My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray. Our Lord God of our grateful hearts, minds, Spirits, and souls, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

Most of us love to read about heroes, don’t we? From when we were small children, even before we could read, we were told stories about evil kings or queens and triumphant knights and princesses. The Disney folks continue to make money out of a franchise that includes overcoming poor starts in life, bad luck in the middle years, and ultimate triumph in time for a happily ever after. You know the names, right? Snow White, Aladdin, Cinderella, Peter Pan, Ariel, Buzz Lightyear, Rapunzel. Just when things look bleak, they seem to triumph over their circumstances, and put the bad guys in their place.

 It’s really nice when things have a happy ending isn’t it? But the last several weeks, we’ve been looking at our Bible a little more critically. We hear these stories Jesus tells, or the circumstances in which he finds himself, and more often than not, Jesus says something that we don’t expect, but that we have come to know as Godly goodness and a path we should probably attend to in our lives. And there’s also cautionary tales Jesus tells us that veer us away from our own selfishness and toward doing unto others. What have we heard about in the past few weeks?

Oh, I know you know, but let’s review anyway. The Rich Fool. Martha and Mary. The Good Samaritan. The Seventy Disciples sent. The Demon-possessed Gerasene. All these follow that same pattern of circumstances, events, and lesson to be learned. It’s how we experience life, looking back and seeing patterns to our lives, and observing others and their experiences, too. Combined with wisdom of the years it’s how we learn to live and grow so that we can order our world to make it more understandable.

 But God comes along and asks us to expect the unexpected. Don’t look for things in their usual place. Don’t expect the outcome you’re accustomed to. That’s the life and lot of the Christian path, and our scripture today tells us as much. We have a passage about the “great cloud of witnesses” who trusted God, were heroes of the faith, but were seldom glorified, and they never received all the blessing promised to them by God in their lifetime. It’s hard to see their path, and hence it’s hard for us to see why we, too, might follow such a path.

 Recently, the optometrist in our town closed, and that just happened to coincide with my needing to update my prescription for my glasses. The shop had a sign in the window that it would re-open in a few weeks under new management, but my vision was blurry with my old set of glasses and I needed to see. Right now. But I really didn’t want to drive to the next town over and establish a relationship with the eye doctors in the next town over, so instead I saw a coupon in the Sunday paper for LensCrafters. Am I sounding like a grumpy New Englander yet?

 Lenscrafters advertised that they could give me for what they said was 2 pair for $199 plus a free pair of shades. It seemed like a good deal. So I went and a nice woman explained to me all my options based on what I needed. Because, you see, I was entitled to several different pairs of glasses, and she was thinking big.

She would give me fisherman’s glasses that would remove the glare for those days when I went whale watching or near the beach, because they remove the glare and I could see the fish better under the water. They could give me a type of low light glasses that help penetrate the darkness and maybe if I wanted to go hunting or something at dawn or dusk. And then of course, there was just a better pair of reading glasses, which is really what I was there for in the first place. But because my eyes are different prescriptions, one is a 2.5 and one is a 2.0, it’s really not good for me to go to the dollar store for readers anymore.

So this escapade around Lenscrafters got me thinking about our scripture this week. It got me thinking that when we’re befuddled about a particular set of circumstances, or person or people that can’t get along, or just how we see ourselves in the world today, I got to thinking that if we want to see a little better, we should think about our faith. We should maybe put on some glasses of faith rather than try and figure out everything with our minds. Our hearts, souls, and Spirits need a chance to weigh in, just like with prayer a couple of weeks back.

So maybe faith allows us to fight the glare of the endless waters that surround us, and instead of seeing just what’s on the surface, we see also what’s below. Are we whale watching and there’s one just under the boat? Or are we in the shallows and it’s not safe to proceed? Or maybe we should drop a line and get some dinner? We want to be able to understand our surroundings, and God can help with that.

God helps us penetrate the gloom and darkness so that we can see a little better where we’re going when it doesn’t seem so clear. Let me be clear. It’s not like there’s sin and death lurking around every corner. But when we take some time for God in our lives, we can often NOT mis-step a way forward.

And faith helps us just see more clearly each day, where the letters are a little larger, the field of vision less blurry in our daily lives. Let’s face it, we want to see better. And God can be our optometrist with some lenses of faith no matter what we’re up against. God is a great LensCrafter after all.

I’ll leave you with these final thoughts.

Faith in God promises the start of something. It is something no one can ever take away, no matter what befalls us. We can lose our homes, our monies, our relatives, our jobs…we can lose all that is around us…but no one can take God away. And for that reason, we better understand the words of our scripture when it says that faith is the conviction of those things not seen. Faith starts in believing in God’s character, that God is does what God says. We believe that God fulfills promises, right? But do we always see how, when, where, what and with whom?

That’s faith. Things hoped for, means confidence of promises fulfilled. Not, “I hope it doesn’t rain today”. Hope is based on assurance of God’s character, and those things that we attain in other ways that cannot be seen or measured. Eternal life. Heaven, right here. Blessing upon blessing. Those things that God honors and remain unseen but are real nonetheless. Faith means God brings to pass what we cannot yet see.

And by the way, I didn’t end up with multiple pairs of glasses. Just a slight anti-glare and photogray overlays on some readers were enough for now. She smiled, I’m sure, because she had a certain faith that I’d be back sometime soon.

Thanks be to God, Amen..