

# The Certainty of Faith

## The Uncertain Journey

Good Morning Everyone! If it appears as if some people are missing today you would be correct in your observations. Andrew and Pastor Richard are both on vacation this week which means, lucky for you, that you get to hear from the baldest preacher on our staff. Alright, I'm partially kidding about that, but I really am happy to be here with you this morning. My name is Darrell Arnold and I am the Director of Family Ministry here at First Church. If your visiting with us or you were gone last week Pastor Richard made a cameo appearance( He does that every once in a while) and launched us into a new series all about the Psalms. **He shared with us from Psalm 1 and presented the idea of "a life that enjoys the blessings of God."** This week we are going to keep moving through the Psalms as we take a look at Psalm 46 and the role that faith plays in our ability to experience the blessings of God.

Speaking of blessings, I believe one of the greatest gifts that God has given us is this little thing called Netflix. If you are unfamiliar with it, Netflix is an online streaming TV service that features all sorts of tv shows, movies, documentaries about all sorts of different topics. If you were to browse through my Netflix queue or the list of shows I have recently watched you would find a lot of mysteries or cop shows, cooking shows, and sports shows. I just finished watching the fourth installment of a series called Last Chance U. Last Chance U is a docuseries that follows a Jr College football program as it tries to navigate all the complexities of a season. You get a glimpse into the life of the coaches, teachers, administration, and players as they try to manage the menu aspects of there life during the rigor of a football season. However, as I watched this season I was struck by one observation: **Life is a very uncertain journey and if we don't put our faith in the right things we can find ourselves lost in a hurry.**

Each and every one of these athletes featured on the show is at junior college because they found themselves on the wrong side of life. Whether it was the wrong side of a high school report card, college report card, geography, the law, or even a division one NCAA head coach they find themselves unable to achieve the athletic goal they believed was a certainty. Over the course of their lives, they have been told and shown that football will give them the keys to the kingdom of life and that it was their destiny to be a top football talent. As a result, they put their faith in their talent and its ability to lead them to the ultimate goal, mostly the NFL. Then somewhere along the line, they are shown that their talent is not enough and they need to combine it with wisdom, knowledge, character and the other attributes needed for success in life. The conflict in the show is created because these athletes put all their faith into talent they have been led to believe is certain to lead them where they want to go. In the end, some of them are able to learn and make the transition to a more responsible lifestyle, while others are left scratching there head trying to figure out why their talent, the thing they put all their faith in, isn't enough to help them achieve success.

## The Problem with False Certainties

Even though this is simply a tv show meant to entertain people who watch it I think it reveals something to us about our world. **We live in a world obsessed with false certainties.** We live in a world that wants us to believe that all we have to do is lock in on certain skills or strategies and we will

ultimately be successful. If you buy into the right financial principles you are certain to make lots of money and live a comfortable life. By attending the right college you are certain to get the degree and the connections you need to launch a great career. Take the right classes in high school and you are certain to get accepted into the college of your dreams. Participate in the right music or theatre programs and you certainly will have the opportunity to be on Broadway or record your own platinum album. I could make a list as long as the state of California of things we believe are certain if we simply check the right boxes and cultivate the right amount of skill in our life. However, what this does not take into account is a simple fact that life is unfair. It sounds cliché, but it is also very true. We can have all the talent in the world, we can do all the right things, and sometimes things just don't break in our favor and we miss our goal. We put our faith in our abilities and sometimes the story just doesn't break our way and we end up lost, we end up facing uncertainty much like the young athletes who try and navigate the collegiate and professional sports landscape.

While it is simple to observe this reality in tv shows or hypothetical situations, close observation reveals a deeper problem, a problem that affects all of us no matter who we are. **That problem is about faith and specifically where we are placing our faith.** We are going through life putting our faith in things we believe to be certain and then when the trials come and those things are stripped from us we end up lost and directionless, searching for something to put our faith in. For those of us who profess faith in Jesus and God's plan to restore the world this should be troubling to us because it means that we aren't doing our job, it means we are buying into the false narratives our culture perpetuates rather than actively professing the truth as we know it. It means that we need to reexamine where we are putting our faith and what we are putting our faith in. For those of us who maybe find ourselves in place of searching, looking for something to put our faith in this means that you need to take a look at your life and find a new direction, something new to put your faith in.

The good news for today is that we have a path for you to travel, for people of faith and people in search of faith, there is a path that you can travel. The question is: Are you ready to take the steps needed to get on the path?

## **The Path of Certainty**

In a world full of paths that ultimately lead to chaos and confusion, Christians have come to believe that the path revealed to us through God's interaction with humanity leads us where we want to go. **In a world full of false certainty, the story of God reveals to us that the only certainty in this life is God.**

As mentioned earlier, our text for today comes from the book of Psalms, specifically Psalm 46. It's not a terribly long passage but it has enormous meaning in it. Most of us who are familiar with the Bible and Christianity have probably heard parts of it quoted numerous times. Psalm 46:10 is probably one of the most quoted and verse in the entire Bible because its message is so simple and true. "Be still and know that I am God." I could preach an entire sermon on that passage alone, but doing so would be a great injustice to all of you. That is how much truth is in these short eleven verses.

