

Good morning, we're continuing our series in Matthew and today we come to the incident that we looked at, at the end of last week:

The healing of the demon possessed boy – and more importantly for us: the faith involved in making that happen.

Last week, we saw how Jesus took 3 disciples up a mountain – because all week, the spectre of Jesus death had been playing on their minds. So Jesus creates some space and they journey together up a high mountain.

There on that mountain they encounter:
the Spirit of God shining through Jesus
the Word of God applied to their exact situation, and
the Voice of God reassuring them that “this is my Son with whom I am well pleased”.

They took time, they made space, to be with God
and the result was this powerful reminder of his presence, his plan and his love in their lives.

So in Matthew chapter 17v14,
they come down the mountain and
a man approached Jesus and knelt before him.
Lord, have mercy on my son, he said.
He has seizures and is suffering greatly...
I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.

And we're told in v19, that the reason why the 9 disciples,
(those who did not go up the mountain)
could not heal this boy, was because they had so little faith...

And then Jesus says, in what is the pivotal verse:
I tell you the truth,
if you have faith even as small as a mustard seed,
you can say to this mountain,
'Move from here to there' and it will move.
For nothing will be impossible for you."

Now given that I assume none of us have seen any low-flying mountain being relocated by Christian prayer, we have to ask the question: what does this mean?

Well I want to draw out three points from this text morning:
Firstly, that Faith is “believing IN something FOR something”
Secondly, that Faith has to be small to be big; and finally
that faith in Jesus is found in his faith in us.

Faith is “believing IN something FOR something, it has to be small to be big; and it is found in his faith in us”.

So, if you would turn in your Bibles to page 984.
Firstly,

1. Faith is “believing IN something FOR something”

when we post a letter we believe IN the Post Office FOR the safe arrival of the letter
when we trust a friend we put our faith IN them, FOR them not to let us down.
when we get on a plane we put our faith IN the plane FOR our destination.
Faith is “believing IN something FOR something”

And the key to real Faith is: believing IN the right things FOR the right things.

This is what I think was going wrong for the 9 disciples.

Jesus looked at his disciples who said they “believed in him”

He look at the crowd of people who were following him and he said “*you don’t yet get it yet and time is running out*”

v17 "O unbelieving and perverse generation,"

"how long shall I stay with you?

How long shall I put up with you?

Bring the boy here to me."

And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

There is something fundamentally deficient about these disciples faith

They didn’t go up the mountain

They didn’t set time aside to be with Jesus

They didn’t see the point of making space for Jesus

They stayed behind to do ministry, to teach, to attempt to heal.

I think, they believed IN their own ministry FOR blessing - rather than IN Jesus FOR relationship.

I just want to say that again

I think, they believed IN their own ministry FOR blessing - rather than IN Jesus FOR relationship.

They wanted to see the power of the Kingdom of God in their life (and that’s great) – but they didn’t actually want to invest themselves in Jesus

They wanted to reap the benefits of knowing God – but they didn’t actually want to make the time to know him.

They wanted results - without relationship.

They believed IN their own ministry FOR blessing rather than IN Jesus FOR relationship.

You know, there is a little book at the back of church entitled “we would see Jesus”.

It’s short, but it makes one simple and profound point.

It says:

our faith should not be about the results of our relationship with Jesus – it should be about our relationship with Jesus.

What our faith should be seeking is not the benefits of our relationship with Jesus - *peace, patience, strength, hope, blessings, success* - we should be seeking Jesus

(not the benefits of Jesus - but Jesus)

In other words –

the motivation for our faith is not us knowing God’s salvation, or power or blessings in our life - it is knowing God.

There was something fundamentally deficient about these disciples faith.

They didn’t want to spend time with Jesus

as much as they wanted to do good to others,

to be a blessing to others, to be blessed by God.

They didn't want Jesus – as much as they wanted the benefits that Jesus could offer.

This is such a subtle distinction,
we are not so much to seek the benefits of knowing Jesus, as seeking Jesus.
we are not so much to be hungry for success in ministry, as hungry for him.

The danger for our faith is that we place it “IN the wrong thing” / “FOR the wrong thing”.

For IF we place our faith IN ministry
in helping the poor, in loving others, in exercising our gifts, in creating great services, in doing wonderful things
FOR blessing.
It may look good - but it'll lack power.

Our Faith (living faith, powerful faith, life transforming faith) should IN “Jesus” FOR “a relationship with Jesus”.
NOT in ministry FOR blessing!

Do you see?
not looking for results but looking for relationship.
not seeking blessing but seeking him....

