

I. A Faith that Follows Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor August 10, 2008

II. Thank Summit Servants

III. (Mat 8:1-23 NIV) When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. {2} A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." {3} Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. {4} Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." {5} When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. {6} "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." {7} Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." {8} The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. {9} For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." {10} When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. {11} I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. {12} But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." {13} Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour. {14} When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. {15} He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. {16} When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. {17} This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." {18} When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. {19} Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." {20} Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." {21} Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." {22} But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." {23} Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.

IV. From Preaching to Practice

A. Before I left on vacation, we ended a series from Matthew 5-7 known as the Sermon on the Mount.

B. It is really the only sermon that Jesus preached.

C. He does tell many parables to illustrate what the Kingdom of God is like, and often answers the questions and criticisms of the religious leaders, but I feel pretty safe to say that Matthew 5-7 is his definitive Sermon.

D. I don't think it is an accident, but as soon as He finishes preaching he begins to practice what He preaches.

E. That is what really defines great preaching, the practical application. That is exactly what Jesus does.

V. It's all about Faith!

A. The older I get, the more I have come to the realization that Christianity is actually much simpler than we make it.

B. The Bible is a bit of a complicated book, especially the Old Testament with all of the history it contains, but there is a theme that runs throughout Genesis to Malachi.

C. The New Testament is simpler and covers a shorter amount of history; but quite often we default to Jesus being just another Religious/Moral leader and I think we miss the essence of His mission.

D. There is a common thread that runs throughout the Old and New Testament.

E. God is looking for people with Faith. God is doing everything within in the limits of His power to show humanity that Faith in Him pleases Him.

F. (Heb 11:6 NIV) *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

G. The Old Testament is filled with Imperfect, Fallen, Broken people who God manages to use simply because they have Faith in Him.

H. *Eugene Peterson, A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* "All the persons of faith I know are sinners, doubters, uneven performers. We are secure not because we are sure of ourselves but because we trust that God is sure of us."

I. I hear people describe other believers with words like Spiritual, On Fire, Committed, Dedicated, etc.

J. All of these are good and are a part of what it means to be a Follower of Jesus Christ, but all of these are wrapped up in our Faith.

VI. Faith is the assurance we are Accepted

A. In this Chapter we meet three people that were considered in some way or another outcasts by the Jews.

1. A Leper
2. A Gentile Roman Military Leader
3. A Woman

B. *The Leper*

1. Leprosy was a dreaded and misunderstood disease at the time of Jesus.
2. If afflicted, you were forced to live apart from others and were required to announce your presence by shouting "Unclean."
3. It took great faith to run to Jesus for healing, and Jesus sees that faith and the man is healed.
4. Here is a lesson in faith. Jesus told the Leper not to tell anyone about His healing, but he couldn't help himself. Jesus tells us to tell everyone about our healing, our salvation, our acceptance, and we keep quiet.

C. *The Centurion's Slave*

1. It defies logic for the Centurion to come to Jesus.
2. Jesus is a Jew, he is a Gentile.
3. Jesus is a peacemaker, he is a warrior.
4. Jesus recognized two things in this man that really caught his attention.
5. Compassion.
 - a. Servants were property. They were just a notch above animals. They were bought and sold.
 - b. This man, however, treated his servants differently.
 - c. Jesus sees the man's Compassion.
6. Faith
 - a. Jesus also is amazed at the man's faith
 - b. *{8} The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. {9} For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*
 - c. Jesus replies: *"I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. {11} I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."*
 - d. Jesus compares this outsider's faith, with three superstars of faith from the Old Testament: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

D. Peter's Mother-in-law

1. At the time of Jesus, women did not have much clout.
2. It is doubtful that any other religious or spiritual person was going to give her the time of day.
3. If it was today's culture, Peter probably would be cracking mother-in-law jokes.
4. But Peter and his brother Andrew knew that Jesus was breaking down barriers, that His mission was about healing, salvation, and acceptance. It was perfectly logical to bring Jesus to her.
5. Jesus reaches out and heals her.
6. She is not only healed physically, but she immediately responds in obedience to Jesus, (*Mat 8:15 NIV*) *He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.*
7. As a response to her healing, Matthew tells us {16} *When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.*

E. Pharisees would pray each morning, "I give thanks that I am a man and not a woman, a Jew and not a Gentile, a free-man and not a slave."

