



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 08.10.2023

“What faith really means”

Preacher

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Scripture

“When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. 15 As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

16 “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

17 A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 18 Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

19 “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

21 Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. 22 “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”



23 “If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

24 Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

26 The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

28 After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

29 He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.””

Mark 9:2-11, 14-29

Thought

As we explore today’s passage, we see that most of our life happens not on the mountain top, but on the dusty roads of humanity. Jesus meets a man in the midst of life, in the middle of challenges and heartbreak, and in this moment of life’s mediocrity, a miracle occurs.

We so often are tempted to think that ‘faith’ is based on our own strength, our unwavering belief in a good outcome, or our performance. But what if faith isn’t about confidence in ourselves at all? What if faith is about trust in the person of Jesus?

When faith is primarily anchored in ourselves and our own ability to grow and perform, we will never have the kind of faith that Jesus requires. Faith is not about how much we can stretch, but how much trust we place in the person of Jesus. It’s not conjured up, it’s an anchoring of our dependence on Jesus through a trusting relationship.



It's not static. It's as dynamic as any relationship we have, and it grows as we dynamically build a deepening relationship with Christ through the twists and turns of life. There's no technique, there isn't a formulaic approach, or a magic word. In this passage, Jesus points us back to Prayer. Prayer - the heart position of communing with God, of spending time with Him, of talking and walking with Him, of just consistently turning up to present our needs before Him.

In prayer, we realise that we don't have the power, we don't possess the authority, rather we only have authority through our relational connection with Jesus. And so we, with faith, reach out, knowing that in and of ourselves, we are empty, yet through our relationship *with* Christ, and *through* Christ, there is Authority. We rely, not on ourselves, but on the one who brings authority and breakthrough.

Could it be that sometimes we're afraid to share the depths of our heart with Christ? To trust him enough to open our hearts and lives to Him?

It's ok to admit that our faith is weak. We are weak creatures, and the irony is that, like the man in these verses, as we approach Christ in our weakness, we are actually exhibiting faith in its purest form. In the very act of asking Jesus for help in our faith, we actually show that we have the faith required.

There are often things that happen in our lives where we feel weak. This is not the point where we need to conjure up faith - rather we need to realise who our faith is reliant on, and all that is required is to place our weak and failing trust in the hands of an all-powerful and all-loving God.

And here we discover what faith really means. In the midst of our doubts - doubts of the mind or the doubt of the heart, faith is to approach Christ, trembling, weak, unsure and to ask Him to help us in our unbelief.

Our proximity to Jesus makes the difference, not our performance. Christ is the one who holds our hearts, who knows what we need, who knows our rising and falling, our coming and going - He is the source of all good things. He won't turn us away, He's just glad that we're close to Him, and it's through an ever-deepening relationship with Him that we truly discover the meaning of faith.



Discussion Points

1. How have I defined or understood faith in the past?
2. If faith means presenting ourselves before Christ in weakness, and asking for His help, How can I grow in this?
3. How, then, with this understanding of faith, can I encourage others in their faith?

Personal application + Prayer

Jesus,

Teach me what it means to have faith in You. I turn my mind and heart towards you in prayer, and I put all other thoughts aside. Help me, Lord, in my unbelief. Let me understand the depth of your grace, the power of Your love, and your unwavering care for me. I place my life in your hands, the hands that created the universe and the hands that created my life. I place my faith in You, and You alone. I trust You afresh. Have Your way, and teach me Your ways.

Amen.