

From Fear to Faith Matthew 9:27-34, Mark 6:1-6, Matthew 9:35-10:5

We ended last week in Mark 5, finishing up a series of passages that addressed the issue of fear in our lives. Through these passages, it appears that Jesus wants us to transform our fear into faith in Him. Faith that His authority and power is supreme over anything in this world- after all He has the power to command the forces of nature and the forces of the spiritual world. Jesus desires for us to have faith that He cares for us, faith that He doesn't want to shame us, faith that He is bringing about healing and restoration, faith that the life He will raise us up into is going to be so much greater than anything we experience here on earth. And in the next couple of encounters, Jesus shows us a little more about faith and belief, and even the lack of faith and belief. And I believe that the ramifications are huge for us concerning how we personally and corporately as a body of believers, apply the truth contained in God's word to us this morning.

Like I mentioned, we ended last week in Mark 5 and before we read what happened in Mark 6, there's a passage in Matthew that we need to look at, that details for us a few more events that happened before the events recorded in Mark 6. We're going to do a little bouncing back and forth between Matthew and Mark in order to put together all the chronological pieces, pieces that will help us in understanding a profound truth in this beautiful story narrative of the bible.

We'll begin in Matthew 9, verse 27. If you take a quick glance of the verses before 27, you'll see Matthew's record of the events we looked at in Mark 5 last week, so what we're reading follows directly after Jesus healed the bleeding woman, and raised back to life the daughter of Jairus. Ok, so let's read verse 27, and we'll stop at verse 34. **Matthew 9:27-34**

Here we have two more healings Jesus performed after healing the woman and the young girl. Two blind men, and a demon-possessed man that was unable to talk because of the demonic presence in his life. It seems the Pharisees couldn't come up with an issue to accuse Jesus of concerning His healing of the blind men, but in spiritually freeing the demon possessed man, at that the Pharisees scoffed in unbelief, and attempted to cast doubt into the minds of people. This wasn't a new attack, they had used this argument before against Jesus and He had very sternly defended Himself against such a dirty accusation. At this point in Jesus's ministry, all could plainly see that Jesus was indeed *NOT* influenced by the ruler of demons. After Jesus had already rebuked this line of thought once, and after seeing or hearing about Jesus calming the storm, casting out the legion of demons, healing the bleeding woman, raising the girl back to life- hopefully the people at this point disregarded the Pharisee's comment as being completely ignorant and hateful.

What I'd like for us to focus on is Jesus's interaction with the 2 blind men. Jesus was probably returning back to Peter's house, and the 2 blind men were following Him. Verse 27 says they cried out to Him *"Have mercy on us, Son of David!"* By calling Jesus "Son of David", they were recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. The prophets Amos (**Amos 9:11**), Isaiah (**Isaiah 9:7, 11:1**), Samuel (**2 Samuel 7:12-13**), and Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 23:5**) all foretold of the coming Messianic King being in the family lineage of David. So as many were asking "Who is this man?", including Jesus's own disciples, (**Mark 4:41**) it appears that these 2 blind men believed in Jesus for who He said He was. I think it's worth noting that since they were blind, they couldn't see the miracles Jesus was performing. They had to rely solely on what they heard- Jesus's words and the testimony of others. "Seeing is believing" didn't work for them. But they had heard- and in their minds they were able to put together the pieces in order to realize that they were calling out to not just a miracle worker, but rather they were calling out to the promised eternal King.

Note Jesus's words to them in **verse 28**: "Do you *believe* that I am able to do *this*?" Able to do what exactly? The "this" is referring back to the men's request in **verse 27**: "Have mercy on us", so

Jesus was asking them if they believed that He was able to “have mercy” on them. And maybe saying “have mercy” was a kind way of asking for Him to heal their eyesight, but perhaps they weren’t crying out just for mercy to grant them the ability to see. Perhaps in their realization of Jesus as the Messiah, they recognized in their own lives the need for the Messiah Savior’s mercy. Mercy as in not punishing them eternally for the wrong things committed in their lives- mercy as in forgiving them and allowing them entrance into His Kingdom. And maybe mercy too, in the form of being able to see face to face on earth, this Messiah King who grants mercy, in whom they had placed their belief and hope.

