

It Takes a Leap of Faith, by Rev. Eric Moeller
St. Lucas UCC, July 6-7, 2019

“It takes a leap of faith to get things going,
It takes a leap of faith you gotta show some guts,
It takes a leap of faith to get things going,
In your heart you must trust.”¹

So sings Bruce Springsteen. Add to that what William Sloane Coffin says; that having faith means to trust without reservation.² Leaps of faith, I think, are a combination of what these two men had in mind when they made these statements. Leaps of faith require trusting ourselves, trusting God, and trusting one another without reservation. It’s all wrapped together, you see.

I’ve taken a few leaps of faith in my journey so far. The first I can remember was being torn about whether to stay in the safety of my hometown for college or to head to Flagstaff, AZ where I didn’t know a soul. I remembered praying about it one night, waking in the morning, and, from my bed, turning on my TV and seeing a giant Arizona license plate. SOLD! Away I went. I just went back last weekend for my friend’s memorial. Being back in that place with old friends helped me to recognize how that time, taken on a leap of faith, transformed my life in ways I can scarcely define and may still not understand fully. That transformation was rooted in a trust of myself, trust in the movement of God, and trust in other people that I would come to know and love. I’ve a few other moments like that, and, if I can keep my courage, I’m sure I’ll have some more in my lifetime. I don’t care how much faith you have, those leaps are horrifying. You likely have these kinds of stories, too; moments in your life when you took a horrifying leap of faith into the unknown that went against all logic and it transformed your life, and likely the lives of others. Well, I hate to break it to you, but this kind of living on the edge, taking frightening, risky leaps of faith, is part of our calling as disciples, as people of God. Both of the Biblical stories today illustrate taking such risks.

Take Naaman. Naaman was a mighty warrior with a lot of access to power and wealth, yet he had leprosy. Well, as God would have it, there is an Israelite girl in his household, a slave, who shares that there is a prophet in her homeland that can heal him. So Naaman takes a bunch of money and soldiers, leaves home, crosses borders in search of healing. He goes to the king, and, after learning that the king was not the one with the actual power in this situation, he goes to the prophet expecting that he can put money at the prophet’s feet, the prophet will wave his hand, and he will be healed. Easy enough. But what he finds is a prophet who doesn’t even speak directly to him, but tells him to go wash in the water of the Jordan. Rather than trust this, he gets huffy and walks away. Eventually his servants talk him into taking a leap of faith into unknown, unfamiliar waters, so he goes, washes, and is healed. He returns to the prophet, attempts to pay him, but Elisha refuses. What’s more, is he is transformed and recognizes that the God who healed him is the one true God. It took a leap of faith.

Then we have the 70 who were sent out as lambs among wolves by Jesus with nothing; ordered to take nothing with them but embark on a mission of proclaiming and embodying the Kingdom of God. They are to put their prayers for laborers into action and go out to bring peace to others, to receive gifts from others, to offer healing, and to proclaim that through their presence and actions the Kingdom of God has drawn near. They are told that this will be risky; they are lambs among wolves; the vulnerable amongst the fierce and violent. They are told that there will be rejection and that not everyone would recognize them for who they were, or recognize that indeed the Kingdom was drawing near through them, but

¹ Bruce Springsteen, “Leap of Faith,” from *Lucky Town*, Columbia Records, 1992.

² William Sloane Coffin, *Credo* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 16.

nonetheless they had a mission to boldly embark on and carry out. By God, they did, and they all returned rejoicing. All the risk, all the fear, is all outweighed by the trusting without reservation that results in lives transformed and the very world shifting as the powers of death, injustice, and darkness, who we have given as much power as God like setting them in the heavens, fall and lose ground little by little.

Our story, my friends, is the continuation of these ancient stories. Sometimes we may be like Naaman, and we have to follow God's lead toward healing in unexpected ways that may require some faith, work, and effort on our part. Other times we may be like the 70 who are sent out, empowered by the Spirit, to bring peace, do the healing, and embody the kingdom. Most of the time we are a mixture of all of this, with one constant: leaping in faith. No matter what, what is required of us is trusting without reservation; trusting ourselves, our God, and one another. Leaping is always a risk, so risk too will always be a part of our lives' equations if we are living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we are called. Yes, there will always be risk, there may be cost, but there will always be transformation, one another, and great rejoicing. So listen to where Christ's voice is sending you, and sending us as a community; listen to where God is calling you, calling us, take heart, and take a leap of faith trusting without reservation that the resources will follow, that you will have what you need to fulfill the mission before you, but keep the mission of bringing the Kingdom near front and center, and trust the rest will fall into place. As you do that, the very world will shift.