

Believing Is Seeing

John 20:19-31

04/16/2023

“I believe! Help me with my unbelief!”

It had been a tortuous time for a father with a son that was vexed with an unclean spirit, that resembled epilepsy, but was caused by a demon.

(Mark 9, Matthew 17)

You can just imagine the pain the father felt having no control over the pain his son suffered. No way to heal him, no one that could help him, desperately seeking a solution from our Lord Jesus Christ.

How many times that spirit cast his son down on the ground foaming at the mouth, how many times it threw him in the fire to burn, how many times it threw him into the water to drown.

The helplessness of the father may have been at his very breaking point when he encountered our Lord.

I know, we often use Jesus as a last resort; to cure the cancer, save a life, all other efforts have been exhausted all we can do now is pray; mentality.

I don't know if he exhausted all his options before he finally turned to Jesus, and I guess I don't care. I am simply fascinated by his exasperated cry of “I believe, help my unbelief!”

(Mark 9:24)

What honesty, what a confession, that right there is real and unadulterated truth about faith. We believe but we need help with our unbelief.

We believe that Jesus died for our sins and saved us from eternal damnation, but we find redemption in the day-to-day activity of our lives just a little bit unbelievable.

Let me give you a silly recent example of this that Marcy and I experienced.

A few weeks ago, the air conditioning on my car went out. I wasn't sure what it was, but we had replaced the interior blower motor on Marcy's old car before and I *believed* we could do it again on my car.

I believed until I talked to the salesman at Auto Zone who gave me no guarantees that the part, he was selling me, would work, because a host of other things could be damaged on the car concerning the air conditioning.

Could be an electrical short, a bad compressor, on and on the list went preparing me for the possibility a fan motor blower may not work.

I went ahead and bought it anyway deciding I would take a chance. And you have to understand, it's really a chance I do not take lightly.

I only get one day a week where I have time to work on things like this, my day off. It's the only day I can work on projects around the house, yard, or on the cars that may take all day to work undistracted or have to be somewhere later and cut the project short, or worse yet, just remain uncompleted in perpetuity, ala most of the projects in my house.

So, taking this on myself rather than trusting my mechanic, took a little faith. And as we began to work on it, I kept telling Marcy over and over and over again, if we get this figured out, we're giving all the Glory to God! We are praising His name and giving thanks to sweet Jesus for making this happen, because there is no way were gonna figure this out with out His intervention.

So, we sweated through the project, unscrewed all the panels and support brackets that were in the way. We studied the YouTube video thoroughly to make sure we were looking at everything the right way.

I contorted my back over the seat and under the dash, warning Marcy we may have to make an emergency visit to the Chiropractor because I twisted to far, but after it was all said and done, and we got the fan plugged in and situated, then replaced the buckets and panels; I moved over to the driver's side of the car and turned to Marcy and said, "Say a prayer that this works..."

I turned the ignition, and the car started, a good sign, then I reached over and ever so carefully turned on the AC and felt the compressor kick in, another good sign, then the fatal moment came to turn the fan on...and slowly moving the dial from left to right, off position to on high fan position...I heard the glorious sound of the fan robustly coming to life and cool air blowing on my face once again!

And I shouted from the top of my lung, "Unbelievable! what PURE LUCK!!!"

I had no sooner got those heathen words out of my mouth, when I realized I didn't give God the Glory!

I know, stupid right? Maybe it was all just a little too unbelievable that God would let me have just a little win.

But that's the beauty of God, even when we don't believe Him, He is still faithful to us, even in the times we need help with our faithlessness.

And with the help of my best friend Marcy, and the friend we all have in Jesus like the Beatles said in their great song written in 1967, “I get by with a little help from my friends.”

Ya know, Thomas today gets a bad rap. What I mean is, history likes to tag him with that title of doubting Thomas, and for all intents and purposes, that is what Thomas, at least initially, appears to be.

But like all things in life, Thomas is remembered for what he did wrong, rather than what was right!

They say you’re only as good as your last performance, but all that can come crashing down in a moment because of your most recent gaff, sin, or failure.

Nobody remembers what you did well again and again and again, they only want to know, “What have you done for me lately?”

Janet Jackson even wrote a very popular Song in 1986 with that very title, “What have you done for me lately?” So, it has certainly become a part of our cultural mindset. You only as good as your last performance!

A perfect illustration of this comes from a class Einstein was credited with teaching one time.

“While I have not been able to confirm this story to be true, the moral of the story is a good one. So, I want to share it with you.

One day Albert Einstein wrote on the board:

$$9 \times 1 = 9$$

$$9 \times 2 = 18$$

$$9 \times 3 = 27$$

$$9 \times 4 = 36$$

$$9 \times 5 = 45$$

$$9 \times 6 = 54$$

$$9 \times 7 = 63$$

$$9 \times 8 = 72$$

$$9 \times 9 = 81$$

$$9 \times 10 = 91$$

The chaos started suddenly in the hall because Einstein made a mistake. This was Einstein!

How could this genius get such a simple equation wrong?
Correct answer $9 \times 10 = ?$ And all his students ridiculed him.

Einstein waited for everyone to be silent and had a powerful lesson that no one soon forgot:

‘Despite the fact that I analyzed nine problems correctly, no one congratulated me. But when I made one mistake, everyone started laughing. This means that even if a person is successful, society will notice his slightest mistake. And they'll like that.

So don't let criticism destroy your dreams. The only person who never makes a mistake is someone who does nothing. "

<https://www.restorationadvisers.com/blog/einsteinlesson#:~:text=Einstein%20waited%20for%20everyone%20to%20be%20silent%20and,notice%20his%20slightest%20mistake.%20And%20they%27ll%20like%20that.>

So poor Thomas made the mistake of not believing the eyewitness accounts of his beloved brothers and sisters and has paid for it to two millennia with a name that indicated he did nothing to dispel his disbelief.

What is missing in his unfair characterization is the fact there was someone who did do something, that many considered was the biggest mistake of all time, and Thomas, unlike many in his day in the end, believed it.

The mistake, in the world's eyes, was simple. God gave up His glory and became a mere man, pretty unbelievable. Then God lived as impoverished a life as He possibly could, as a man, still unbelievable. Finally, God did the unthinkable and let His enemies kill Him.

But I think it's a mistake to say Jesus did nothing, what Jesus did was everything.

And Thomas knew it, he saw it, but above all he believed it.

But Jesus had to do it, because, you can't know Jesus, until He reveals Himself for who He is, "My Lord and My God." As Thomas confesses in our Gospel today.

After all it may indeed be unbelievable but Jesus rising from the dead, appearing to over 500 witnesses, having more than 24,000 written accounts about Him, and eyewitness disciples and apostles who were willing and did die for Him, is at the end of the day worth believing.

Help me with my unbelief for sure, but believing is seeing even more!

AMEN

Rev. Marc A. Kappel, M.Div.
Faith Lutheran Church
Eustis FL