

Faith: What Are We Missing? 1

Can We Just Trust & Believe Jesus?

(preached 9/3/23)

Is it possible that, when it comes to faith, that we're missing something? I'm not talking about some deep, mind-boggling revelation that no one's ever figured out before.

- I propose that maybe we're still making it about us...about what we can do and accomplish.
- I submit that perhaps we're thinking that with enough hard work, discipline, and "git 'er done" we can finally have this thing that Jesus says can move mountains.

What if it's simply a matter of trusting in Christ? I know we tell each other to "trust God" a lot, and then we normally respond how "hard" that is...but it is really that hard? Maybe we're "making a mountain out of a molehill"?

WHAT IF TRUSTING THE LORD AND THEREFORE HAVING FAITH ISN'T HARD?

What if it's the easier choice than what we've been doing?

Years ago **I was at a TKD camp** where we had to move a large, heavy, rectangular wooden platform. This thing was a beast and there was no equipment to help—we would have to do it by hand. There were about 8 of us who got on both sides to carry this thing about 50 feet but, for some reason, more people gathered on the opposite side of me. One of the guys noticed this and asked me if I wanted more people on my side to help lift and carry, and speaking in a manly and confident manner, I said "no."

Why? Because I wanted to **show everyone how strong I was** and wanted them to be impressed. So all of us lifted and the great self-confidence I was feeling a moment ago fell to the floor. The platform was heavier than I expected and I wasn't as strong as I thought I was. We only walked about 15-20 feet and I had to set it down. Everyone was staring at me, asking if I wanted more guys on my side to carry. Despite what happened, I proudly retorted "*I got this!*"

We all lifted and started forward again and I realized **I wasn't going to make it...** I didn't "have it" despite my best effort. You know how loud I am! With some "urgency" in my voice **I blurted out that it was too heavy and I couldn't continue** and suddenly a person appeared on my left I didn't see a moment before.

It was our Headmaster Mike! Unbeknownst to me, he'd already seen us moving this thing, noticed the imbalance of people, and had heard me declaring I didn't need any help. When he saw me set it down the first time, though, he realized I ****did**** need help and had **already started to make his way over**. I never saw him coming because my back was to him.

He was right there when I finally admitted my weakness and my need for help. By the time I saw him responding to my call, my arms were so weak I was ready to drop the platform and not just carefully set it down like I had before. This would have been dangerous not just to me, but the others who were carrying it.

Headmaster Mike positioned himself right next to me and grabbed the platform, **and I trusted him to bear all the weight**. Mike isn't a big guy...I probably outweigh him by 40 lbs. Yet when he grabbed the platform and lifted, I couldn't believe it. I continued to "help" as we walked the remaining distance, but the truth is my efforts were minimal at best. Mike bore the weight all the way to the end and didn't look like he was trying.

Let me ask me ask some questions:

- Was it foolish for me to rely upon myself to lift and carry this heavy object?
- After it was proved I couldn't carry it on my own, was it even more foolish to turn down help?
- When did the Headmaster finally appear and help? After 1) I admitted my weakness and 2) asked for help and 3) trusted that he could & would carry the load.
- How much "effort" was needed from me after he grabbed the platform? Very little.

We trust more often that we think.

- When we're sick and go to the doctor, we trust in his knowledge to help us get better.
- When our car breaks down, we trust the mechanic to find out what's wrong and fix it.
- A child trusts their parents to provide for and protect them.

So why don't we start doing the same with Jesus?

[Pro 3:5-6 ESV] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

To trust in someone is to *believe in them* and *we provide and produce the belief*. When we believe, God is the one Who gives faith.

Believing and having faith are NOT the same thing.

- Belief is human, faith is from God.
- They're a married couple like the Church and Jesus.
- The Church believes in Jesus, and Jesus gives faith.
- Faith is completely supernatural and can only be given by God.
- We cannot produce it in any. We don't work for it and earn it. We can't achieve it.

Our destiny is to believe and the Person we're to believe in is our Lord Jesus Christ.

What, exactly, are we supposed to believe? Let's break it down:

- ABILITY/POWER: does Christ have the power or does He lack it?
- WILLINGNESS: is He willing or not?
- INTENTION/MOTIVES: are His intentions and motives good and pure, or self-serving?
- INTELLIGENCE/KNOWLEDGE: is He smart enough and does He know what He's doing? Or does He lack the brains and know-how?
- WISDOM: is He mature to the point of wisdom, or does He make mistakes and need to learn from them?
- CONSISTENCY/DEPENDABILITY: is Christ consistent in all the above and is He dependable? Or is He wishy-washy, fails to keep promises, and lacks follow-through?