So here's the challenge...
If our faith, the reason why we are here this morning is,
about the friendships here, the traditions here, the community here, the ability to make a difference here, the support here, the buzz here
then we're missing the point.

If we're here FOR “life to be better”,
we're missing the point.
Our faith is not IN “knowing what we get out of it” its IN knowing Jesus

That's what I think is going on here in v17& 18.
The disciples faith is.
IN the wrong thing / FOR the wrong thing.

They were looking to do ministry trusting IN
their own skills, gifts, wisdom FOR blessing

Rather than putting their trust IN Jesus FOR Relationship.

Our Faith needs to be IN Jesus FOR a relationship with him.
That should be our hunger, our reason for being here, the motivation for our belief.
It's all about knowing Jesus...
everything flows from that but its easy to lose focus

Secondly

2. Our Faith HAS to be small to ever get big

v19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

He replied, "Because you have so little faith.

I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move.

For nothing will be impossible for you."

We know the mountain was real – because they have just climbed it.

We know that it was daunting and seemingly impossible to face because it is described as being HIGH.

We know the mountain is PHYSICAL – *because it's that dirty great thing behind them!*

But it is also symbolic of something deeper.

For them, for the disciples, the mountain was the devastating news of Jesus' proposed death, his suffering, his cross /

their own cross, their own persecution, their own loss

This was an emotional mountain!

For us

Ill health is a mountain.

Relationship troubles are mountains.

Family crises are mountains.

Unpaid bills are mountains.

Difficult children are mountains.

Unfaithful husbands and wives are mountains.

Untrustworthy friends are mountains.

We all have mountains – and they are high and seemingly impossible to get over!

Life is filled with mountains,

Everyone one of us has mountains in our life,

me, you, the person sitting next to you

but Jesus says

"I tell you the truth

if you have faith the size of a mustard seed,

you can say to your mountain",

(which seems impossible to you to ever get over)

"Move from here to there," and it will obey you.

How does that work?

Well why did the Jesus and the disciples climb that mountain?

Why do people ever climb mountains? – to conquer them!

What is Jesus saying here?

He says climb your mountain with me and

you will see further - yes

you will not live in its shadow - yes

but more than that - you will conquer it.

How?

By believing/trusting/investing IN a relationship with Jesus FOR a relationship with Jesus.

Not by believing/trusting/investing IN

our own ability to cope, to tough it out, to be strong –

because that won't work.

Not by

believing/trusting/investing IN your Relationship with Jesus FOR him to get you out of it

FOR him to solve all your problems

FOR him to spare you the tears

because that's not realistic.

But rather, by

believing/trusting/investing

IN a relationship with Jesus / FOR a relationship with Jesus that will get you up that mountain.

How do we do that?

Well, one, small, mustard seed sized step, at a time.

It takes time, it takes small steps of faith, it doesn't happen in one big leap.

Every day we have to take real steps, practical steps
of putting our Faith IN Jesus FOR Jesus.

Look if I said to you – after last weeks sermon –

I've seen the light, I've had a Damascus Road conversion.

I can now see the delight of walking

I now just love the experience of the wind in my hair

the pollen up my nostrils and

the rain on my bald head,

I can see now why you do it

I've been once around The Grange once and I get it

TOMORROW I shall conquer Everest!

You'd say "woah there soldier", "one step at a time",

*lets try a three stage assault on the Kingston Ridge before we tackle anything as daunting as **that** high Mountain"*

And you'd be right.

Fitness builds slowly.

Our relationship with Jesus is not deep instantly

it develops one step at a time.

No matter how sincere we are,

No matter how enthusiastic we are

no matter how determined we are

it takes time

Do you think the disciples who prayed for that girl weren't sincere and determined and enthusiastic in their prayers for her healing?

Of course they were!

But they hadn't been walking with Jesus up the mountain

Their faith was still resolving, it was still forming, they were still unsure about their motives...

My daughter plays the violin

She practices every day

slowly over the last 8 years she's got better.

If I said to you (I who doesn't have a musical note in my body)

If I said to you

I am going to learn to play the violin brilliantly tomorrow

Would it matter how sincere or devoted or enthusiastic I was?

If I put in an hour of solid determined, hard, practice –

Should I be disappointed then that I can't play Handel's Violin Sonata without everybody including the dog wanting to kill themselves"?

You'd say "that's not surprising Steve, it takes time".

Well, relationships are like that (relationships take time),

trust is like that (trust takes time),

Faith is like that, faith takes time,

it starts small, as small as a mustard seed.... but it grows!

Conquering our mountains is done step by step with Jesus.

