

Sermon Text for May 14, 2023

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Hosea 5:15-6:6, Matthew 9:20-22

“A matter of faith”

This Mother’s Day we find ourselves again in the Gospel of righteousness, where we are challenged to act according to the will of God. We find ourselves looking at a matter of faith, part I, and on Father’s Day we will look at a matter of faith, part II. I normally have a few go to people in the Bible that I lift up on Mother’s Day, Debora is my favorite, the judge who ruled over Israel and showed her commander what it looks like to be brave in the face of battle. Each Mother’s Day we make it a point that we are celebrating not just biological mothers but all those women who have served in a motherly role in their lives and we honor and respect what they have done and continue to do.

But in the back of my mind I feel like I am also in a bit of a battle as a girl dad to make sure that my girls, and every girl, has the very same opportunity that the boys have. I know that my girls, and all girls for that matter, are looked at in a very different way than boys and I want to fight that. Rarely are boys objectified and seen as objects that are able to provide some sort of benefit just by their presence. I know, I’m speaking in riddles, but there is a clear double standard in how we view men and how we view women, and subconsciously I want to make sure every single Mother’s Day that every single woman and every single girl here knows their worth that comes from their relationship with God and not from what people think or say when they see them.

Today, Jesus raises up this person of faith who happens to be a woman and sees her, truly sees her and defines her and encourages her based upon who she is. As a result of this interaction with Jesus she becomes equipped with everything that she needs to be a child of God who can do all things through Christ who strengthens her. For men or for women, it always comes down to a matter of faith, but there is a distinct cultural disadvantage if you are woman and today this sermon is for all those who are women, or girls, or have daughters or spouses, so basically all of us.

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Since we are talking about faith it is a good idea to set the table in front of us and make sure that we are talking about the same thing when we are talking about faith. We did the same thing for righteousness. By now all of you should know exactly what righteousness means. It means acting according to the will of God. But we have also said that you can know what

something means but if you don't put it into play, if you don't do it, then knowing it isn't going to help at all. Knowing what righteousness means is one thing, being righteous, acting according to the will of God, is something totally different. The same is true of faith.

We find the best definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, where we read: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." I am sure that I will be with Jesus when I die. I hope for it, but I am sure of it. I don't necessarily see Jesus present by my side at all times, but I am convicted, without a doubt, I know that he is always by my side. This is faith, the ability to believe in something that you don't see, and the ability to trust in something that you hope for but haven't totally realized yet. I know that God has my life in his hands and so my faith is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

You should take some time today and read through all of Hebrews 11 because we get a list of all these wonderful things that the people of faith in the Bible have done because of their faith. It is our faith in God that allows us to believe that all things are possible through him. It is a lack of faith which creates anxiety and stress and doubt. The faith we have is a gift from God, but we are able to increase it. Our faith could be the difference between sinking or swimming in the case of Peter as he walks on the water.

Jesus' disciples complain in Matthew 17:20 that they were not able to cast out certain demons which Jesus was able to cast out. Jesus tells them that if they were to have the faith of just a mustard seed then they would be able to move mountains. I think sometimes we have the wrong impression that God wants nothing to do with us because we don't have enough faith, or honestly that we are too sinful for him to even consider us as part of his family or part of his future plans for his kingdom. Every person in this room has been gifted faith, every one of us. If we would just have the faith of a mustard seed, nothing big, nothing flashy, just trust that God is in control of your life, then you can do so much more than you ever imagined. We often limit ourselves to what we see and what we hear to what we can touch and feel. But faith is about trusting in God, whom we can't always see, and knowing that he has our life in his hands and so all things are possible through him.

Hosea had to learn that the hard way. Last week we read the really difficult Scripture of Hosea being told to marry an unfaithful woman and to have children with her knowing that she would continue to be unfaithful. We read in chapter 6:1 and following some pretty terrible things that have happened to Hosea that can eat away at our faith in God, and our ability to trust in God. Let us return to the Lord, for he has torn, he has struck down. But then this Scripture in Hosea ends with the promises of the rain on the harvest and a reminder of what God really wants

from us, in times of celebration and in times of tragedy. God simply wants our steadfast love when things are good or bad, happy or sad. God simply wants us to know him, we read that in vs.6.

