

“HAVE FAITH IN GOD”

Mark 11:20-25

Key Verse: 11:22

“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.

In today’s passage Jesus says to us to have faith in God. We all want to be men or women of faith. After all, we are saved by faith. We are healed by faith. Jesus said to the blind Bartimaeus, “Your faith has healed you” (10:52). We are also blessed by faith, as Abraham was. But what does it mean to have faith in God? What kind of faith does Jesus want us to have? Let us open our hearts and hear what the Lord says on these important questions!

I. FAITH THAT MOVES MOUNTAINS (20-23)

Look at verse 20. *In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.* It was the second day of the Passion Week. Many events had taken place during the previous two days. Jesus told two of his disciples to bring someone else’s baby donkey so that he could make his entry into Jerusalem. As they untied the donkey, the owners asked them, “What are you doing untying the colt?” The disciples said, “The Lord needs it.” Amazingly, the owners said, “Okay, take it.” When Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on the colt, many people shouted, “Hosanna in the highest!” The sound of shouting was still ringing in the disciples’ ears. When Jesus cursed an innocent fig tree, they were puzzled, not realizing it was an expression of his broken heart toward the spiritual condition of his people. When Jesus cleansed the temple before the very eyes of the religious leaders, they were amazed and frightened. The excitement and amazement of the day lingered in their minds through the night.

A new morning came. They were traveling along the road back to Jerusalem. On the way they noticed something amazing. The fig tree Jesus had cursed withered from the roots. *Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”* (21) Peter couldn’t believe his eyes. The fig tree had looked beautiful and healthy only a few hours earlier. How could it be that over night the flourishing tree had dried up from the roots! Perhaps Peter might have felt that it was unnecessary for Jesus to curse the innocent fig tree. He might have felt the same about the cleansing of the temple. Jesus had offended the religious leaders. Why did he have to make enemies with the important people in Jerusalem? In his amazement or perhaps frustration, Peter exclaimed, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”

Jesus knew the real reason why Peter was so amazed. He was amazed at the authority of Jesus’ word. At a few words of Jesus, a healthy fig tree had dried up from the roots over night. This power and authority was what Peter and the other disciples wanted to have, so that they might do something great. But they were always powerless to do anything. How did Jesus help them?

Look at verse 22. *“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.* Jesus told them that they had no power because they had no faith in God. They were like power tools that are unplugged from electrical outlet. They were powerless because they were not connected to the source of power. So Jesus told them, *“Have faith in God.”* What does it mean to have faith in God? Jesus says to us to have faith *in God*. It means to put our trust in God, not in ourselves, our abilities, or something or someone other than God. This seems so obvious. The problem is that many people put their trust in something or someone other than God. Some people put their trust in money. All their problems would go away and they would be happy only if they became a millionaire. How many people do you know who think like this? A man named Zacchaeus had faith in the mighty dollar (actually the Roman denarius). He sold his conscience and became a chief tax collector for the enemy government. He became very wealthy. But he wasn't happy. When he met the Savior Jesus, he exclaimed, *“Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount”* (Lk 19:8). Zacchaeus found out that money was not worthy to put his trust in.

Some people put their faith in human love. A Samaritan woman put her trust in a man whom she thought her prince charming. She married him. But she found out it wasn't him. They were divorced. So she found another man. She put her faith in the man. But she was disappointed again. She met yet another man with the same result. This was repeated five times. Finally, she was living with a man without marrying to him. Yet, she was still thirsty. She was lonely. She found out that men were not worthy to put her trust in.

That is why Jesus says, *“Have faith in God.”* Money cannot be the true object of our faith. Men are not worthy to put our trust in. Only God is worthy of our faith and trust. Numbers 19:23 says, *“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”* Only God is trustworthy. He never reneged on his promises. That's why Jesus says to us to have faith in God. It means to believe in God's word of promise and make decisions based on his word. Hebrews 11:1 says: *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”* This means that faith is not an abstract or vague idea.



When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they faced many problems. As they traveled toward the promised land, they arrived at the Red Sea. The sea was in front of them and the Egyptian army was closing on them from behind. The Israelites were terrified. What could they do? Moses told them, *“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today”* (Ex 13:13). So what happened? Hebrews 11:29 records: *“By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.”*

So to have faith in God is important. What kind of faith does Jesus want us to have? 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 wants us to have faith that moves mountains. Mountains like Mt. Everest or Mt. St. Helens, is lofty and solemn, and awe-inspiring. The main characteristic of a mountain is its stability. A mountain is too big to move. But Jesus wants his disciples to have faith that moves mountains. Verse 23 is an awesome statement. How can we tell a mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea”? But this verse teaches us the power of faith. When we say, “I believe in God,” it must mean, “I believe in the power of Almighty God.” When Jesus said, “Have faith in God,” he meant, “Have faith in God who is almighty.”

The apostle Paul had to confront many problems as he traveled through Asia Minor and Europe to preach the gospel. Once he was in a helpless situation locked up in a Jerusalem jail for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. But he had faith that he could obey the world mission command of Jesus. At that time, Paul was old and tired, and he was a prisoner. He had no one to depend on. But he depended on God Almighty. He believed that he could go to Rome and start a ministry there so that through Rome the gospel of Jesus might reach all nations. Finally, Paul went to Rome in chains. Later he testified, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Php 4:13).

We have many problems in life. Some of us have job problems and financial problems. Some of us have problems at work. Some of us have family problems. But there is nothing that we cannot overcome if we have faith in God. Faith overcomes the world. This is what Jesus often told his disciples. When they were stranded in the middle of a stormy sea, they felt helpless. They were scared, thinking that they were going to drown, even though Jesus was in the same boat sleeping. Jesus got up and rebuked the wind, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the sea was completely calm. Jesus turned to his disciples and said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mk 4:40) The wind was not the problem. The problem was that they did not have faith in God.

