



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion  
4 - The Great Cloud of Witnesses

Announcements:

~~12/27 @7:30-~~

~~—Prayer~~

~~12/28 @6:30-~~

~~—Grace Group~~

12/31 @8:30 -

Sunday School

12/31 @6:00 -

Family Night

NEW YEARS

GAME NIGHT!

**ICE BREAKER:** Who are some of your role-models? What do you seek to imitate in their lives? Why?

**READ:** Hebrews 12:1-2

Before I became a pastor, I would be one of those people who would make fun of pastors for saying the same thing over and over and over again. Now that I am a pastor, I find myself saying some of the same things over and over and over again. So at the risk of sounding like a broken record: When you are reading Scripture and find the word “therefore” you need to ask “What is the therefore there for?” Hebrews 12 starts with a therefore, and it serves a hugely important role. It calls us to both look back, to what he has said, and forward to how we live. In all of this if focuses on a “great cloud of witnesses”. And it is this “cloud” that we will look at today.

First let's look at the “therefore” causing us to look back. Hebrews 11 is often called “the Hall of Fame of Faith”. The writer wants us to look back and see all the people who came before, Old Testament saints, who lived their lives according to faith. Just a highlight would be: Abel and his offering to God; Noah and his willingness to build the ark; Abraham (in a whole lot of things!); the people of God as they crossed the Red Sea; and finally just a list of people like “Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets (Hebrews 11:32). In other words, people for all time have been living their lives by faith. They become a “great cloud of witnesses”. A group of people who we can look back and see what that life looks like, what it means to live by faith. It is offering to God the best like Abel, it is following the commands of God even when they do not make sense to us like Noah, it is giving up everything (like everything: his land, his family, even his own son) like Abraham, we could go on and on. So here, in chapter 12 the writer of Hebrews wants to challenge you. Looking back at these people, looking back on their lives, and in particular their faith, Why are you not living the same way?

But now that same “therefore” can cause us to look around. The witnesses that surround us are not *just* in the past. We are surrounded by God's people who live by faith even now. While it is good and helpful to look back to the great heroes of the faith, there are heroes alive even now. To hop on my soapbox for just a second: this is why we so desperately need the fellowship of the local church. We need one another. We need to be able to look around even now to a great cloud of witnesses who are endeavoring to live their lives through faith. We can see their victories (and even their struggles!) and be inspired to follow the Lord. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses in the past, and we are currently surrounded by that same great cloud: Let us run with endurance the race set before us!

This leads me to the final thought here. This verse is true of all of us, we are all surrounded by this great cloud. So to push this thought: this means that while your cloud is made up of others, you are part of someone else's cloud. So for someone else, you are called to be part of the picture of what it means to live by faith. The goal is that we all have people who inspire us, but we also serve to inspire others. Every part of your life becomes part of how you operate as a witness. Every trial and struggle and blessing becomes a part of what it means to live your life by faith, and for those around you that can serve to strengthen and motivate their faith too.

**REFLECT:** Who do you look at and think: I wish I had faith like that? In what ways can you be a witness to those around you?