

Message: Faith
Sermon Series: Second Mountain
By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison
Acts 2:29-41
November 17, 2019

INTRO: Read this: David Brooks explains in “The Second Mountain” the strengths of his secular Jewish background. I’ve seen those strengths with my Jewish friends, too. He points out the power of ritual, community and Shabbat (p. 225-6). It is also rooted in action (p. 227). After his divorce, he began to investigate the Christian faith. Certain Christians have an offensive tenor and tone that makes it very difficult for people to be interested in hearing about Jesus. This often happens when Christians link following Jesus with a political agenda. My favorite chapter in his book is 21, “A Most Unexpected Turn of Events.” PLEASE read this chapter! Brooks’ tells of speaking with the late John Stott, an Anglican priest and scholar. I quote Brooks: *“Stott’s voice...is friendly, courteous and natural. It is humble and self-critical, but also confident, joyful and optimistic. Stott’s mission is to pierce through all the encrustations and share direct contact with Jesus. Stott says that the central message of the Gospel is not the teachings of Jesus, but Jesus himself, the human/divine figure. He is always bringing people back to the concrete reality of Jesus’ life and sacrifice. It’s about putting on the mind of Christ.”* (p. 227) He also quotes Stott: *“‘It is your sin I am bearing, your curse I am suffering, our debt I am paying, your death I am dying.’ Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we visit a place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross that we shrink to our true size.”* (p. 228) Brooks understands being a Christian is all about a relationship with Jesus. Christianity rises and falls on the resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle Paul had “a most unexpected turn of events, too.” The story is not about us. That is why our mission is “Helping Others Follow Jesus.” HE is our story.

Acts 2:29-41

*“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the **resurrection** of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God **raised up**, and of that we all are **witnesses**. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves*

are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, ³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool." ³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." ³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, **what shall we do?**" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "**Repent** and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will **receive** the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

The disciples had been **witnesses** to Jesus' life. They were amazed by His life, teaching and ministry. They were blessed by seeing His miracles. They were crushed by the crucifixion. When Jesus died, so did their dreams of Him being the messiah. But Easter Sunday bore an exciting event – it was like trying to keep a beachball under water – death couldn't keep Him down. The Resurrection changed everything. God raised Jesus from the dead. The ones who had their mouths stopped by the cross, now understood what this meant – just as Jesus had been resurrected, so would they. They had a message to proclaim, Help Others Follow Jesus. If they would repent of their sin and receive Jesus into their lives, they would be forgiven, be given the Holy Spirit, be given a community of faith, be given meaning and a mission to life, and when they died they would go to heaven to be with the Resurrected one.

"**What shall we do?**" 2 words: **Repent** (for forgiveness of your sin) and **Receive** the Holy Spirit. Our problem is we do not want to repent.

Brooks says In chapter 22 ("Ramps & Walls):" *The will is self-centered. It tends to see all of human existence as something that surrounds me, as something in front of, beside & behind me. There's a selfishness inherent in the normal human perspective. The will is also narcissistic. As C.S. Lewis observes, every 2nd thought we have seems to be about the self. If you are not thinking about whether you are cold or hot, or hungry or stuffed, you're rehearsing the clever thing you're about to say, or feeling angry about the way some other person didn't treat you right. Even when you do something really humble & good, the self turns around & admires itself for being humble & good. The will is also voracious. Your will wants popularity & is never satisfied. The great sins come from excessive worship of self & callousness about others. But God doesn't seem to want the elimination of the will – he seems to want the training and transformation of it....When people talk*

about dying to self, they are really talking about dying to old desires & coming alive to a new and better set of desires. When I was a boy, I loved Kool-Aid, a desire that has no appeal to me now. Now I prefer coffee & wine, desires that had no appeal to me then. When I began my career, I really wanted to be famous & get invited into the inner rings. Now I have more fame than I really want, & I've seen so much of the inner rings that they have lost their charm. The religious life is not just about abstract thinking & feeling. It involves concrete practices, being with actual people, entering actual community. I found out pretty quickly along the way that religious people & institutions sometimes built ramps that made it easier to continue my journey, or they built walls, making the journey harder.

WALLS: Bad listening, Invasive Care, Intellectual Mediocrity

RAMPS: Ritual, Unabashed Faith, Prayer, Spiritual

Consciousness,

The Language of Good & Evil, The Sheer Shock of Faith

ASBURY RAMPS: Perception Books; ADC'S; Meals; Personal Invitations

We have a response to make. *"The leap of faith doesn't always happen when you're ready to make it."* When I was a youth director at a West Tulsa church, someone asked me to visit a man in the critical burns unit at Hillcrest after having been horribly burned in an oilfield accident. They didn't know if he would live. I'd never been in such a situation, but I went to the man's bedside at Hillcrest, introduced myself, and I felt led to present the gospel. His response was a firm, "I think I'll wait." I will always remember his response: "Why would he say he would wait?" Wait for what? He might not make it through the day. I understand all the interpersonal dynamics – he didn't know me from Adam. David Brooks talks about "invasive care" and maybe I was guilty of that. Maybe he thought everything would be just fine or that nobody had told him how serious it would be. Maybe he accepted the Lord later. I don't know. But why would anyone wait? Why would anyone reject the gift of forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of eternal life? *"The leap of faith doesn't always happen when you're ready to make it."* It's never going to be perfect. We'll never be able to figure things out. We'll never be able to make our lives presentable to God. We'll always have questions. We'll always be able to point to the brokenness of others and the hypocrisies of others.

Whatever else is happening in your life, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, I want you to know one thing: Jesus wins. You may have fallen into a valley in life. Live long enough and it happens. You may have lost your job or be having financial problems – but those trials won't go on forever. You may have lost a meaningful relationship through death, divorce or distance, but there is another who will give

you an eternal relationship that begins now and will stay with you throughout eternity. You may be concerned about a friend or loved one – but there is good news available – all because of one thing: He is Risen. He Is Risen indeed. Everything hinges upon the resurrection. Our problems will eventually end – and the good news is that the Lamb who was slain will triumph over every evil. Those who place their faith in Him will attend a glorious banquet in His honor. I want to offer you 2 gifts today: The gift of “**forgiveness**” and the gift of the Holy Spirit. One deals with the past; the other with the present and the future. Becoming a Christian is *a change in our relationship with God*. Jesus' life, death and resurrection work – when it is believed and rested in – instantly changes our standing before God. We are *'in Him*. It's a new day. Jesus is Risen. He is Risen Indeed. As you come to receive Communion today, repent and receive the real and Risen Christ into your heart.