty God if we put our trust in him and him alone.

Then he names numerous people from the Old Testament who put their trust in God and were used by Him to accomplish many things. They overcame things like fires, and sword. Overcame the other forces against them. God turned their weakness into strength once they trusted him.

But trusting and following God isn't always easy. The writer of Hebrews tells us that some who followed the faith as it transitioned from the Old Testament into following Jesus:

Recap verses 35-38

I see in these verses that being a disciple is hard from time to time. That when it comes to choosing Jesus over the world, "IT AINT EASY."

#### **IV – WORTH IT:**

Jesus didn't have it easy either as he fulfilled his calling from God to die for us. As he lived and traveled the region preaching the Good News. He didn't have a home or know where his next meal was coming from, but he trusted that God would take care of it. He had friends, especially twelve close ones, but one of them turned on him and betrayed him to the people who weren't his friends. The religious leaders who considered him a threat to their existence and power. He

was betrayed in a peaceful garden where he had been praying to God for intervention but didn't find it.

He was taken to those who hated him and tried and turned over to the pagan Romans where he was stripped naked, beaten, spit on, mocked and humiliated in any way they could. He was then marched up a hill and nailed to a cross where he was mocked some more and left to die in the hot sun unable to breath as his own weight worked against him on the nails and he asphyxiated and died.

I would have to look at that example and say that it certainly wasn't easy...but in my book, in my soul, it sure was worth it. I would not be here as you wouldn't either, if it wasn't for the work our Lord and Savior did on that cross that day. My hope is that God looks down on his creation and says, "It aint easy, but it was worth it.

### **V – FOLLOW JESUS:**

I told you when I preached a couple weeks ago that being a follower of Jesus was simple to do. I tell you again that becoming a disciple is simple, but also to tell you it won't always be easy. Just as the earliest Christians found there will be those who disagree with your faith. Those who mock you and make it evident they don't agree with you. Those who have made the decision not to follow Jesus or believe in the work he did for them. Through it all we just remember how the writer of Hebrews put it:

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We follow Jesus by keeping our eyes on him and putting our faith in him at all times. We do it by ignoring human opinion and handling worldly loss in order to someday stand firm in the presence of God in all of his glory and mercy.

We do it by remembering that Jesus was faithful in sacrificing himself for us so we should be faithful in keeping our faith in him and be a faithful disciple for him, and serve him and only him.

I can testify that it aint easy, but it is certainly worth it.

AMEN