

Faith

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[0 : 00] Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene. One commentator says, if I were a woman, this would be one of my favorite texts.

When most of the disciples had forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ, three women lingered in his presence.

And you'll notice they were all called Mary. And if we could link that verse with Paul's letter to Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, in verse 13, now abideth faith, hope, and love.

We might well be able to present each of these women with a surname. Mary Faith, Mary Hope, and Mary Love.

And over these next three weeks, we want to look at each of those women in turn. The faith, the hope, and the love that we have in Christ.

[1 : 43] And what does it mean to us to have that faith? And how are we challenged by that faith this morning? Many things are possible for the person who has hope.

Even more is possible for the person who has faith. And still more is possible for the person who knows how to love.

But everything is possible for the person who practices all three virtues.

faith, hope, and love. John Piper said, Life is wasted if we don't grasp the glory of the cross.

Cherish it, the treasure that it is, and cleave to it as the highest price of every pleasure and the deepest comfort.

[2 : 54] In every pain. What was once foolishness to us? A crucified God must become our wisdom and our power and our only boast in this world.

Mary Faith. What do we know about that woman? Jesus' mother. Well, go back to the beginning of the Gospels.

And what was, as far as she was concerned, physically impossible to be conceived without an earthly father, she believed what was said to her.

I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me, as you say. And that was her response to the angel who came and said to her, You're going to have a child, Mary.

Couldn't understand it. But whatever you say, that is what I will believe. And in joyful anticipation, Luke chapter 1 and verse 46, My soul praises the Lord.

[4 : 22] My heart rejoices in God my Savior. And we see, too, the testimony that was given for the wise men, the shepherds, and the others in the early chapters of the Gospels.

They came to worship. They came to seek. They came to know. And the Lord Jesus Christ himself said, I must be about my father's business.

And by the time he reached the age of 30, Mary had grown in faith to expect Jesus to carry out miracles.

Remember that first miracle? That interesting verse where Jesus said, Do whatever he tells you. Now that's an interesting verse to share at a wedding. to the husband and the wife. And I did that once.

[5 : 59] And with great consternation on the wife's face until she realized I wasn't thinking about her husband. But Jesus says, do whatever, or Mary said, do whatever he tells you.

she no doubt understood and had that sense of expectation of what the Lord Jesus Christ had come to do and what he was able to do.

And when the Pharisees accused him of blasphemy, we read in Mark chapter 3 and verse 29 and 31.

whoever does the will of my father.

Who is my brother, my mother, my brothers? And Jesus said, whoever does the will of my father. And then going on from those early days to standing around the cross watching, horrified, Jesus is crucified.

[7 : 33] But there was a great event happened after that crucifixion when Jesus arose again from the dead.

Yeah? Just say yes. Thank you. I'm just trying to keep you with me. Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realizing you were the prisoner.

And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross when he died and rose again. He sets us free. Prisoner imprisoned by our sin.

Imprisoned by our unfaithfulness. God chose to use his son to set us free. And I would have to say amen to that.

Joni Erickson, you might have read of her. The woman who had a terrible injury when diving became paraplegic.

[8 : 58] said, faith isn't the ability to believe long and hard into the misty future. It is simply taking God at his word and taking the next step.

And many people are sometimes afraid to take the next step because of fear. Not knowing what's going to happen. Not knowing where the next step is going to lead them to.

But she discovered that by taking the next step and trusting in God in the midst of her infirmity God was gracious to us.

Childlike faith focuses on our heavenly father not on our fears. faith. You see, faith doesn't make things easy.

Faith makes them possible. people. The apostle Paul in writing the chapter Galatians, he says, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

[10 : 19] The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

And so to be crucified with Christ, to be committed to Christ is allowing him to guide us in our lives doing and living the way he lived.

Following his example that he set, as Paul would remind that the church, some of the churches he wrote to, for example the Corinthians in 1st Corinthians 11 and verse 1, follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.

When we rise in the morning, who do we commit ourselves to? Follow our own desires, our own instincts, or do we commit ourselves to follow what Christ has for us that day?

Irrespective of what it is, irrespective of how difficult it may be, irrespective as to how much fear it puts into our lives, are we willing to follow Christ and follow his example?

[11 : 50] I trust that that is the case for each and every one of us. Paul says, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

And as he says those things, he also brings out in his writings the book of Habakkuk. the just shall live by faith.