Jesus of course had the capacity to grant any and every form of mercy towards them that they were thinking of in that particular moment. The key verse that I want to draw your attention to is **verse 29**. In response to saying they believed Jesus was able to have mercy on them, Jesus responded “*It shall be done to you according to your faith.*” How interesting for Him to have said that. When He calmed the storm, there wasn’t any faith present. **(Mark 4:40b)** Everyone was scared for their lives- Jesus even commented on the lack of faith- but He wielded His power despite the disciples fearing the storm and fearing that Jesus did not care that they were perishing. **(Mark 4:38)** Then as we looked at the passage where Jesus encountered the legion of demons, it appeared that the man had to have had some role to play in allowing Jesus’s power to cast away the demons. Jesus said “Come out”, and yet there was a delay before the demons were cast out. It seemed as if there was a battle raging in the man’s mind, and perhaps he had to engage in that battle in order for the power of Jesus to deliver Him fully. **(Mark 5:7-13)** Then as Jesus was on the way to heal the daughter of Jairus, a woman touched the edge of His cloak and was healed on her own initiative, and Jesus turned to her and said “*Your faith has made you well*”. **(Mark 5:34)** Three stories in a row, each with powerful results, yet different equations. The storm was Jesus’s desire + no faith, the legion controlling the man was Jesus’s desire + an assumed bit of faith from the man, the bleeding woman was her desire and faith + Jesus’s desire to answer her faith, and now in addressing the 2 blind men, it’s almost as if Jesus wrote them a blank check and said, “whatever capacity you have for faith in me, whether it be great or small, according to that faith I’ll do it.”

It’s an interesting progression. We see Jesus calming the storm on His own with absent faith- if it were up to the disciple’s faith alone, the boat may have capsized and they all drowned. And through the events that followed it seems that in each instance, Jesus was placing more responsibility on the faith of the individuals He encountered, building right up to the point where He says “*according to YOUR faith it’ll be done.*” And in the next chronological event that we have recorded, we’re going to see this principle of “according to your faith it’ll be done” play out in a completely different manner. So let’s keep the story moving as we turn over to Mark 6 to see what happened next chronologically. **Mark 6:1-6a**

So as Jesus arrived in His home town of Nazareth, the news of His miracles was being spread to the people there, but the reaction to him was that they took offense. They doubted and had no faith in Him as God’s Messiah. They *thought* they knew Him- they saw Him grow up, they knew His family- He was just a poor carpenter after all. He wasn’t deserving of such attention, He wasn’t worthy of having such wisdom, why should such miracles happen through Him? And according to their faith, it was done. Verse 5 says that there were only a few sick people that were healed- only a few that had faith in Him as God’s Messiah.

Nazareth would have been the perfect place for Jesus to prove His authority as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. If Jesus’s miracles were primarily designed to help unbelievers believe, then one of the best places for Jesus to have performed miracles would have been a place like Nazareth!

Jesus's miracles did serve to prove the truth of what He taught- He performed many miracles to announce the reality of the Kingdom existence- but there was a progression of Him moving the work and responsibility from Himself, onto His followers. He had proven Himself faithful, now His true followers were to be proven by their faith. But here in the town where He had grown up, instead of faith and belief, Jesus instead encountered lack of faith and unbelief. Perhaps those in Nazareth believed that He had truly performed miracles, and that He did truly speak wisely- but they did not believe *in* Him as The Messiah, The Answer, The Promised King. And as a result, His power was severely limited.

I can't help but wonder if today Jesus's power is limited in a similar way. But perhaps instead of believing in His powerful works and rejecting Him as Messiah, perhaps often we as His church believe in Him as the Messiah, yet reject the idea of His powerful works here in this life. As in we trust Him to save us when we die, but our trust in Him bears no relevance for our lives in the here and now. Or perhaps there are some that see Him as "a" Messiah, and not "the" Messiah. Do we sometimes see Him as just one more concept to add in to our array of other things that consume our attention? Or maybe sometimes we have the tainted belief that Jesus did and does powerful works, but for whatever reason we believe that He doesn't want to work powerfully in our own life. Be careful about what you believe and where you place your faith. Jesus said "It will be done according to your faith" and the blind men were shown great mercy according to their faith, and yet Nazareth saw very little according to their little faith.

