

J.J.

MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH
Matthew 17:14-20

INTRODUCTION :

When I was young, I always got into fights. Most of the time, they are guys bigger than me or better than me. But there was this street fight that I thought I had it in the bag because the other guy was a head smaller than me. So we went into this flatbed trailer and all the kids from the neighborhood were watching us. We agreed that it was going to be like a fair fight with three rounds. No holds barred. My coach on the other side was my older brother who said to me, "When I shout flying kick...you do flying kick." So I agreed. Round 1. This kid who was smaller than me was fast and he just punched me in the face fast. I heard my Kuya shout, "Flying kick!" But I wasn't able to do it. Round 1 was finished and my kuya kept saying, "I told you to do "flying kick" when I shout flying kick." Round 2. Right from the bell, my Kuya shouted, "Flying kick!" But before I could do that, this little kid punched me in the nose and when you punch me in the nose, I'm done. Round 3. I just heard my Kuya in the background shouting loud and several times. "Jerry, flying kick! Flying kick!" But the little kid was so fast, he just kept punching me in the face. After the fight, I went home crying and my mom was there and she asked, "Why I was crying?" I told her I got into a fight and got punched in the face. My Mom said, of course everything was in Filipino, "Makikipag-away ka tapos iiyak ka?" (You will get yourself in the fight and then you will cry?") Then my kuya was following behind and he was explaining to my mother the reason why I lost is because I did not do the flying kick.

Now the reason, I'm telling this story is because just like faith, it doesn't matter how small it is but does it pack a powerful punch? Faith as small as a mustard seed is powerful.

Now the question is... what does that mean? Does it mean it's ok to have little faith? Or small faith? **What's the difference between little faith and small faith? Do you want to know? You'll know later.**

Let's read from God's Word :

Matthew 17: 14 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." 17 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." 18 Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, 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. Nothing will be impossible for you."

PRAY

This is one of the passages in the Bible where we already know what the key verse is in the story and it is found in verse 20, which says :

20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, 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. Nothing will be impossible for you."

I mentioned earlier that does this mean little faith is enough? A lot of people are stumped when our Lord mentioned “little faith” and then mentioned “faith as small as a mustard seed” that can move mountains.

Remember, this is one of those sermons that the people then would understand but you need to dig deep enough to appreciate what the Lord is telling us.

You want to know the difference between little faith vs small faith? let's look at the context first. It would be good if we follow the story first before we go to the main lesson. Remember, this story is found also in the Mark 9:14-29 and Luke 9:37-45

1. The son's demon possession

15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.

We know that the son is demon possessed because our Lord rebuked the demon in verse 18
18 Jesus rebuked the demon,

What were the manifestations of his demon possession? We have to go through the other passages

- In Matthew, it says that he has seizures (Greek : moonstruck; that's why KJV translated it to lunatic).

Background : The greeks believed during that time that that there are certain behaviours being caused by the moon.

So you know that the father is not a Jew.

- But in Mark and Matthew, it also shows that because of the spirit, he cannot speak, he is deaf and mute.

Mark 9: 17 ... I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 25....he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

- This has been happening since the boy was a child according to Mark 9:21

Of course, some of you may ask, does this happen today? By God's grace, I've been a pastor long enough to see it. Now there are degrees, sometimes, a person can be demon possessed, demon oppressed or demon influenced.

The danger during these days, it can be subtle.

How can a person be possessed, oppressed or influenced? When they open themselves to these spirits whether voluntarily or involuntarily (they think it's harmless)

Illustration : Spirit of the glass; when I was young I used to play that and when we asked the name, the glass was moving by itself and was spelling the word S-A and we immediately freaked out and stopped it. THANK YOU LORD, I AM SAVED.

Another more subtle example is the kind of lyrics we listen to...I said lyrics not music. Music in itself is amoral...whether it's jazz, classical, rap, hip-hop, rock and etc. BUT BE CAREFUL WITH THE LYRICS!

Another thing is make sure that you watch what your child looks at the web. Or if they are young, don't let them hold a tablet or a smartphone on their own.

That's why the Bible says to really safeguard what goes into your head. That's why the Bible says to always meditate on God's Word!!!

That's why I ask my children to memorize Bible verses. It's because when you are memorizing God's Word, it's going to be planted inside your mind.