Psalm 46 is a worship hymn comprised of 3 stanzas full of statements and truths about God and his character. The purpose of this psalm was to remind the people of God why they put their faith in Him and what exactly he is capable of doing. This isn't just a god based on a statue made of gold, wood,

or stone. This is Yhwh, the God who has delivered them from slavery, won the wars against foreign nations, led them through the desert and at numerous times in their history controlled natural elements to help them reach the point where they are at. **Psalm 46 is a reminder that God is sovereign over all things and that he is the most powerful force in the entire universe.**

In addition to revealing the certainty of God and his interaction in the lives of his people, it also reveals to us that God is committed to his people. He is committed to providing for his people, he is committed to interacting with his people, and he is committed to protecting his people. All of this, by the way, is backed up at numerous points in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The final stanza of this Psalm serves as a proclamation that God is something to behold and that he is the most powerful being in our world. It is full of commands, and even starts with an invitation to come and see. This is the section that contains that famous exhortation to be still, but in reality, this statement is a command and a promise. Psalm 46 is ultimately an 11 verse reminder of why we should put our faith in God. **For the people of God, this passage is not an empty promise, it's a reminder of what God has done and a recommitment to continue his protection, interaction, and provision.**

### **What are you certain of?**

Psalm 46 is meant to give us certainty about God and his desire to interact with us, provide for us, and protect us. Folks I do not care who you are, what your story is, or what you believe about God before this moment. The only thing I care about is that you take the time to really think about your answer to this question, "What are you certain of?" Here is why- **the things you are certain of ultimately reveal where your faith lies.** Are you certain that your career will protect and provide for you? Are you certain that your marriage or relationship will provide the relational interaction and security you require? Are you certain that your education will give you the opportunity to provide for yourself? What are you putting your faith in? Christian Abolitionist William Wilberforce, a man who came to faith later in his adult life, had this insightful observation concerning faith and people. This is what he said:

**I am disturbed when I see the majority of so-called Christians having such little understanding of the real nature of the faith they profess. Faith is a subject of such importance that we should not ignore it because of the distractions or the hectic pace of our lives.**

**- William Wilberforce**

This is the very essence of the conflict we are attempting to tackle today. The reality is that our world wants you to believe that every opportunity, relationship, the path is available to you if you are willing to do all the right things to get there. What it doesn't tell you is that all the paths, opportunities, and relationships are broken and without the proper perspective they will lead you down a path of brokenness. Money alone will not fix your debt problem. Couples therapy will not fix your marriage. More education will not always fulfill your career goals. More practice will not guarantee you a scholarship or a path to stardom. The truth is none of that is certain. You can take all the steps imaginable and still come up short of your goals, you can put in all the work and still come up short of

what you deserve. You can put your faith in all of that and still experience the confusion and chaos that comes when uncertainty slaps you in the face. However, that is not your only option.

Every day you are on this earth you have the ability to choose the one thing that is certain: God. Every day you have the opportunity to put your faith in someone that promises to interact with you, provide for you, and protect you. You just have to make the choice to be certain, to put your faith in his ability to influence your life. I won't promise you that he will help you reach success and fulfill all your dreams, but here is what I will promise you: When life gets hard, when everything you are certain of is lost, God will meet you there. **Matthew 11:28-30 states, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."** This verse even says that not only will he meet you there, but he will help you carry the burden of uncertainty and all the brokenness and pain that comes with it. He may not make your life easy, but he will give you the strength to make things you never thought you could. **When everything else in your life is uncertain, God will be certain.** All you have to do is put your faith in him. All you have to do is give him a chance.

### **The Impact of Certainty**

**Are we a community of believers living like we are certain of the impact God can have on our lives?** Are we a church that is certain of the impact faith can have in people's lives? What would the impact on our community be like if our actions reflected our faith and the impact God can have on our community? The world we live in today is full of people who are desperately chasing certainty. They are desperately looking for somewhere or something to put their faith in. Everywhere we turn there are people in need of something that only God can offer them. Church, we are called to be the messengers, to be the ones who are communicating the offer God makes to all of us. When people are looking for rest from all the challenges they face, we have the answer. Are we sharing it with them? Homework kits are great, operation Christmas child boxes are great, hygiene kits are great; all of those things are a huge help to the community they live in. However, they do not completely fulfill our responsibility to meet individual people in their struggle with uncertainty. They do not remove our responsibility to speak for the faith we have in Jesus. We have a responsibility to speak to the uncertainty in people's lives, to show them that when people fail, when the government fails, when institutions fail, when money fails, when love fails, that God will never fail. If we can do that, some of the things we see in this world, the challenges people face may cease to exist. We will start to see victories over addiction, disease, relational brokenness, sexual sin, and all sorts of other plagues that attack the human condition. We will start to see the impact the power of God can have on the world it created. We just have to take steps of faith to get there, the steps needed to believe in the only certain thing in this world. God is here, he is alive, and he wants to move in our church and in our community. Are you ready to join him?