Even though I wrote this on Saturday, ***I'm confident you all gave the "right" answers to these questions.*** If asked, I'd wager you would all say YES to Jesus having the ability, willingness, good motives, smarts, know-how, wisdom, and that He's 100% dependable.

I'll guess that you would say NO to Him lacking power, not being willing, self-serving motives, lack of brains, immaturity, and little follow-through.

Yet I say to you that the reason we don't believe is that we believe Jesus is lacking in one or more of the things in the list above.

It's with the heart that one believes...so "lack of faith" is there. Is it possible that:

- Our hearts don't believe He's able. Maybe He can't heal us because we deserve this sickness we're dealing with or He's waiting for us to do something first.
- Our hearts may not think He's willing. He won't pay the overdue rent because He thinks we'll spend the \$ elsewhere, and doesn't want to waste it on us.

- **Our hearts suspects His motives.** He's denying us this thing because He demands that we be holy and obey and we're not.
- **Our hearts don't think He knows.** Yes, He's all knowing but does He really GET what I'm going through? He's God in Heaven, not a flawed human living here...does He really relate??
- **Our hearts doubt His wisdom.** Last time we obeyed His will things didn't work out! He told us to get married and we did, and it was a disaster! Did God miss it somehow??
- **Is God really consistent and dependable?** If He is, then why do we still have financial problems? Why did the sickness I was healed from return? Why did the addiction He freed me from come back? Why doesn't He consistently keep us protected from these things, or be more dependable when it comes to provision?

We won't get to all these today, but let's start.

IS JESUS ABLE? DOES HE HAVE THE POWER?

[Mat 9:27-30 ESV] 27 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." 28 When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, **"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"** They said to him, "Yes, Lord." 29 Then he touched their eyes, saying, **"According to your faith be it done to you."** 30 And **their eyes were opened.**

First, did you notice the married relationship belief has with faith?

They're not the same thing, but they are married and therefore bonded together. *Faith is given after someone believes.*

Second, **look at the question Jesus asks the blind men.** He doesn't ask if they WANT to be healed...of course they do! He asks them if they believe that He's ABLE.

The phrase "do you believe" is translated together in the Greek and it means to **be committed to trusting.** Didn't we just have a sermon series about commitment? That it's God's main word for "love"?

In other words, believing in Jesus isn't a case by case thing. It's not situational or depending on circumstances. ***Believing in Jesus is to bond with Him.*** To be in love with Him. To know that there's no One more in love with and committed to us than Him.

"I am able" is a phrase that translated like it was one word and it means ***"to have the power/be capable of."***

Therefore here is what Jesus is asking the blind men and us: ***“are You committed to trusting that I have the power to heal you and restore your sight?”*** Verses 29-30 show that yes, the blind men did believe and yes, Jesus had the power.

Do we believe that Jesus is able? Capable? Has the power?

[Col 1:15-20 ESV] 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 **For by him all things were created**, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--**all things were created through him and for him**. 17 And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 **For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell**, 20 and through him **to reconcile to himself all things**, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Verse 16a: “By Him ALL things were created.”

Verse 16b: “all things were created through Him and for Him.”

Verse 17: “and in Him all things hold/are held together.”

Verse 19: “In Him the FULLNESS of God was pleased to dwell.”

Verse 20: “through Him to reconciled to Himself all things.”

The universe is HUGE. Like...none of really get how big it is, despite hearing measurements of space and time such as “trillions of light years.” The amount of energy in our sun is so vast that our minds can’t understand it—and galaxies have billions of these suns. And there are billions of galaxies....

So...Jesus created all that. He has the power.

All was created FOR Him which speaks to WHO He is. It wasn’t created for the angels like Michael or Gabriel. It wasn’t created for humankind. Everything was created for Him because He’s God.

Only God can hold all things together.

JESUS WAS AND IS THE FULLNESS OF GOD. HE IS EQUAL TO FATHER GOD.

Jesus “reconciling” all things to Himself means ***He’s eventually going to make everything OK***. No more death, sickness, pain, sorrow, decay, conflict, separation...all of that is going to die because He’s going to kill it. Eternal life, holiness, love, and joy will replace all those things when He comes back and brings His Kingdom with Him.