- Since he was a child, whenever the demon possesses him, according to the passages in Matthew, Mark and Luke
 - The boy suddenly screams
 - he foams at the mouth
 - gnashes his teeth
 - has convulsions and becomes rigid
 - rolls around and the demon throws him to the ground and most of the time since there were a lot of open fires during that time, *He often falls into the fire or into the water.*

This demon really wants to kill this boy and imagine the burns of this boy. **But also imagine the pain of the father.**

2. The father's doubtful plea

- A man approached Jesus Christ and obviously he is the father and immediately, he knelt before Jesus Christ and called Him, Lord. *15 Lord have mercy on my son.*

Quote : Mountain-moving faith needs to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.

What does it mean to believe that Jesus is Lord? It is to believe that Jesus has power and authority OVER EVERYTHING, EVERY CREATION AND EVERYONE..INCLUDING OURSELVES.

Even to be saved, we need to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Romans 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved

It's very clear in this passage that it doesn't only mean if we say "declare" that Jesus is Lord, believing is not just saying it but it's really believing in your life that Jesus is Lord. That's why the verse said, *believe in your heart*

IMPORTANT : How do you know that if a person really believes in Jesus Christ as Lord? If that person is living a life of obedience to God. I'm not saying sinless but his lifestyle and his desire is always to follow the will of God.

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

The question is, does this man really has faith that Jesus is Lord? NOT FULLY. We thank the Holy Spirit that we have other passages that shows us that He still has doubts.

- In the other passages, he calls Jesus "Teacher" Rabbi.
- And in Mark he said,

Mark 9: 22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

SANA PO Illustration : One of the first lessons I've learned from my father-in-law and I was still a new Christian is the time he asked me to lead the prayer before meals. I prayed like this, "Lord, sana po....sana po...sana po..." (Lord, I hope... I hope... I hope...) After the prayer, my father-in-law said to me, why use the word, "sana" or "I hope"...don't you believe that God will answer your prayers?

That's true. You never heard any of the people in the Bible ask Jesus, "Lord, I hope..." That's why Jesus said to this father, "If you can????" OF COURSE, JESUS CAN ANSWER YOUR PRAYERS!

What did the Bible say?

James 1:6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

Our Lord Jesus said,

Matthew 21:22 You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it." NLT

Of course, this must be inside a framework. The prayer must be according to who God is and according to God's will which you can only know when you read the Bible.

3. The disciples' powerlessness

16 I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

All the passages in Matthew, Mark and Luke showed the same scenario that the father asked Jesus' disciples to drive out the spirit and they could not.

To better understand this, we have to learn that Jesus already gave the disciples THE AUTHORITY to drive out spirits.

Matthew 10:1 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

So why weren't they able to do it?

17 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." 18 Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

It's the same reply our Lord gave in Mark and Luke.

THE REASON WHY THEY WEREN'T ABLE TO DRIVE AWAY THE SPIRIT IS BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.

That's why in the next verse, our Lord Jesus said, *19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith.*

If there is something that our Lord gets frustrated with His disciples, it's their little faith.

- They were afraid of the big winds and the storm

Matthew 8:26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

- When Peter was already walking on water and then he looked at the waves, symbol of our problems and challenges, so he began to drown

Matthew 10 : 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

- In Matthew 16, Jesus was already showing them that is Lord and He can provide to feed the more than 5000 men and women and children and that His Words are the only one that is true. But the disciples still can't see it.

Matthew 16: 8 8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?"

Which now brings us to the real lesson here.

20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, 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. Nothing will be impossible for you."

What is this mountain moving faith?

Two things we need to establish first.

1. Moving mountains doesn't necessarily mean, a literal mountain.

The Jews metaphor sometimes for challenges or problems is a mountain.

2. As small as a mustard seed, doesn't necessarily mean if you have small faith, when Jesus already told them, you have little faith.

Now before we go further, here's the difference between little faith vs small faith.

- Little faith – it has to do with the amount.

Example : glass of water... glass with little amount or glass with full amount.

The frustration of our Lord Jesus Christ with the disciples is they don't have FULL TRUST IN HIM.

- Small faith – it has to do with the size... today it's small but soon it can become bigger.

Illustration : mustard seed... can grow bigger to become a tree.

So what is this mustard seed, mountain moving faith?

I. PASSIONATE FAITH

In the Authorized KJV Version of the Bible, it shows in Mark, what Jesus said,

Mark 9: 28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Fasting doesn't mean you're twisting God's arm. Fasting is telling God, Lord, your will is much more important than my basic appetite.

