**Have Faith In God**

September 22, 2013

Mark 11:12-25

Key Verse: 11:22 “‘Have faith in God,’ Jesus answered.”

We all want to experience the power of God. We all want to experience victory in God. But when we look at the present problems, we become weak and discouraged. We question, “Can I do it?” But it is having faith in me. When we depend on our own abilities, we cannot but live a life limited by our mountains of obstacles. Jesus says to us, “Have faith in God.” He means that we should not look at ourselves, but look at God. Instead of saying, “Can I do it?” we should have faith that God can do it. “Have faith in God.” This has been a favorite key verse of many people. First of all, it is very short. Whenever I worry about many things, I say to myself, “Have faith in God.” Then worry disappears. Why should I worry? God will do it. Why should I try to do God’s job? God is the living God. When we simply believe in him and pray, God can do the impossible. He will move the mountains. Let’s not limit what God can do due to our unbelief, but have faith in God and experience the power of God.

In the last passage Jesus entered Jerusalem as the suffering King, riding the colt of a donkey. The next day as they were leaving Bethany with the Twelve, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached out, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” Jesus cursed the fig tree, and the disciples heard him say it. Normally a tree full of leaves should have some fruit. But this one had none. Jesus must have associated the temple with the fig tree. It was beautiful in its outward appearance, but it was spiritually fruitless. The fig tree seemed to be flourishing with abundant leaves, but in reality it had no fruit. This event is an indirect rebuke to the religious leaders, who looked good outwardly, but who were utterly corrupted inwardly.

Look at verses 15,16. “On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began to drive out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.” Jesus is infinitely merciful to those who turn their hearts to him for help. But his anger and wrath are inflamed when people intentionally suppress the truth and do evil. The religious leaders were supposed to be the shepherds and prayer servants of their people. They were wearing beautiful robes and were conducting beautifully ceremonies with holy looks. But they were full of greed in their hearts. They only accepted temple currency as offerings. When people exchanged currency, the religious leaders overcharged. When people brought animals from outside for offerings, the temple inspectors always found something wrong with them and rejected them. So they were forced to buy animals from the religious leaders, almost 10 times as much. In this way, the temple became an animal market and money changing bank. Jesus was angry that the religious leaders were exploiting people, and desecrating God’s holy place.

Look at verse 17. “And as he taught them, he said, ‘Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”? But you have made it “a den of robbers.” The temple was supposed to be the place where men could listen to God and talk to God. The temple is also a house of prayer for “all nations.” Jesus wants his people to pray for all nations, not to mention his own nation. But when Jesus went into the temple, it was not a house of prayer for all nations; it was a den of robbers. They were interested only in politics; who gets what positions, how much salary. It revealed the spiritual condition of his people, especially of the religious leaders. So Jesus could not but reveal his righteous anger.

Look at verse 20. It was now the third day of the Passion Week. As Jesus and his disciples went along, on the way back to Jerusalem, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered what Jesus had said. This fig tree had been in beautiful foliage. How could it be that in the space of one night, the flourishing fig tree had dried up from the roots! Wow! It was a surprise. At the time, Peter probably didn’t think much about Jesus’ quiet words, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” He thought that Jesus was cranky because he was hungry. Now he realized that Jesus’ words had awesome power. At the word of Jesus, the fig tree dried up completely from the roots overnight. Usually, it takes several months for a tree to dry up completely from the roots. To wither overnight was impossible. In his amazement, Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered! How can it be possible?” The power and authority of Jesus’ words really impressed Peter. With this kind of power and authority, the enemies of Israel could be destroyed and the nation restored. With this power and authority, Jesus could establish his Messianic kingdom. But Peter did not have power. He did not have the power that comes from God.

How did Jesus respond to Peter’s amazed reaction? Jesus said, “Have faith in God” (22). Jesus says that the source of power and authority is God. To tap that power requires faith. Didn’t they have faith in God? Yes, they believed in God. Then, what kind of faith in God did Jesus want them to have? Jesus wanted his disciples to have absolute faith. He wanted them to have the power that comes from faith. When Jesus said, “Have faith in God,” it meant, “You are weak, but our God is Almighty God.” When Jesus said, “Have faith in God,” it meant, “Our God is Almighty God. We can do nothing but God can do everything for us when we believe in him.” When Jesus said, “Have faith in God,” it meant, “Believe in God Almighty absolutely and see the great things God will do for you.” Jesus said in Mark 10:27, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Look at verse 23. “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.” Jesus wanted them to have faith that moves mountains. Faith that moves mountains is faith that defies our human limits. When we think about telling a mountain to “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” our first thought is, “it’s impossible.”