If we have cancer, it’s bigger and stronger than us. It’s more powerful than even the most brilliant doctor and the most advanced medical technology. I saw it take my sister despite her having the best medical care around. It’s like trying to carry a large and heavy platform that’s clearly too heavy. Eventually our strength gives out and we come crashing to the ground.

Yet Jesus is more powerful than cancer and is able to overcome anything that would crush or weigh us down. He is able and we can fully trust Him. He can carry the heavy platform.

CALL TO ACTION. Let’s start here today: let’s admit we’re weak and that we cannot. Can’t what? You name it. We’re not strong enough and the platform is too heavy. Since we know Jesus is able, ***why don’t we just start asking Him to grab it and carry?***

Let’s ask without overthinking which looks like this: “He can’t help me because I haven’t been living holy, haven’t been going to church, haven’t been praying, haven’t been_____.”

How about we just ask, believing that He is able!

But is He willing? We’ve prayed and prayed and prayed about _____ and we accept Jesus is able to do it. He’s powerful enough to make it happen.

Yet sometimes that even upsets us! We might think to ourselves that, with a wave of His hand, He could make this bad thing go away! Make this good thing come into our lives! Free us from that which holds us prisoner like an addiction or anger.

So why doesn’t He?! Why did my sister suffer and die from cancer back in 1977? Why didn’t God just heal her? Now our hearts struggle and wonder if Jesus is willing or perhaps unwilling. **If we believe He’s unwilling, then we ask why?**

[Luk 5:12-13 NKJV] 12 And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on [his] face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, **if You are willing, You can make me clean.**" 13 Then He put out [His] hand and touched him, saying, "**I am willing; be cleansed.**" Immediately the leprosy left him.

God-fearing Jews don't touch lepers because the Torah forbids it. It's an actual commandment. Said commandment warns that lepers are "unclean" and that if a "clean" person touches them, they become "unclean." Lepers were sequestered from the rest of society like they had all the worst variants of Covid-19. They were forbidden contact with anyone, including a spouse, kids, etc. and said quarantines were permanent.

SO THAT'S WHY THE LEPER ASKS JESUS IS HE'S WILLING. Notice very few others asked Jesus that? The blind and the deaf never asked, and certainly not the mute.... That was a joke. The leper specifically asks because He knows the Torah forbids it, knows that it's supposed to make Jesus unclean, and has likely experienced a lot of *fearful and hostile people who avoid him like the plague.*

The leper doesn't ask if Jesus is able, and Jesus doesn't ask the leper "do you believe I am able to do this?" like he did the blind men.

Why not? **I think it's because ability wasn't the issue in the leper's heart, but willingness.** I'll bet that after being cast out by society and having everyone be afraid of him all the time, **he didn't think anyone had the mercy to aid him.**

To have enough compassion to overcome the boundaries of the Law to help him.

So he's heard about Jesus preaching and healing, and that **He may even be the long-awaited Messiah.** Messiah will be one of the "cleanest" people around—dedicated to God, holy, and set apart. Would the Christ really want to defile Himself by touching a leper? Here's what happened:

13 Then He put out [His] hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him.

We've already covered that Jesus is powerful and able to do all things. *Do you suppose He could have healed the leper without touching him?* Absolutely.

He purposefully touches the leper, in front of others, **to show that His love and mercy is what makes Him willing.**

His compassion drives Him to free His sheep from what afflicts them.

STOP OVERTHINKING THIS. I'm talking to myself and you're getting to hear my internal convo.

You are not going to make the Lord unclean. Maybe you feel like a leper: an outcast that others may see as “diseased.”

- Maybe some avoid you because they don't want your “issues” to affect them, to make them “unclean.”
- Maybe you struggle with worth and there's a voice in your mind saying you AREN'T worth the effort.
- That no human being has enough compassion or mercy to get past your issues and still love you.
- Every time one of them has tried, your “stuff” is too much for them.

NOT JESUS! You won't overwhelm Him, your issues aren't too much, you won't drain Him, He won't run out of mercy and compassion...you aren't going to make Him unclean.

Overthinking is unbelief. Our spirit believes...it's our hearts that have the problem. Even if we accept Jesus is able, we conclude He must not be willing until we start obeying Him, restrain from sin, go to church more, read our Bibles more, pray more, stop drinking so much, stop cussing, start treating people better, etc.

All of that is us refusing help—that we can lift and carry that heavy wooden platform all by ourselves. It's us thinking that only after we PROVE we can do it, then Jesus will come.

NO: Jesus comes and lifts the heavy object only when we cry out for His help. When we trust that He can, and that He will.

He is willing!