Faith is not name it and claim it, Jesus doesn't say "It will be done according to your faith" to give permission for us to dream up anything we can imagine and have enough faith that it will come true. No, faith is believing, trusting, and knowing God's truth presented through scripture. It's believing that the Creator God has sent Himself to us through Jesus, who has all power over every fearful force that exists. It's trusting that through Him we have complete forgiveness and that we are eternally secure in Him. Faith is believing and trusting in the fact that He cares for us, and that He doesn't want to shame us. It's knowing that His plan is to bring about redemption and healing to His followers. And faith is properly expressed through allowing Him to do that redeeming healing work on *His* timetable, according to *His* plans and *His* glory.

Do we as a church family believe these things? Do we believe them with more than a head belief, as in, do we believe in such a way that our belief and faith effects our every action? Do we believe that God sees us where we are, that He desires for us know Him more and to make Him known, that He wants to use us in powerful kingdom work? Are there some of us that don't believe, whose faith in Jesus's power and Messiahship is lacking? For those whose faith is lacking, might I suggest that you are perhaps limiting Jesus in His power among this group of people? It's a scary thought to think that one's unbelief can negatively affect Jesus's power demonstrated in the life of someone else who is full of belief. Will you believe with me that the gospel is as powerful as the bible says? Will you believe with me that living for the Kingdom is worth more than living for this temporary world? Will you believe with me that if we seek first His Kingdom and righteousness, all else will be given to us?

After His rejection in Nazareth, the end of **verse 6** tells us that Jesus went around to the surrounding villages to teach. And in **verse 7** it says Jesus sent out the 12 apostles two by two. But this is where I want us to flip back over to Matthew chapter 9, so that we can see what led up to Jesus sending out the 12 apostles. **Matthew 9:35-38**

So Jesus saw a need amongst the people, He had compassion on them, and asked His disciples to pray that God would send out workers. Now at this point, hopefully the disciple's faith has been

built up to the point where as soon as Jesus says to do something, they do it. They have seen proof, they've seen His authority and power, they are growing in their understanding of their role in Jesus's kingdom work. I imagine, when Jesus told them to beg the Lord to send out workers, I have a feeling they did it. Maybe even right then and there- they bowed their heads, closed their eyes, and prayed for just that. And then look at this, the very next thing that happened is this: **Matthew 10:1-5a**

Jesus asked them to pray for workers, and did extra workers then show up, adding to their numbers? I'm sure that's what they were imagining. The disciples had just recently witnessed the awesome displays of power over the storm, over demon possessed men, over disease, death, blindness. They had witnessed this shift of responsibility moving from solely Jesus, to him sharing the responsibility with others, and now to the extreme of Him saying "according to your faith it will be done." I imagine as they prayed for workers, in their minds perhaps they were thinking of more superhero guys like Jesus or angelic beings showing up that would do miracles and powerful works like Jesus. And I can't help but see a little bit of humor in Jesus asking them to pray for workers- and they immediately did what Jesus said to do- and then perhaps as soon as they said "amen", the disciples looked around for the superhero workers to arrive, and Jesus says "Thank you God, that was fast, these guys will be great!"

Sometimes God's powerful works are accomplished *without* any influence from our faith. Other times His powerful works are accomplished, or hindered, *with* influence from our faith. And then sometimes His powerful works are accomplished with influence from our faith, but God allows we ourselves to be the means through which He accomplishes His powerful works. The progression of responsibility has now been moved even further. We have: Jesus doing the work, moving to: Jesus allowing man a small part in the work, which moved to: according to one's faith Jesus does the work, to now: according to your faith Jesus will do the work, but through you, using you to do it! The responsibility pendulum has swung from Jesus alone, all the way over to ourselves- yet still through the power of Jesus.

What is the work that God wants to do in your life? What is the work that He wants to do in the lives of your family and friends? What is the work that He wants to do in this church and community? The first step is to believe and have faith that He is willing and able to accomplish that work. The second step is to look at yourself and consider what is your role in seeing God's work accomplished? He wants to use you! He wants to equip and grow each of us, even if it means taking us a little out of our comfort zone. Think about what you are praying for, and consider that God might want to use *YOU* in answering those prayers. Let's do that now- let's spend the next few moments prayerfully considering the work that God wants to do and our possible role in that work. Let's bow our heads...