

Day Thirty-Three

Jesus: Real, Relevant, Raw and Radical!

Faith in Unlikely Places

Matthew 28:8-10(NLT) *The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. 9 And as they went, **Jesus met them and greeted them.** And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "**Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.**"*

Mark 16:8(NLT) *The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened. 9 After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. 11 **But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, they didn't believe her.***

Luke 24:10(NLT) *It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened. 11 **But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn't believe it.** 12 However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened.*

We have become more and more cynical. People trust little, doubt much, and brag about their skepticism. The mantra is, "Prove it to me, show me, give me evidence, and then I will believe." If you think that this only applies to the world, you are wrong. The church is filled with skepticism, cynicism and downright rebellion. What drives this? I think deep within us lingers a fear of looking foolish. We don't want to be labeled as people who deny the facts; people who are not in touch with reality. So, we elevate intellect above all. We brag about how smart we are, and relish our intellectually superior skepticism. We are smart enough not to let anyone pull the wool over our proverbial cerebral eyes. We are smart, and we know it! How, then, can we thrive as people of faith? How can we live a vibrant spiritual faith life when doubt is nipping at our heels? If the just live by faith, then faith is not an option, but a necessity. We need faith to live, and we live by faith. So, we have to ask, "Who is our faith rooted in?"

Throughout the accounts of Jesus' life, we see two things that Jesus marveled about. Great faith and persistent doubt. What is interesting about both of these concepts is where Jesus found them. When the Centurion's servant is sick, he asks Jesus to come and heal him. Jesus agrees, and while He is on His way to the Centurion's house, the Centurion sends word to Jesus to simply speak the word. He explains that he understands authority, and recognizes Jesus' authority. **Matthew 8:10(NLT)** *"When*

Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, ‘I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel! 11 And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven.’”

Jesus is amazed by a Roman Centurion’s faith. We know the story of the Syrophenician woman in her persistence for Jesus to heal her daughter. *“That’s true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their master’s table.”* **28 ‘Dear woman,’ Jesus said to her, ‘your faith is great. Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was instantly healed.”** Some sinners don’t just attempt to believe, they demonstrate great faith in Jesus. If sinners can have this kind of faith, should we the saints not be brimming with faith? Surely, we will see the disciples overflow with faith in Jesus.

The disciples are in a storm with Jesus. **Matthew 8:25-26(NLT)** *“The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, ‘Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!’ 26 Jesus responded, ‘Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!’ Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm.”* Unlike the sinners, the disciples demonstrate fear not faith. **Jesus is on the boat, and the disciples could not even trust His Person, when the Centurion only needed His word.** I am sure they learned the lesson.

Bring on the next storm. **Matthew 14:30-31(NLT)** *“But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. ‘Save me, Lord!’ he shouted. 31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. ‘You have so little faith,’ Jesus said. ‘Why did you doubt me?’”*

Obviously, they are not learning the lessons from the storms. Let’s try something else. How about a simple thing like bread? Storms are a little bit tough. I mean, it is a life and death thing. So, let’s go to something basic; something that has to do with everybody, sinner or saint. I mean, we all have to eat. Maybe they will get this lesson. **Matthew 16:7-9(NLT)** *“At this they began to argue with each other because they hadn’t brought any bread. 8 Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said, ‘You have so little faith! Why are you arguing with each other about having no bread? 9 Don’t you understand even yet? Don’t you remember the 5,000 I fed with five loaves, and the baskets of leftovers you picked up?’”* This discipleship thing is not going too well. Two stormy lessons and a failing grade concerning faith. The simple bread lesson, fail. They have the Bread of Life with them, but argue about bread. They have the Multiplier of food, but are thinking about bread. They are with the God who can make it rain bread, but they cannot bring their minds to understand. Maybe one more lesson. Authority over demonic activity.

Matthew 17:16-18(NLT) “So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn’t heal him.’ **17 Jesus said, ‘You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.’** **18** Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him. From that moment the boy was well. **19** Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, **‘Why couldn’t we cast out that demon?’** **20 ‘You don’t have enough faith,’** Jesus told them. ‘I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.’ **22** After they gathered again in Galilee, Jesus told them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. **23** He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead.’ **And the disciples were filled with grief.”**

We don’t have to read into this verse. Jesus clearly tells them why they couldn’t cast out the demon. **“You don’t have enough faith.”** So, now, after this, they are together in Galilee and Jesus tells them what is going to happen. Notice, He does not just tell them about His death, but also His resurrection. They are filled with grief. Jesus fully prepared them and gave them all that they needed to be ready for what was going to take place. Let’s go back to the morning of the resurrection. Jesus is raised from the dead. He appears to Mary Magdalene. He appears to the other women on their way from the tomb. They are terrified and happy all at the same time. Mark says they are too afraid to say anything to anybody. Matthew writes that they see Jesus, and He tells them to go tell the other disciples. All the women at the tomb see Jesus and they run to tell the rest. The party is about to begin, or is it? **Luke 24:11(NLT)** **“But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn’t believe it.”** Wait, what? Nobody believed the women. The founding apostles of the church did not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, even when He was seen by the women.

Why would Jesus appear to the women first? Surely, He knew how that culture was going to respond to them. You see, Jesus does not have to prove who He is. We have to believe Him for Who He is. **1 Corinthians 1:27-29(NLT)** **“Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. 28 God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. 29 As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.”**

God, in His wisdom, will use whoever He chooses, and He loves to use people and things despised by the world. Jesus used the women as the first witnesses to His resurrection. I know some say women are not allowed to preach. Maybe you should tell Jesus that. It does not seem wise to use people (women) as the first witnesses to the greatest event in human history. Why did Jesus not just hang around for Peter or John? I mean, they both ran to the tomb as well. Wouldn’t it be more credible to tell them? It

was only after Jesus appeared to the women that He appeared to Peter next. We don't know what was said at that first meeting after the resurrection, but we will find out in heaven. We just need to have faith.

Where are you today concerning your faith? Do you feel Jesus owes it to you to prove Himself? Have you become skeptical because somehow the storms of life are strangling the faith from your heart? Are you worried about bread or do you trust the Bread of Life? Will you, like the Centurion, trust His Word even when you don't see His presence? Will you be like the Syrophoenician woman who is willing to eat the crumbs from His table? When you hear His message through a vessel you do not approve of, will you trust or will you think it is nothing but nonsense? Jesus told Peter, "Just have faith in God." He is telling you the same.

Prayer:

- **Ask the Lord to help you to have an attitude of child-like faith.**
- **Release your fears to Him and trust Him whatever storm you might be in.**
- **Thank Him for His provision and for your daily bread.**
- **Pray that your faith will grow to the place where you will trust His words even when you don't see any evidence of His presence.**
- **Pray for your fellow believers to rise up in faith and to be bold in their proclamation of Jesus.**