F. Jesus sees people of faith and can't help but reach out to them.

VII. Faith is the acceptance of Authority

A. The next two people we encounter give a stark contrast of what the lack of faith looks like.

B. (*Mat 8:19-22 NIV*) *Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." {20} Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." {21} Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." {22} But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."*

C. Both come seeking to follow Jesus, and we are not sure exactly whether they follow or not, but Jesus definitely lays out the conditions of being a follower. It is Faith.

D. Faith came so naturally to the three people in great need.

E. Even the centurion recognized that Jesus had Authority and that he needed to submit to it.

F. Jesus wants to make sure that these two men know what they are getting into.

G. A. W. Tozer *Great Sermons of the 20th Century. Christianity Today, Vol. 31, no. 6: The present position of Christ in the gospel churches may be likened to that of a king in a limited constitutional monarchy. The king (sometimes depersonalized by the term "the Crown") is in such a country no more than a traditional rallying point, a pleasant symbol of unity and loyalty much like a flag or a national anthem. He is lauded, feted, and supported, but his real authority is small. Nominally he is head over all, but in every crisis someone else makes the decisions. On formal occasions he appears in his royal attire to deliver the tame, colorless speech put into his mouth by the real rulers of the country. The whole thing may be no more than good-natured make-believe, but it is rooted in antiquity, it is a lot of fun, and no one wants to give it up.*

H. I just finished hiking about 45 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Southwest Virginia.

1. We participate in a ministry called Wilderness Trails.
2. I have been hiking the Appalachian Trail since I was 18 and have been involved with WT since their inception.
3. I have observed a lot of people as they have made this 4 ½ day journey, leaving the comforts of home, hiking about 11 miles a day, sometimes climbing 1200-1500 feet of ascents with a 25-40 lb backpack.
4. Somewhere in the first hour, they begin to question why they ever thought they could do this.
5. Even before lunch, many are thinking about giving up but somehow manage to press on.
6. By the next day they are hiking with a little more confidence that they might survive, but they are still pretty miserable.

7. Somewhere during the third day, they realize they are going to make it. They start to see the finish line, but they are certainly never going to hike again.
8. By the end of the hike, they are feeling such a sense of accomplishment and community they actually begin to admit that they were glad they did it, ONCE, but never again.
9. What I love is that quite often, some within just days, some in a couple of months, some when they hear that we are registering for next year's hike, actually decide to do it again.
10. I love it to see people challenged beyond what they ever thought they could do.

I. Jesus issues us that challenge. He calls us to accept His authority in our lives.

J. As Savior, he accepts us. As Lord, we accept His authority.

VIII. Faith is getting in the Boat.

A. {23} *Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.*

B. Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby *Experiencing God Day-by-Day The Devotional and Journal*
P. 63 "You may say, 'I love God, but I just have difficulty trusting Him.' Then you are not pleasing to Him. You cannot struggle at the core of your relationship with God and still enjoy a vibrant fellowship with Him! Faith does not eliminate problems. Faith keeps you in a trusting relationship with God in the midst of your problems. Faith has to do with your relationship with God, not your circumstances."

C. (Written to Diane Briery after Tanya's mobile home exploded and burned 11/2002) Faith empowers us to live with reality, sometimes enables us to change reality, sometimes cope, but never avoid.

D. Break Through Prayer, Jim Cymbala Page 180 "In this context faith means the moral persuasion or conviction that leads the heart to rely on Christ."

E. I have been in an email conversation with a couple who have just gone through a personal loss. We shared about the feelings of grief that accompany a loss. I shared how quite often I haven't let myself grieve enough and have thought that people expected me to just get on with my life.

F. What I have learned is that grief is not a sign of a lack of faith.

G. One of the downsides of being in the ministry is that you sometimes think you have to hold up and be an example of strong faith. The older I get, the less I live by that. Grief is real, it is human to grieve. I have learned that faith keeps grief from becoming anger. Whenever I fail to remember how important faith is, my grief turns to anger.

H. Three broken people came to Jesus and two who didn't seem to have any real pressing problems.

I. Faith is what healed the three; faithlessness prevented the two others from following.

J. Followers of Jesus Christ must all start with the knowledge that no matter what their condition they are accepted by God. Jesus is the flesh and blood proof of that.

K. Faith doesn't just stop with acceptance, it then lets Jesus be the ultimate Authority in your Life. King, Lord, Savior.

L. {23} *Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.*

IX. Are you in the boat?