

# Sermon Text for January 28, 2024

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## *Psalm 6:1-3, 9 and Matthew 9:27-31* *“The power of faith”*

This may sound a bit too simplistic, but the power of the faith of the church is seen most clearly, I believe, when we gather as a congregation to see what we have done over the past year. We did that last week in our congregational meeting where we looked over our yearly report and noticed how Jesus was at work through us as a church. We can see clearly the financial impact we have had on mission agencies all across the region and beyond. The missionaries that we have supported have also felt our faith in very tangible support as well. The actual social ministries that emanate from this church which is not just the food bank and CIC with its financial impact, but so many other ways that we as a church live out our faith in real, concrete ways, not just by saying we believe, but showing we believe.

All of this is possible because you, in an act of faith, are willing to tithe, give ten percent of what you bring home to the work of the church. That is the baseline. But why do you tithe, why do you give to the church, which an outsider looking in would label as an extraordinary act of faith. Why do you give to any organizations? Our faith in the kingdom of God, our faith in Jesus, allows us to give sacrificially to the work of the kingdom that this church does. You see tangibly the work of the kingdom that this church does. You see it not just in the yearly report, which might be the most visible way to see it, but you see it through your participation and your experience with our programs and the people who are impacted by our programs.

The power of your faith in this church allows us to do what we do because you place your faith in your tithes that we will do what you have seen and what we say we will do. Our faith in Jesus builds trust in our faith in each other and ultimately in our church. It also helps that as a church we are an open book. You know what is happening behind the scenes because you can see what is happening behind the scenes. When you have faith in someone or something it changes everything about how you interact with that someone or something.

Today, in both of our Scriptures we see a living faith, the power of faith in both of our readings. One leads to a deliverance from terror and the other from blindness. The question we ask today is how does our faith in Jesus impact our lives, like really make a difference? Is it powerful enough to make any difference in how we live and what we do. How powerful truly is our faith in Jesus? Let's read.

## READ

Back in the day of King David when this Psalm was written, as well as in Jesus' day, there was a real belief that any illness that you suffered, blindness, leprosy, cancer, whatever it was, and any hardship that you were going through, poverty, violence against you, terror, all of this was a sign that God was distanced from you as a result of your sin. Psalm 6 is a call by David to God for God to come back to him, to save him now that he has come back to God. There was a direct correlation between the status of our faith in God and the status of our health, our prosperity, our life in general. Illness was associated with sin, it was a rebuke, as we read in vs.1, as a result of our discipline for our failings.

When we turned back to God, our response to God's discipline, the power of our faith in God, its degree, dictated the degree to which God would respond to us. It was, back then, a very conditional relationship, it was thought, between us and God. If you obey me, then I will provide you with blessings and deliverance. The power of our faith in God was indisputable. Today in our enlightened minds we know that is simply not the case. God does not give cancer to the unfaithful. God does not choose to heal those who love him and destroy those who do not. As Billy Joel say, we see the good die young, we know the cause of cancer and blindness and violence across the globe and it strikes the faithful and the faithless equally, some might even argue, as the Apostle Paul did, that our faith just might work against us in having an easier life. Faith produces persecution and so hardship as a result.

So we find a resolution in Psalm 6 with the author after expressing their faith in God, the power of their faith was able to produce in vs.9 a sigh of relief where he can say: The Lord has heard my supplication; accepts my prayer. As a result of my faith, the power of my faith, is such that God will and does and has answered. That same mindset we find in Jesus' day in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and Jesus doesn't do anything to dissuade us from that mindset, that the power of our faith actually has the ability to impact our lives quite substantially. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century the power of faith was able to not only bring you closer to God, but to actually keep you more healthy.

Jesus is probably still in Capernaum walking through the town and by now the people know who he is and he has become quite the celebrity. We read that two blind men began following Jesus everywhere he went and called out to him Son of David. Now, in all of Scripture Jesus is called a number of things and each time that he is called something different there is a particular reason for that.