The woman in Matthew has had a string of some pretty tragic things happen to her. For 12 years she has been sick and no one has been able to figure out what is going on with her. Mark has more details than Matthew does, Mark tells us that she spent all of her money going to doctors and her condition not only did it not get better, it actually progressively got worse over these 12 years. Like Hosea, she could have easily have given up and say it is what it is, God just gave me this hand and I'll just suffer through it and deal with it. But that is not what she said, and this is where her faith is manifested. Folks, listen to me, when you say it is what it is, you are giving up on the situation and you are saying not only can you do nothing about it, but God can do nothing about. She wasn't willing to settle for that, even those all around her were probably telling her that her life couldn't be changed.

We read that her faith is manifested by her saying if I just touch his cloak. If I can just somehow get close to him. This ought to be our determined stance when we find ourselves in life wondering what to do, if I can just get closer to Jesus. You can get closer to Jesus, you just have to spend more time with him. Our faith is a gift from God but the more we spend time with Jesus then the stronger our faith becomes. There is a very clear relationship between the time we spend with Jesus and the increase of our faith.

Mark and Luke talk about the crowds, Matthew tells us she sneaks in from behind to touch his cloak so that no would notice this unclean woman touching a rabbi, she does, Jesus turns to her, Jesus sees her, Jesus talks to her, Jesus heals her immediately. When Jesus talks to her he tells her that her faith had made her well. Do you believe that your faith can change the course of your life? Do you believe that the faith of your children can change the course of their life? Do you believe that the faith that you have in your household can change the course of your life? It can, beyond a shadow of a doubt, and if you take your faith for granted you will not see the miracles in your house that can happen if you take your faith seriously and the faith of those around you.

There was a back story that was taking place in this Scripture. Jesus is on his way here to go and heal the daughter of a religious leader who begs Jesus to come to his home to heal her. There is a clear tension between how culture views this religious leader and how culture has beaten down this woman. The religious leader gets in Jesus' face, kneels before him, preventing him from going any further until he deals with him, and gets Jesus to agree to go to his house to

heal his daughter. This woman sneaks in from behind, hoping no one will see her, and just wants to touch the hem of his robe, maybe no one will notice.

People have been telling her her whole life that she had no value, that no one would ever pay any attention to her, that she should just check out and settle for the misery in which she found herself. But Jesus changes all that. Jesus takes the initiative and turns to her, Jesus takes the initiative and sees her for who she really is. Jesus looks through all that has been built up in that society and culture, some of it similar to what we have, and says you have value not because of your looks or your contribution in certain areas of society and not in others, but you have the same value that the religious leader has. You are as much a child of God as anyone else.

He turns to her, listen to this now, and says: "Take heart". Do you know what that literally means in the Greek? It means be confident. What a thing to say to a woman in the first century, Be Confident. What a thing to say to a young girl in the 21st century where they are taught that their confidence is based upon their looks and their ability to maneuver through whatever cultural garbage they are filling their minds with. The greatest threat to our girls today is a double standard that whispers in their ear that they only have the value that their peers say they have and they can only do certain things that not all youth can do.

You see this especially in some churches where women are not able to have all the roles that men can have. This feeds into a terrible double standard that relegates women to certain roles, lesser roles, than men, and forces them to see their value as serving men and not as serving God. This sin in churches continues to allow men to be those who are able to approach Jesus directly and women having to be satisfied with the scraps that fall from the table. I can't believe I have to address this in the 21st century, but I want to be sure that you know that the girls and the young women from this church will have the confidence in Christ and the faith from Christ to be able to do anything that they feel the Holy Spirit is leading them to do.

This Mother's Day we need to build up the faith which places our confidence in Jesus and which allows us to believe that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Faith is a gift given equally to men and women. Our job as a church to ensure that we don't allow culture to erode this faith in anyone who steps into our doors, especially those girls and women who have been taught by churches or by culture differently. Amen.