

9-8-24

Riding the Same Wavelength

Mark 2: 1 – 5

I think one of the greatest challenges we have as Christians when it comes to explaining our faith to others is this whole idea of faith itself.

Typically, we Christians talk about faith as the essential and non-negotiable ingredient that secures our salvation. We often reference Ephesians 2:8 to make our point: *“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

We may use certain analogies to explain faith.

For example, we might say ... when you go to sit in that chair over there, you must have faith that it is going to hold your body weight.

Or ... when you put the key into the ignition of the car and turn it over, you have faith that the car motor is going to start up.

Or ... when you board the jetliner and strap the seat belt over your waist, you have faith that the plane will speed down the runway and eventually become air born, carrying you to wherever you want to go.

I could go on for days with these analogies.

One of my favorites is the analogy about the tight rope walker who walks across the Niagara Falls on a thin rope. Everyone cheers and applauds him for his death – defying achievement, believing he can do it again even with someone on sitting on his shoulders, but when he asks for a volunteer to be the passenger, no one takes him up on his offer!

“Will you get on Jesus’ shoulders as he carries you across the river?” shouts the evangelist.

“This is the sort of faith you need to become a Christian!

The type of faith that trusts God with everything!”

I guess I could do that, the listener ponders, as long as you could positively, 100 percent guarantee me that Jesus himself was the tightrope walker!

Well, I’m here today to attempt to give you another analogy about faith. Whether it’s better than the ones I’ve already described, you’ll have to be the judge.

To be honest, I’m not sold on the ones I’ve mentioned so far. I think there’s better ones out there, and if you have one, I’d certainly like to hear it.

Perhaps the one about lying on the surgeon’s table as the anesthetic slowly drips into our vein. We’re trusting and hoping that the medical team knows what they’re doing, and that, in a little while we’ll wake up in the recovery room to see our friends and family again, on the road to recovery. I think this takes real faith.

But is it the faith Jesus requires of us?

Jesus said in John 5:24, *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

This is the kind of faith I want. The kind that assures me of eternal life with God. I suspect this is the type of faith you want as well.

And maybe, it's not so much about the kind of faith, but what or whom we've placed your faith in. After all, Jesus said, "believe in Him who sent me."

But this leads me to the portion of scripture where I think I've found another analogy about faith that could be helpful for us if we ever find ourselves in a situation where we were asking ourselves or someone else about faith and whether we have the sort of faith that will see us through to salvation, and it comes from Mark 2:5 where it says, "*When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'*"

And I guess this is the question I bring before you this morning:

What kind of faith did he see in these people?

And I say these people because it wasn't just about the paralytic. It was also about the people who brought the paralytic to Jesus.

Because when you think about it, that paralytic would have never gotten a chance to meet Jesus if it hadn't been for his friends. And it doesn't even say they were the paralytic's friends.

The Bible just says there were four of them, that they were men, and they had faith.

The text makes it sound so simple, and to some degree it is, but on the other hand, we cannot help but ask what kind of faith did they have?

Because it was the kind of faith that moved Jesus to say something very profound: "*Son, your sins are forgiven.*"

I don't think we can ever overstate the weight of the moment when we realize our sins are forgiven – in that moment when we finally understand that those things that have weighed us down and have burdened our consciences with guilt and regret and sorrow, that they've finally been lifted so that we can have release and breathe again and know that we have a new and fresh start and that we're back on the pathway of life - that we're not doomed to die in our trespasses and sins, but that our souls are truly made clean because of what Jesus did on the cross, taking upon himself the punishment we deserve.

When this happens to us – when we finally believe that Jesus loves us so much that He wants to and provides a way for our forgiveness and salvation, we will never be the same again.

As a young Christian, I used to think how disappointing it must have been for the the paralytic when Jesus said those words, “*Son, your sins are forgiven.*”

My guess is that his greatest desire for meeting Jesus was to walk again, so when Jesus said, “*Your sins are forgiven*”, he must have been initially let down. Even to this day, I'm not sure how he initially felt, but I do know this ... things were about to drastically change for him on different levels.