There are no short-cuts

But if every hard, steep, tough, step is taken with Jesus TO know him more,

Then “nothing will be impossible for you”

You will be (as Paul testified) be “more than a conqueror of your mountain”

you will make it to the top,

the Holy Spirit will shine out of you

you will know God’s purpose

and you will have the immense ability to go minister to others facing similar climbs **in real power.**

Faith is “believing IN Jesus FOR a relationship with Jesus”

it starts small but grows big, and nothing is impossible...

and finally

3. Living Faith in him is found, when we recognise his Faith in us.

v22 When they came together in Galilee, he said to them,

The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.

They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.

And the disciples were filled with grief.

In fact Mark tells us that: they still didn’t understand about his death and they certainly hadn’t taken on board the fact that he was going to conquer it!

And what this passage shows us is the amazing patience and faith that Jesus places in human beings, in his disciples, in us.

They have so little faith in him at this point.

Their faith is so deficient, *even smaller* than a mustard seed at this point

They have such little understanding of his mission at this point

BUT Jesus carries on with them.

Even though they don’t yet see the extent to which

the Son of God is going to invest his life, his trust, his love, his faith in them.

He does it anyway.

Jesus puts HIS faith IN them, because one day they WILL understand – and the penny will drop.

That day, is the day they see him die for them; and

rise for them – personally and individually.

It is the day through faith they see it for themselves.

You know,

Jesus places his faith in you and me, just as he did them

He exercises immense patient and trust in us, just as he did them.

even though we continually miss the point,

even though we are so often motivated to follow “for what we can get out of it”

even though we continually place our faith in our own ability to see blessing.

even though we decline the opportunity to climb the mountain with Jesus –

because praying is too hard

finding space is too inconvenient

seeking Jesus, when we could be doing things instead, seems to make so little sense

Nevertheless, he puts HIS faith IN us, because one day we WILL understand – and the penny will drop.

That day, happens when we see him die for us; and rise for us – personally and individually.

That day happens when we recognise that he has taken step after painful step to carry a cross up the mountain of Calvary to call us to place all our Faith IN Him FOR a Relationship with him.

To invest, to trust, to give what little we have to know the abundance of who he is.

*I came across this story
about a letter found in a tin-can
wired to the handle of an old water pump
on the edge of the Nevada Desert.*

*It said this
This pump is all right as of June 1932.
I put a new washer in it but the washer dries out and needs to be primed for the pump to work.
Under the white rock I have buried a bottle of water.
There's enough water in it to prime the pump,
but not if you drink some first.*

*Pour about a quarter of the bottle over the leather washer and let it soak.
Then pour in the rest, medium fast, and pump like crazy.
You'll get water.
This well has never run dry.
Have faith.*

When you get your water fill-up the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller.

P.S. Don't go drinking the water first. Prime the pump with it and you'll get all you the water you need.

Do you see?
Jesus promises us life and life in abundance
Not an easy life in this broken world – but a life walked with God alongside
A life that will see for eternity and
know the presence of God and
have his power for ministry.

He has already poured out his life for you
His love is as vast as the ocean,
buried beneath the rock of Christ.

To get it: you must stop looking for the benefits of Christ (blessing and peace and happiness) and start looking for Christ

To get it, *you must do what seems utter madness,*
you must pour your life your faith IN him FOR him and then
you'll discover his eternal life in you and pouring out for you.

Do you remember the TV show "Roots"?
I had only just become a Christian, but there was a scene in it that I will always remember because I repeated it with each of my children.

*Kunte Kinta, is an old African slave, working in the plantations in America
He never submitted himself to his slavery..... he never accepted it.*

*When his daughter is born, she is born into slavery.
But he swears that she would know her true heritage
and though a slave in this world, she would never BE a slave.*

*So, he takes her, walks past the slave auction block,
past the slave pens and
climbs a hill.*

*There he lifts his baby girl to the midnight sky
and with nothing but twinkling stars above he
whispers in her ear,
"Behold, the only thing greater than you."*

*And as that girl grew up, and as the story was told,
she knew that there is
a God greater than the auction block,
a God greater than the slave pen,
a God greater than any problem, any difficulty, any hardship,*

*As long as she walked with Jesus,
she knew she could make it,
and though a slave - she was always free.*

YES, you can conquer your mountains.
Mountains of Doubt.....
Mountains of Sickness
Mountains of Loneliness.....
Mountains of Shame.
Yes, with Jesus, there is nothing impossible for you

My friends,
faith can move mountains
you need not live in its shadow
but seek the one who sought you
Place your faith in him and not in what you can get out of him

Pour your life into knowing him and
his love for you will spring up like living water
to be a blessing for you and
for others born into this broken world who do not know their heritage is eternal.