The Pharisees called him teacher or rabbi, because that was his status in their eyes, and since they had control over all the teachers of the law, over all the rabbis, Jesus was technically

under their jurisdiction so he had better do what they tell him to do. He is called Lord by his disciples, he is called Son of David here, which in that day and age is what you would call an itinerant healer. There were many itinerant healers who were walking around making claims that they had what people needed to be healed. They were called sons of David. Solomon, the true son of David, was seen as a healer in the common culture. So basically they called out “healer, have mercy on us.” Basically, heal us Jesus.

And why did they think he was a healer? Well, because in chapter 8 and 9 of Matthew alone this is the 9<sup>th</sup> miracle that Jesus performs, so the word had gotten out that he was a miracle worker. What we see also, in all of these miracles, is the presence of faith, faith is what unites all of these miracles, and these blind men display the faith that allows Jesus to heal them as well. We see time after time after Jesus heals that he says: your faith has made you well.

The faith of these blind men in Jesus is clearly seen in this story, not only do they follow him everywhere, but we read in vs.28 that when he goes in his house, the blind men follow him in there. Now, that’s faith. Can I help you? Do you really believe that I can do this thing? Yes, Lord. Simple faith, nothing flashy. Jesus touches them and heals them. When we put ourselves in the presence of Jesus as a result of our faith, we better expect Jesus to touch us. Look at all the places where Jesus touches the people that he heals. The lepers he touches and heals, the woman with an issue of blood touches him and is healed, he takes the hand of Peter’s mother in law and she rises, he takes the hand of the daughter of the leader of the synagogue who is dead and she rises from the dead. All of this happens in just these two chapters. Jesus wants to touch us and change us.

Jesus is just looking for a little bit of faith, even that the size of the mustard seed in order to work miracles in our life. Remember how frustrated he got with the disciples on the sea of Galilee when the storm came and he revealed his frustration by saying to them: ye of little faith. That is the question for us today, we know that there is power when we have faith in Jesus, but do we believe in Jesus, I mean really believe he makes a difference in our lives? Because if we do, then there is power in that faith. Now, people of faith still die of cancer, people of faith still lose children, people of faith still face crippling disease and live lives of poverty. But we also know that the power of faith is real and plays itself out in ways that we cannot predict or explain, and brings us closer to the kingdom of God.

Once they are healed Jesus commands them to go and tell no one. The same way that he tells his mother that his time had not yet come, so his time had not yet come, yet he still changes water to wine, and the blind men still go and spread the word. The point of these verses is not

the disobedience of those who have been healed, but simply the impossibility of stifling the incredibly good news of the kingdom, you can't keep the power of faith under wraps, you just can't.

When something impactful has happened in your life, you need to tell people. How do you think our youth group has grown? Because the youth have told other youth about it. How do you think any of our programs have grown, or why we continue to experience an increase in attendance year over year at church? Because you have seen the power of faith in your own life, you have experienced the presence of God in your own life and want to tell people. If you are in a stage of your life where you don't really have anything to say to people about Jesus or your role in the life of the church as a result of your faith, I'm guessing the power of your faith is pretty low. Because the power of faith cannot be contained when we see it at work in our lives. But if we don't see it at work, well, that's an us problem, not a God problem.

As a church we are set up to witness to the power of faith and to tell the world about it. If you have not expressed the same excitement as those blind men who were healed in your life in the church, it is time to ask the question: what is my relationship with Jesus and why aren't I able to live that out in celebration in the life of the church? The faith that we are trying to foster here is a firm confidence that Jesus is the channel of God's power, and we have seen it, we have lived it together.

So go and ask yourself the question of how has the power of your faith in Jesus over these years, or months, or days changed your life? We tithe because of faith, we witness and tell people about the work of Jesus in this church because of our faith, we touch the community as Jesus touches us with healing hands because of the power of faith. That is the only thing that will make a difference. Amen.