



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 17:14-21

KEY POINT: True disciples walk by faith, trusting God to give them what they need for their mission.

FOR LEADERS

- **Weekly Resources:** As a reminder, the weekly resources (discussion guides, group videos, podcasts, etc.) are posted for you each week both on the Realm Leader’s Group, as well as on our website at emergencenj.org/weeklyresources.
- **Book by Book:** Chapter 4 of our Equipped Study Guide covers both stories at the end of Matthew 17—the healing of the boy with a demon and the temple tax. This week we are only studying the first of these. Ryan will preach on the second one (the temple tax) next week as we explore what it means to have faith like a child.

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video:** Watch this week’s community extras video.
- [2] Icebreaker:** What’s your favorite season of the year? Are you mourning the Summer, enjoying Fall, looking forward to Winter?
- [3] Opener:** How did your own personal study go in the workbook this week? Was there anything that you found particularly eye opening?

JUST HAVE “FAITH”

So far in our study of Matthew’s Gospel, we have seen the *who, what, when, where* and *why* of ministry, and this week Jesus homes in on the first of seven characteristics of a disciple – **faith**.

- [1]** In your experience, do you find that is usually acceptable or unacceptable to “*have faith*”? What do you think people usually mean by this when they say they “have faith” or say, “just have faith”?
- [2]** Another commonly used turn of phrase is for people to say something along the lines of, “*I’m not religious, I’m spiritual.*” What do you think people mean by this, and is it similar to “having faith”?

In the sermon this week, Ryan said, “*faith for faith’s sake is pointless,*” and explained how simply “having faith” is not enough. Rather, our faith must have an object, or something which we have faith *in*.

- [3]** If simply “having faith” is not enough, then what should a Christian’s faith really look like? What does it mean to be faithful, and how is that different from simply “having faith”?
- [4]** How has your own understanding of faith changed over time?

Leaders: Culturally, “*having faith*” and being “*spiritual*” are not necessarily the same thing, but both are regarded as more favorable than *having faith in Jesus and being led by his Holy Spirit*. As Ryan explained, simply “*having faith*” doesn’t actually mean anything; what is it that we have faith *IN*? Jesus? God? Ourselves? The Government? Satan? Most often, this sentiment of *having faith* is used as a pithy saying to subtly express the notion of “*Well, everything will work out alright in the end.*” This idea is a universal platitude, not a true statement of faith. To truly have faith in Jesus means trusting in Jesus. It means trusting that Jesus is who he says he is, and to walk accordingly to the mission he calls us to.

MUSTARD SEEDS AND MOUNTAINS

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 17:14-21.



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Our passage this week offers us a unique view into the heart of Jesus when he shows his frustration at the apparent lack of faith of his disciples. He goes on to explain that faith, even the size of a mustard seed, can move mountains.

- [5]** Why would it have been reasonable for this man (or anyone) to expect the disciples to perform miracles like removing the demon from this child? (Use Matt. 10: 5-15 and chapter 4 from your workbook to help you answer this question).
- [6]** What do you think that Jesus means with his statement in verse 20 about faith “like a mustard seed?”
- [7]** When Jesus sees his disciples’ unwillingness to cast out the demon, he criticizes them for being “faithless and twisted”. What do you think Jesus means by this, and what should we make of it?
- [8]** Consider again what Jesus asks his disciples to do in Matt. 10:8. Why do you think he wants his disciples to do these things, when he is more than capable himself?
- [9]** How does the disciples call to mission in Matthew 10 compare to what disciples today are called to in Matthew 28? In what way(s) are they alike, and in what way(s) are they different?

Leaders: *There is a lot to digest in this passage, and to understand it more fully, we would STRONGLY suggest revisiting chapter 4 in your workbook and reading this passage in tandem with Matthew 10. The disciples in Jesus’ time were called to something specific – to perform “signs” (or miracles) to show that the “Kingdom of God is at hand.” Jesus sent them out to do this very thing. When he arrives on scene, however, he discovers (yet again) that they have failed in their endeavors for primarily two reasons: 1.) They lack the trust that is required to do what God asks of them and 2.) They are more concerned with their immediate and temporal needs than they are about what’s eternal. Jesus expresses this by declaring them twisted (concerned about the wrong things) and faithless (not trusting in God). Ironically, the faithfulness of the man asking Jesus for help exceeds that of the disciples!*

Today, Jesus’ disciples are also sent out on a mission, the “Great Commission”, which is detailed in Matthew 28. Now that Jesus has been resurrected, there really are no more “signs” that need to be made. Jesus is our sign. God has raised him from the dead, and our sin has been paid! There is no greater “sign” than this, and now we walk as his people declaring this truth to the world. While we certainly do not deny that God uses Christians to do extraordinary things like healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers and casting out demons (Matt 10:6-8) today, this is no longer the commission of the Church. Rather, we understand our commission in light of Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

WALKING BY FAITH

At the end of the sermon, Ryan offered us three truths for us to reflect upon about God regarding our mission as the Church: 1.) God is able 2.) God is willing 3.) God is working.

- [10]** How do these truths inform you, personally, in your own walk of faith?
- [11]** Where have you been challenged in the past to trust God and walk by faith? What was the outcome?
- [12]** Where are you, right now, walking by faith in an area of your life, and how can we join you in prayer?

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that the Lord would give you a true understanding of what it means to be faithful, and then the faith to actually do what God is calling you to.
- [2]** Pray for anyone who may have shared a step of faith for themselves.