

## Trinity 24

### Measures of Faith

Matthew 9:18-26

St. Andrew's Anglican Church – Jacksonville, OR

by Rev. Mr. William Baker

*“While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, my daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.”*

We are all aware of the biblical definition of faith: The KJV puts it this way *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* And when you look at the Jerusalem Bible the language is slightly stronger; *“ONLY faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen.”* (Heb. 11:1)

Faith is important, faith is necessary...so to live a Christian life in pursuit of Godliness and to live within God's will we must have some measure of Faith. So...where does this faith come from? Again we return to scripture to find our answer in Romans chapter 12; *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”* (Romans 12:2-3) So...it is by God's grace that we are given our measure of faith and it is through our proper use of 'that measure of faith given to us' that we may be dealt more faith as we seek Godly lives. And this is what today's Gospel reading is relaying to us this morning.

The 'ruler' our gospel story presents is Jairus, Head of the Synagogue in the area of Lake Galilee. Now, remember, there was great opposition to Jesus and His message and for an official of the Church to come and kneel at the feet of Jesus and illustrate such faith was a very bold position to take. And his is an example of how we should all come to Christ...on our knees...at His feet. The Lord imparted to this man a measure of faith and he edified it to the fullest extent. He trusted in

Jesus and despite any repercussions from the crowd or reactions bound to come from the church, Jairus' faith requests Jesus to come to his home and lay His hands on his daughter. So, is this then complete faith? It looks like it to the point that he used his faith soberly as it was given unto him. And I believe that to be true. But, if we compare the faith of Jairus to that of the Centurion in the previous chapter we find that the Centurion seems to have an even 'greater' faith. Remember his story as he came to ask Jesus for the healing of his servant. *"The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."* (Matthew 8:8) Sounds like greater faith doesn't it? Lord, you don't need to come to my home...just say the word...my faith knows that nothing is impossible for you? Is Jairus weaker in Faith than the Centurion? No. If it is the Lord who imparts to us Faith then it can only be expected of us to react to that faith according to the measure given to us. So Jesus arose and followed Jairus according to his measure of faith and the disciples followed.

*"And behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole."* This woman obviously had a severe hemorrhage or disease of some kind that would have made her 'unclean' and unable to attend the local synagogue or to even associate within her own community. But look at the faith she has! Since she would not have been able to mingle with the crowds around Jesus, she most likely did not really understand His message but, God's imparting faith was so great that when Jesus passed by her on His way to heal a dead girl she reached out...believing so strongly that only touching his garments would heal her.

Why would the Father give this woman so great a measure of Faith? Remember the story of Ester? Ester, a Jewish girl, is chosen by King Xerxes to be his bride. When the evil Haman plots to kill all the Jews, Ester from her position as queen, is instrumental in exposing Haman and preventing the deaths of so many people. And the renowned verse from this part of scripture: *"And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"* (Ester 4:14) When we hear a story such as Ester's it requires us to look deeper into the lives of those found in scripture. This woman...with an issue of blood, this

woman...whose faith says 'just touch His garment' has lived her whole life for such a time as this! Her story recorded forever in the Word made flesh! *"If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole."* What a measure of Faith! And now, watch what Jesus does.

*"But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."*

And what made her whole? It wasn't the garment. It was her Faith...In Jesus's own words *"Thy faith hath made thee whole"...* A faith given by the grace of our Father in Heaven...a measure of faith properly used. And why? Why is this episode in the scriptures? To what purpose does the divine include this short narrative in our Gospels...in the middle of what seems to me to be an urgent trip? Remember, Jesus is on the road travelling to heal Jairus' daughter, to bring her back from the dead. Jairus' faith, unlike that of the Centurion or the diseased woman, has asked Jesus to come physically to his home and touch, with His own hands, his daughter. He too has a measure of faith...and he seems to be true to it but, through the words of Jesus to the ailing woman, Jairus gets an insight into faith, or at least we do. Jesus's response to the woman *"Thy faith hath made thee whole"* could be seen as an admonition to the ruler noting the possibility that Jairus may have had doubts and shortchanged his faith, even as great as his faith was. As great as any measure of faith may be there is always more Jesus is willing to give as long as we are faithful to our callings. *"To whom much is given, much is required."* And also notice that these miracles, as well as these words of Jesus, are only in the presence of those following Jesus, those who have eyes to see and hearts to understand.

*"And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land."*

Now, we have in a sense, demoted the faith of the ruler in comparison to the Centurion and the Woman on the road but, like Ester, the ruler too has acquired a place in biblical history for such a time as his. You see,

the people in Jairus' community were not looking for a miracle...they were not looking for Jesus...the funeral had already begun...the music was playing. And when Jesus told them that the girl was not dead but sleeping they "*laughed him to scorn*". So what did Jesus do?...He sent them away and only allowed His followers to witness this miracle. It may be that this was the proper use of Jairus' measure of faith and is what brought Jesus and the other believers together to experience the glory of the Lord. Or...even if was a shallow use of his faith, Jairus' story shows us how far Jesus will come to make up for our weaknesses. And I cannot say for sure, but after these events, as they traveled their dusty road, I can only imagine that each measure of faith was multiplied exponentially.

Those with faith witnessed these miracles for what they truly were; wholeness given to the sick...resurrected life given to the dead...wholeness given to us whose bodies are riddled with sin...the promise of eternal life for those who parish in this world because of sin. Their faith had opened their eyes to witness these miracles...to see through the glass more clearly and with more understanding. Those who scoffed, because they had no faith, were sent away...put outside the group. Yes, they witnessed the effects of these miracles, but could not see as clearly through the glass and missed the point of who Jesus was...of who Jesus is...

We, as Christians with some measure of Faith, must be mindful of the position of the faithless. They miss the miracles of this life by their blindness. It is our responsibility to edify our Lord by opening their eyes to the Gospel truth of who Jesus is. We are invited to walk the road with Jesus...we are invited into the room. Today you are invited to come to the Table and share in the Meal of Redemption...the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ! Through His grace and mercy we are able to see and to begin to understand, at some level, the Truth that is in Jesus Christ. May we help those not yet invited in to see the true light, that they too may receive a measure of faith and begin the journey that we are so blest to travel.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.