He says, for I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race and I have kept the faith. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to state those same words when it comes to our time to be with God?

[13 : 17] What is faith? What is faith for you? Well, when we think of faith, we can think of selfish faith, apathetical faith, material faith, or devoted faith.

What is faith in your mind? Paul says, we live by what we believe, not by what we see.

And yet, faith allows us to see the unseen, to believe the unbelievable, to expect the unexpected and be prepared.

Is your faith this morning optimistic or pessimistic? how would you describe your faith? Are you full of optimism or are you full of pessimism?

I don't know. Only you can answer that for yourself as I can answer it for myself. Jesus said, I tell you the truth, if your faith is as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move.

[14 : 57] All things are possible for you. the question I have this morning is this, when was the last time you moved a mountain?

How many mountains have you moved in your life recently? Some time ago, there was a group in the Leslie Baptist Church, singing group, and they called themselves the Mountain Removal Company.

Because they believed that God can do the impossible. And they tried to share with those whom they ministered to that God can do the impossible.

The Mountain Removal Company. But what about your mountain this morning? What about mine? We all have them.

We all have them. let's not kill ourselves. They might be large, they might be small, but things we have to overcome in our lives.

[16:15] And one of them is this, the mountain of impossibility. have you ever said that? That's impossible.

I can't do that. I'll never conquer it. Have you ever had those moments in your life when you thought the task that was given to you, you didn't have the skills or the ability or the wherewithal to conquer? Sometimes we have the attitude that it can't be done. We can't achieve the task that's given to us. In my previous position with the Salvation Army, I worked with addicts, people who were involved in drug addiction and alcohol problems.

And I met many of them whom I could see in their own character that it was a burden on their back.

[17:35] I heard many stories as to how they got into those addictions. They wanted their way out, but they didn't know how to do it.

to them, that was a mountain they had to overcome. And with help and with guidance, but more importantly with the Lord, they were able to achieve those things.

Someone once said, you've been assigned this mountain to show others it can be moved. and I am very proud of some of those guys who were willing to take that challenge and remove the mountain that was theirs on their back.

And they got into those situations with different ways. drugs. They were enticed to take drugs.

Resulted in losing their job, losing their home, losing everything they had that they relied on.

And they had to build up again. And many of them, some of them had said, I can't do it. And that was true on their own.

[19:07] They couldn't do it. And on your own, you're not able to do it. But with God, Jesus says all things are possible.

You think of Moses. he said, I am not a great man. How can I go into the king and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?

He was personally incompetent. I can't do this. Gideon, who said, my clan is the weakest.

I am least important in my family. Jeremiah, I do not know how to speak.

I am only a child. And time and time again, people were making excuses that they were unable to do and get themselves out of a situation.

[20:07] They were unable to rely upon God, who would be able to do that for them, and enable them to do it. And their faith, their faith, your faith, my faith, needs to be challenged.

have you ever had your faith challenged? The story is told of a pastor who called his people to pray. There was a drought in the land, and he needed to pray that God would send rain. And he stood up in front of them and said, brothers and sisters, your lack of faith is a sin.

I marvel and tremble for you. Here you are, come to pray for rain, to ask God to end the drought.

Isn't that so? And they all said, yes. God will be to God to pray. I look around you today, and not one of you has brought an umbrella.

[21:27] When we come to pray and ask God to do something, our faith has to match what we're asking. How big is your faith?

faith. We all have mountains that we sometimes find it difficult to cross. The same as with rivers, we sometimes find it difficult to get across those rivers.

But whatever your mountain is this morning, God can give you the strength, the wisdom, the ability to get over it and find fulfillment.

The mountain of impossibility, the mountain of carelessness, a careless word, a careless act or thought, sometime without meaning any harm.

I didn't mean any harm by that we've said. I wish I hadn't said that. But we can't take that word away. It's ingrained in that person's mind.

[22 : 44] It's done the damage. And very often, the careless word or action leads to friction, barriers, hatred, lovelessness, bitterness, and sometimes and unforgiving spirit.

Sometimes we can forgive, but we're not willing to forget. Remember Joseph who could have wasted his life dwelling on the injustices he suffered.

he was a man who was sold into slavery, forced to live in a hostile land, spent his teenage years away from his beloved father, even spent time in prison.