ILLUSTRATION : Some people when they pray, they pray for something but at the back of their minds, they are saying, "Well if the Lord says, no, maybe it's His will."

Remember what Jesus said,

Mark 9: 22...But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

GANYAN TALAGA ILLUSTRATION : There was this one mother whose son was in living a lifestyle of sin and I heard her say, "Ganyan na talaga siya...Dios na lang makapagbabago sa kanya." (Well he's like that already anyway, only God can change him) Sounds spiritual right? Wrong! That's not fate...that's fatalistic!

When we are praying for a loved one who is living a life of sin, we shouldn't say that.

ILLUSTRATION : We had a couple in our church and they are now in their senior years.

Imagine Nanay Vicky saying about that to Tatay Noynoy when he was womanizing and drinking. But I always heard Nanay Vicky said, "Pray lang ako ng pray".

When we pray for that loved one who is living a life of sin, we should something like, "Lord, I know it's not your will for a person to be living in sin. I ask that you change Him Lord."

NOT NO ILLUSTRATION. One of the boldest prayers I heard is when my father-in-law, in one of His prayers said, "Lord, I will not take "no" for an answer." Is that bold? Yes of course. Can He say that to the Lord? Yes, according to Hebrews 4:16 that we can come boldly unto the throne of grace.

Biblical Illustration : Hannah

1 Samuel 1:9 Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house. 10 In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly.

II. PERSEVERING FAITH

Maybe the reason why the demon did not leave even after the disciples tried is because they easily gave up. Maybe, after praying and commanding, nothing happened. They may have tried once, twice, thrice and gave up.

This is the reason why Jesus said,

Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed

Now by God's grace, we'll know what mustard seed faith is.

The mustard tree is drought tolerant

The tree can grow in arid, dry climates and thrive even in clay or sandy soil. It can grow in hot, dry weather or cool, wet climates.

This is faith that truly believes God can answer prayers when it is tested. That's the time we can truly say we believe in God, when money is lacking, when health is failing, when relationships are breaking. It's easy to say we have faith when everything is good.

In short, it doesn't give up even in the biggest of problems. He perseveres in prayer.

Biblical Illustration : In Genesis 3:22-23; Jacob learned that his brother Esau was nearby, so there's potentially a big problem he's going to face. That night, the Lord showed up to Jacob and wrestled with Him but Jacob wasn't budging until the break of day so what the Lord did was he touched Jacob's hip and the socket became out of joint but Jacob continued to not let go of the Lord. **(Note :** the natural reaction when you get hurt is to give up....tap as in MMA). So the Lord said to Jacob,

Genesis 3:26 26 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."

How did Jacob reply :

But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

That's mustard seed mountain moving faith!

Some of us when we face frustrations, immediately lose faith and give up in our praying.

P.U.S.H. Pray Until Something Happens.

Is this a principle in the Bible? Yes of course.

When Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray in Luke 11, one of the parables our Lord gave is about a friend who was knocking on the door of another friend at midnight asking for three loaves. But here's the initial answer :

Luke 11: 7 Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you?

But then our Lord explained :

8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

That's why Jesus said in verse 9-10

9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

That's Mustard seed mountain moving faith

The Bible says in Proverbs to test if gold and silver is pure, it is tested by fire. God also tests us on what kind of faith we have.

Proverbs 17:3 Gold and silver are tested by fire, and a person's heart is tested by the Lord.

Why? God is more interested in our character than our comfort.

III. PROGRESSING FAITH

Even though it's one of the smallest seeds, the trees can grow up to 20 feet tall and 20 feet wide.

That's why Jesus likened the mustard seed in the expansion of the kingdom of God.

Matthew 13:31 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

There's a reason why God sometimes doesn't immediately answer your prayers and it even looks like sometimes he's rejecting it, it's because He wants to see how big is your faith or He wants to develop your faith.

ILLUSTRATION : The story of the Canaanite woman who went to Jesus? She asked and Jesus did not answer at first, but she kept on asking. Then the disciples told Jesus to send her away, but instead of getting frustrated and giving up, she even went near to Jesus and then it seems that Jesus is rejecting her by saying that blessings isn't for her, she said, she's ok with the crumbs of the blessings... AND JESUS WAS AMAZED WITH HER AND GRANTED HER REQUEST.

Now if you have this kind of MUSTARD SEED faith, here's what Jesus said,
Nothing will be impossible for you."

This means whatever mountain (challenges or problems or trials), you are facing... you will always have the victory!

HALLELUJAH!

S.G.D.