Jesus promises that we can move mountains if we have faith in God. It means we can overcome any challenges in life if we trust in God wholeheartedly. Sometimes our problem looks like a big mountain that seems impossible to move. For many years, the visa problem for Msn. Caleb and Pauline had remained as a small mountain to move. But when they trusted in God by faith, they indeed moved the mountain. Likewise, we have examples of moving mountains by faith such as Dr. Mary Yoo getting married and finishing her Ph.D while giving birth to and raising Little Isaac. What is your current mountain to move by faith in God? Chris and I agreed that our mountain is actually ourselves—our pride, our sinful nature, our shallowness, ... It is frustrating to think about how difficult it is to overcome these challenges. But it is not impossible in Jesus. We can move our mountains by faith in God. Let us read verse 23 together. *“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.”*

II. FAITH THAT OVERCOMES DOUBT (23)

Look at verse 23 again. In order to have faith that moves mountains, we must overcome doubts in our hearts. When we try to live by faith, all kinds of doubts arise in our hearts. It is not God who gives us doubt. It is Satan that plants doubts in us—the same Satan who tempted Adam and Eve to trust in his half-lies rather than the word of God. Our trouble begins when we begin to listen to Satan’s lies rather than the word of God. Because of doubts arising in their hearts, many young people give up their dreams even before they really get started. Some young people want to live a holy life, but they become shaky when Satan whispers to them, “You have to follow the trend of this world to fit in.”

Let’s look at verse 23b again. It says, “... *and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.*” We must believe in the promise of God. For example, many people are anxious about their future financial security. But God gave us this promise in Matthew 6:33: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” We must believe in this promise and solve our future security problem. Abraham is a good example of this. God gave him a promise, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” Abraham was an old man, but he believed in God’s promise. Many people probably advised him against leaving his comfortable home and starting a new life in his old age. He must have had a voice of doubt inside him as well. But by faith he made a decision to obey God’s word based on his promise. He became a father of faith.

III. FAITH THAT PRAYS (24)

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.*” Faith and prayer go hand in hand. If we truly believe in God and his power, we will pray to him asking for his help. Prayer is an expression of our faith in God. Prayer is our confession of faith that we can do nothing but that God can do everything. We can ask God for anything in prayer. We must believe that God hears and answers our prayers. Once, General Patton asked his chaplain to write a prayer for him so that God might grant them good weather for a surprise attack on the Hitler’s army. The chaplain got mad because he did not believe that God would answer such a prayer.

Satan often plants doubt in our hearts when we try to pray to God. In this busy world, prayer seems a waste of time. We are tempted to move our hands and feet than to sit down and pray. But the busier we get, the more we must pray to God asking for his help. Prayer is not a waste of time. It is a time of intimate relationship with our Lord. It is a time to listen to him. And this is his promise: “whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

What should we ask for in prayer? The Lord’s Prayer is our model. Jesus says in Matthew 6:9-13: *This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give*

us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

IV. FAITH THAT FORGIVES (25)

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."* It is hard to forgive others, perhaps as hard as moving a mountain. Once Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." (Mt 18:21-22) Wow! Peter thought he could forgive James and John up to seven times, if he tried very hard. But Jesus told him to forgive his brother seventy-seven times. It was hard for Simon the Zealot to forgive the Roman oppressors who had invaded his country and ruled his people mercilessly and exploited their homeland. He probably wanted to kill all the Romans. But Jesus told him to forgive.

Forgiving others is indeed difficult. Sinful people hold grudges in their hearts against the people who hurt them with real or imagined wrongs. This is a problem in work places and in families. Many marriages are broken up because husbands and wives cannot forgive each other. But we Christians must be different. As forgiven sinners, we must learn to forgive others.

Let's read 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."* It is easier for us to follow the law of Moses, "A tooth for a tooth," than to forgive others. How can we forgive others? We must remember Jesus on the cross. The Roman soldiers crucified Jesus in the place called Skull. They mocked him, flogged him, and spit on him. They drove the giant nails through his hands and feet. But what did Jesus say on the cross? He prayed, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Lk 24:34). We were the objects of God's wrath and anger, because we lived by our sinful nature. But God nailed his one and only Son to the cross in order to forgive our sins. Through his Son's blood shed on the cross God has granted us the grace of forgiveness. All our sins are forgiven, and we have become the children of God. Again how can we forgive others? We can forgive others as much as we remember God's grace of forgiveness through Jesus' blood. When we accept Jesus' grace forgiveness of our sins, God pours his love and grace into our hearts. We no longer hold grudges against others because we see others with the grace of Jesus.

As Leonardo da Vinci began to paint the masterpiece, "the Last Supper," he had a violent quarrel with a fellow painter. He was so angry with the man that he decided to paint the artist's face as that of Judas the betrayer. He wanted to immortalize the face of his adversary, and he had no problem in painting the face. Everyone recognized him immediately. However, when he came to paint the face of Christ, he could not make progress. Something seemed to be holding him back, frustrating him. Finally, he realized that he couldn't paint the face of Christ while holding his grudge against his friend. He painted out the face of Judas and began anew. And we know the result.

The most compelling reason why we should forgive others was given by our Lord in Matthew 18:23-35. In this parable, a king wanted to settle accounts with his servants. There was a servant who owed the king several million dollars. The man could not pay and begged for mercy. The king took pity on him and canceled the debt. When that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him to be patient with him, but he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the master found this out, he told the unforgiving servant, "You wicked servant! I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured. Then Jesus said, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

In this passage, we learn that we must have faith in God so that we can live a victorious life and carry out our mission. Let's read the key verse (22) again. *"Have faith in God," Jesus answered.*