But despite that, he harbored no resentment. As his eyes fixed on his first born son, he named him Manasseh, which means God has made me forget.

Oh, that we might take that spirit that when someone has done something or said something to us or hurt us, not just to say I forgive you, but also I forget what you've said to me.

[24 : 38] And that can often be a difficult part of the equation, to forget those harsh words, those difficult words, those words that have pulled us down.

He could find no bitterness, or sadness, as he looked at his son. C.S. Lewis said, forgiveness is a wonderful thing until we have someone to forgive.

most of our friction arises out of our carelessness.

Remember that old chorus that used to sing? Be careful little tongue what you say. Be careful little tongue what you say. Far above looking down in tender love.

Be careful little tongue what you say. And sometimes we say things that we don't think are hurtful, are going to offend, good, but that person has taken them in a different way than we said them because we all have bad hair days, don't we?

[26 : 12] and when we think of mountains, a mountain of impossibility, a mountain of carelessness, sometimes God has to come to us and say not so much I'm going to deal with the mountain, but I'm going to deal with the man.

We have to let him deal with our lives because it is in dealing with our lives that enables us to overcome the mountain, to be open to the Holy Spirit's ministry for our lives.

Carelessness possibility. How many of you look upon prayer as being a mountain? It's so easy to talk and think and read and listen about experiences of other people in prayer, but how difficult is it to earnestly and fervently pray?

How often do we spend with God in prayer? Personally, I have to admit I don't spend enough time with God in prayer.

I have to pray. one man when he heard people going to work outside his home one day, he said, why does their God deserve more than mine?

[28 : 17] I need to learn to crucify myself and spend time with God. God, it's the only way.

Let's endeavor to knock that mountain on its head and be willing to spend time with God in prayer.

Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. it is laying hold on God's willingness. What is prayer but simply asking of things?

Ask and seek and knock and it will, not it might, it will as long as we ask in the right spirit. When we come to pray, it's sometimes seems like a mountain.

Often God has said to me, you've not spent enough time today in prayer. Has he said to you, you've not read your word enough today, my word enough today?

[29 : 45] How often have we prayed? A few minutes here, a few minutes there, because it seems like a mountain. The disciples never asked Jesus to teach them how to preach.

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. and sometimes make very bad job of preaching, but God can help us to make a wonderful job of praying.

May that be the case in our lives today and always. pray. One man said, if we would return to apostolic practice, waiting on the Lord for apostolic prayer, we could then go on to apostolic possibilities.

But we want that to happen. always pray to have eyes that see the best in people, a heart that forgives the worst, a mind that forgets the bad, and a soul that never loses faith.

God. The mountain of impossibility, carelessness, prayer, and there are many other things.

[31 : 39] You can maybe identify someone from your own life this morning. But whatever your mountain is, God says you can conquer it.

You can achieve what he wants for your life. And if God is willing to forgive you, why shouldn't we be willing to forgive other people?

when was the last time you moved the mountain?

I'm not talking about something up Arthur's seat. I'm not quite sure if that's what Jesus meant. He had no vision of JCBs and the disciples using them.

They didn't have JCBs in their day, did they? But in our day, the mountain of impossibility, the mountain of carelessness, the mountain of prayer, and whatever other mountain may be in your life, don't let it have a hold on you.

[33 : 09] Don't let it conquer you. Believe that what God has given to you to overcome, he has done it to let others see that it can be done.

They might not have the same mountain as you, but it can be done. Do you believe that? Are you willing to let him move your mountain?

Or are you willing to move your mountain with his help? When you pray for the mountains to be removed, believe that it will be done, and working with the Lord, go out expecting it to happen.

And expect it to happen today. Not tomorrow, but today. And go out lighter in spirit.

Go out with those burdens not on your back. Remember that chorus?

[34 : 37] Rolled away, rolled away. And can't hear you? Yes. We carry burdens, but God is a burden remover, and it happened at Calvary.

it can happen today in your life and in mine. Father God, thank you for Jesus. Thank you for how he has shown us how he has overcome sin and death and the grave.

And thank you that he promises that for each and every one of our lives today. Whatever our burden may be, Lord, help us to bring it to you, that you may give us the ability to see our way through it and have it removed and rejoice in you always.

Amen. Amen. And thank you