Sermon: **To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see** (Hebrews 11.1)

In Feb 2001 FOX broadcast *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* Poll afterwards showed that 20% Americans did not believe the landings. In 1999 American poll - 18% believed sun went round the earth. In August 1997, 6% of Americans said there was a possibility that Elvis is still alive. Of course most disagreed.

Merely believing something does not make it true.

TEXT. Faith somehow sounds deeper than belief, though obviously linked.

TEXT Let us clear a couple of things when thinking about faith *in this verse*.

[1] It is not a set of doctrines - Virgin Birth, Trinity, Infallibility of Bible… The Faith of the Church.

[2] It is not anti-reason – you are not asked to leave your brains by the door. Faith is intelligent.

[3] It is not about believing impossible things but about things that make sense.

Joan Hodges and Sylvia Gorton have just died. I doubt that they thought much about [1], they were intelligent so not [2], and I am quite sure they felt justified in their faith, so not [3].

For them faith was:

[A] about trust – we trust all sorts of people (that judges know the law, that cashiers ask for the right money, that drivers will stop at red lights, etc). Faith is about trusting God.

[B] based on personal experience (thus can’t be imposed or taught) but can be seen in others. We trust God because he has proved worthy of that trust in our experience. Without experience faith is only theory.

[C] based on the past but looks to the future – the only reason we look back is to turn round and make the next step. The good thing is that God is ahead of us calling us forward.

True for individuals, also true for this church. We trust God because he is worthy from our experience, and that gives us confidence to go forwards as his people, and live his kingdom. TEXT.