**Have Faith in God**

August 30, 2020

Mark 11:12-25

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

“Have faith in God.” This has been a favorite key verse of many people. First of all, it is very short and easy to memorize. Whenever I worry about many things, I say to myself, “Have faith in God.” Then worry disappears. Why should I worry? Why should I try to do God’s job? God will take care of it. 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. There was a drought in a small town. 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 that it would rain. We have to believe and live as if God already answered our prayer. 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, and the more we experience the power of God.

In the last passage Jesus entered Jerusalem to destroy what is false, false expectation and false religion, riding on the colt of a donkey. The next day as they were leaving Bethany with the Twelve, Jesus was hungry. Jesus must have gotten up very early for prayer, and did not have time to eat breakfast. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves. 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. A fig tree always bears edible fruits before leaves come out. But this fig tree was full of leaves but no fruit at all. Jesus must have associated the temple with the fig tree. The temple was beautiful in its outward appearance, but it was spiritually fruitless. Jesus’ cursing the fig tree was an indirect rebuke to the religious leaders, who looked good outwardly, but who were utterly corrupt inwardly. It is a parable of divine judgment on the temple and on the false religion. Then Jesus went to the temple and cleared the place, another preview of the coming judgment forty years later when the Romans came and destroyed the temple.

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 was beautiful in abundant leaves. How could it be that overnight, the flourishing fig tree had dried up from the roots! Wow! It was a surprise. When Jesus cursed the fig tree, 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 is it 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. 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, “You can do nothing, but God can do everything for you when you 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.”

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 powerless and discouraged. We question, “Can I do it?” But when we do that, it is having faith in myself. 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. Now the point here is not about faith, it is about God. Another way to say it, is “Trust God.” We must trust his power, and we also must trust his purpose and his promise and his plans and his will. In other words, we have to trust that he knows better than we do. Trust in God. Trust in Jesus. One time when the disciples said, “Lord, teach us to pray,” Jesus said, “Pray this way: ‘Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done.” That is how we pray. “God, whatever honors your name, advances your kingdom, and accomplishes your will, that is what I pray.” That is what it means to trust God.

Look at verse 23. “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them.” Jesus wanted them to have faith that moves mountains. Faith that moves mountains is faith that defies our human limits. The characteristic of a mountain is that it is immovable. So when we think about telling a mountain, “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 withstand the weight of 20,454kg (45,093.35lbs) or 35 moose. 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 to move mountains of obstacles. 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 mountains. Jesus wants his disciples to have faith that moves mountains. A mountain is any obstacle that blocks your path and stops your progress; it blocks your view of God. Is there a challenge you are facing right now that looks like a huge mountain? You may be staring up at school or work—it seems as if you’ll never overcome. You may be facing a relational mountain—you are so lonely that you think you’ll never find the right spouse. Or you just can’t seem to get along with some family member—it seems like an insurmountable mountain. Others are facing a physical mountain—there is sickness that you can’t seem to overcome. Jesus told the disciples that they could speak to the mountain. We love to talk about our problems and obstacles, but we sometimes never get around to addressing the problem itself. The truth is, the more we talk about our mountain, the bigger it gets. It grows and grows until sometimes you really turn a molehill into a mountain. And if you don’t speak to your mountain, it will speak to you—it will taunt you, “Look at me! You can’t get past me! You’ll never be healthy! You’ll never overcome. You’ll never kick that habit!” So try speaking directly to the mountain. You don’t have to yell. Just say with faith, “Mountain, there’s not enough room for both of us in this life, so you gotta go! Go jump in Lake Ontario!”

You may ask, “How much faith do I have to have?” In Matthew 14, Peter began to walk on the water, but when he saw the wind, he was afraid and began to sink. He cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Jesus heard his prayer. Do you know what the key principle here is? Little faith is enough. Did Peter have great faith? No, he had little faith. But he was granted his prayer, even though his faith was small, little faith. Remember the father of a boy who was possessed by an impure spirit in chapter 9. Out of desperation, he said to Jesus, “If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” But Jesus said to him, “If you can? Everything is possible for him who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father cried out, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.” It is always going to be faith mixed with some doubt. We don’t have perfect faith, do we? You were saved by faith. Was it a perfect faith, a hundred percent, to the max, no shadow of doubt? No. Now you live by faith; you walk by faith. Is it a perfect faith? No. How much faith is needed? Matthew 17:20 says that it is the faith as small as a mustard seed. Even a small amount of struggling faith can draw down the power of God in the life of a believer. Faith isn’t the power, faith is the empty hand that receives the power from God. What an amazing promise! I think it is great news because we all struggle with doubt.

Look at verse 23 again. “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them.” Many people think that this 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 suitable helper, and the next week we receive it; we pray for a million dollars, we win the lottery. It does not work that way. 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 will start digging. If we do not have faith, we just give up and do nothing in front of the mountain and despair. In other words, there is no Aladdin’s lamp, there is no shortcut, but only hard work and determination produce miracles.

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. When we pray, we have to absolutely believe two things. First, God could do it. Second, God will do it. Those are two different matters. We have to first believe that God has power to do it, and then we have to believe that God is willing to do it. 1 John 5:14-15 says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.” Jesus understands our cries. He understands the cry for healing. He understands the cry of the heart over the prodigal children. He understands the struggles with school and work. And he holds you in his heart, and he will never forsake you, and he will never withhold any good thing from you; and all things will work together for your good if you faithfully ask. 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.” Notice the verb change in verse 24, “have received it.” It is a present perfect tense. We should believe and live as if God already answered our prayer.

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? Because not forgiving others is a sin. If we hold grudges against others, it is a sin and sin 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 also says, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” Here forgiveness isn’t talking about salvation. You have already had the judicial forgiveness of salvation from God the Judge. This is talking about the sins that are part of your life as a believer that stand between you and God the Father. This is about restoring our relationship. It is like when you sin against your father, you are still a son and a daughter, but your relationship is broken. If you have a broken relationship with your father, it is difficult to ask him and he may not be willing to grant your request. Likewise, a broken relationship blocks our prayer-channel to God. Here is your choice: hold a grudge and have your prayers blocked, or have your prayers answered.

May God increase our faith, that our faith will grow and increase, and that the result of that faith will be believing prayer. When we live a life of faith, we have to move many mountains: mountains of school and work, mountains of relationship, and mountains of grudges in our hearts. May God grant each of us the faith that moves mountains.

Big Idea: Faith that moves the mountains