

6TH SUNDAY IN LENT

HEBREWS 11:32-40 DIVINE DIVERSITY

³² *And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. ³⁵ Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. ³⁷ They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— ³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. ³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*

Anyone who has ever studied or read about snowflakes has come across the observation that no two snowflakes are ever alike. Likewise, the human fingerprint is the icon of our individuality. In my experience, no two days have ever been absolutely identical. Even identical twins can be distinguished by their mother. Without going into a long list of illustrations, I think we can agree that diversity is a gift that God built into his creation.

Like any other good gift human beings receive from God, diversity is subject to abuse. At the time of the Judges, the condemnation of the people of Israel was that “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (6:10;17:6). In our time, we too could be described as a culture about which that same statement could be made. The diversity we are to celebrate is God’s diversity not the corrupt diversity of man.

God’s diversity is seen in the expression of godly faith throughout the history of God’s people. The first four heroes of the faith listed were “Judges” and a very mixed bag when it came to the expression of their faith and even the attitudes and sinfulness of their lives. Even David, Samuel and the prophets all had their spiritual warts. Yet all were used by God and *commended for their faith*. The diversity continues with the unnamed heroes who faced an incredible variety of horrors, but remained faithful in their circumstances and were *commended for their faith*.

There is also a temporal diversity in that faith is expressed by those before Christ, contemporary with Christ and living millennia after Christ. God deals with us where we are and according to who we are. He loves us as the individuals he created us to be and honors us by dealing with us through a personal relationship. Where he draws the line on diversity is when it comes to the object of our faith. There is only one God and he is God, and Jesus Christ is his Son and the Messiah.

Let me see your diversity as a reason for the celebration of who you are, O God. Prevent me from being tempted to extend your diversity in ways that are attractive to me but against your will. Thank you for the witness to the diversity through which faith in you has been expressed and commended, so that I might not need despair that my

circumstances do not fit the mold. Thank you for loving me and providing the way for me.
Please strengthen my faith in you. Amen.