So, what is mountain-moving faith? It is faith that trusts God and doesn’t give up. It is faith that doesn’t think about human limits, but thinks about Almighty God. In order to have mountain-moving faith we must fight against the doubt in our hearts. We can overcome doubt when we know the heart of our God and stand on his side. We can overcome doubt with a decision of faith. We must have faith in his word. Then God will give us the power of faith. In CN Tower, there is a glass floor. They say that it can actually withstand the weight of 14 large hippos. So it is completely safe to stand on it. But many people, when they look down on 342m below, are afraid to stand on it. Some crawl. This means that they do not believe. Many of us are just like that toward the word of God. We must overcome our doubt and have faith in the word of God.

When I think about my own abilities and limits, it is impossible. But what about God? God is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth. There is nothing that the Almighty Creator God cannot do. A mountain is too big for me to move. But God can move any mountain. Jesus wants his disciples to have faith that moves mountains. A mountain is primarily any obstacle that stands in your way. We are faced with obstacles in our lives. Most Christians pray to God. But Jesus told us to speak directly to the obstacle and tell it to be removed. Most Christians just speak to God about the mountain, instead of following Jesus’ direction and speaking directly to the mountain. Are you just talking to God about the problems in your life instead of talking directly to the problems and telling them to be removed? You should say to the mountain, “Get out of my way!”

At the Labor Day conference, we heard Dr. John Baik from El Camino UBF. For several months, his despair was a big mountain in his heart. He went out to campus to invite students, but no one responded to his invitation. After trying several students, he gave up and went to a restaurant to eat lunch and read a Korean newspaper from cover to cover. This went on for several months. But one day, he spoke to his mountain. “I will not be defeated any more. I will not give up until I get new students today.” God removed the mountain in his heart, and helped him to win the victory. That day, God sent 4 students who became the pillar of his ministry.

Look at verse 24. “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” This verse teaches us that when we pray, God hears our prayers, and our requests are granted. This is a great promise of God. We cannot do great things by ourselves. But we must believe that when we pray, God answers our prayers, and that we have received what we prayed for. When we pray, we have to mean it. There was a drought in a small town. So the pastor wanted to have a prayer meeting to pray for rain. When people came to the church, the pastor rebuked them. “You came to pray for rain, but none of you brought umbrellas.” They should have brought umbrellas because God would give them rain. Though they came to pray for rain, they did not believe it would rain. Faith grows as we pray more and more. We gain muscles as we exercise more and more. In the same way, prayer is our spiritual exercise. The more we pray, the more we have faith, the more we experience the power of God.

Look at verse 24 again. “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Many people think that it means that God is like Aladdin’s lamp. How wonderful it would be if we pray for 12 disciples, and the next week, it happens; we pray for the permanent residency card, and the next week we receive it. It does not work that way. In 2001 international summer Bible conference, Dr. Samuel Lee explained this verse as follows: Mountain-moving faith is digging the mountain with our bare hands little by little and move it. It may take 1 year, 10 years or even 100 years. But it will move. If we have faith, we can start digging. If we do not have faith, we just give up and do nothing. In other words, there is no Aladdin’s lamp, but only hard work and determination produce miracles.

Look at verse 25. “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” Until now, Jesus talked about faith that moves mountains, which was really fantastic. But now Jesus talks about forgiving brothers. Why? If we hold grudges against others, it blocks our prayer-channel to God.

Isaiah 59:1,2 says, “Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” Psalm 66:18 says, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”

How can we forgive others? We must look at Jesus’ cross. We were objects of God’s wrath and anger, living by our sinful nature. But God nailed his one and only Son to the cross in order to forgive men’s sins. God gave us the grace of forgiveness through his Son. Our sins were forgiven, and we became the precious children of God. We can forgive others’ sins as much as we remember God’s grace through his one and only Son Jesus Christ.

When we live a life of faith, we have to move many mountains: mountains of despair, mountains of doubt, and mountains of grudges in our hearts. May God grant each of us the faith that moves mountains.