So, here's my thought: When Jesus saw their faith of these men, the paralytic and his transporters, he couldn't help but think to himself ... These guys get me!

These guys are on my wavelength!

These guys are catching my vibes!

They're picking up what I'm laying down!

In other words, they understand why I've come and what my mission is.

Isn't it great when you meet someone who understands you? And you just click with that person?

Why do you think people who own Jeeps go to Jeep rallies?

Why do you think horse people go to corrals where other horse people congregate?

Or football fans tailgate at their favorite football stadium on the weekends?

Or quilters go to quilting conventions?

They want to be surrounded by people who think like them and can relate to them and appreciate the same stuff they appreciate and value.

Jesus observed those guys carrying the handicapped person to the door. And he observed them realizing that there was no way they were going to see Jesus unless they did something very crazy and drastic that was probably going to raise the ire of the crowd – after all, who is going to want dirt, dust, and straw and who knows what else flung into their faces while they're trying to see Jesus!

Jesus saw all the trouble that these men went through in order to have an audience with him, and he said to himself ... these guys get me!

I don't know, but it must have been a very satisfying moment for Jesus.

So much of Jesus's teaching flew right over the heads of the disciples, and this wasn't Jesus' fault. He tried to explain his mission in the most basic and simple way possible, but sometimes they were just too spiritually dense.

And the Pharisees and Sadducees, the contemporary religious authorities were opposed to Jesus right from the start.

Who were Jesus' friends and confidants? He really had none!

But these four who brought the paralytic, who saw the large overwhelming crowd spilling out of the doorway, they could have given up and went home and told the paralytic, maybe another day.

No, instead they came up with another plan and though it would be crazy and difficult and inconvenient and costly and people would look at them and judge them for their audacity and their presumptuousness, they did it anyway!

And Jesus saw all this playing out in front of him and he must have chuckled inside because he saw his kind of people – people who did not run from a daunting or overwhelming task. People who said, on this day it's about you, not about me.

I wish I could be more of Jesus' kind of person.

A person who sees a great need in another person's life and isn't afraid to wonder how that need could be met even if it means breaking from our schedule and seeing where it may lead us and not worrying the whole time about when I can get back to my schedule.

Jesus was with the Father in heaven and he agreed with His father that he needed to come to earth and be our Savior.

I want to be Jesus' kind of person that when I'm faced with a large obstacle in my life I won't quickly eject from the situation and say, oh well, better luck next time. Maybe I could face the situation head on and see where Jesus takes me.

Maybe I could be Jesus' kind of person and sometimes take the more difficult route. Sure, I could bully my way through the crowd and demand my rights, but maybe a more creative way to the solution is available, I just have to think more creatively and work with others to find a solution. Jesus called twelve disciples and said to them, I'm leaving in your hands the responsibility of leading my fledgling church.

I want to be Jesus' kind of person who isn't afraid to flex my spiritual muscle, unsure of the immediate outcome, but certain that God will give me exactly what I need when I need it.

It's easy to read about the great men and women of faith that have gone before us and have accomplished things that have become renown among the believers, and this can inspire us to greater heights and good deeds, and I don't want to minimize what God has done through them, but if we could be more like these men who brought this broken man to Jesus – a man who was both physically and spiritually crippled – and God healed Him!

Then we too would truly be exhibiting a faith that would please God because we would be imitating him.

For God through his Son Jesus saw the large crowd, and he had compassion. And he didn't remain on the sideline, but came to rescue us, and though his mission was one of great cost and sacrifice, he didn't shy away from it but faced it head on knowing that to accomplish it was to forgive the multitude and secure many souls for heaven and to do the Father's will and bring great glory to His name.

Let's catch Jesus's vibe as these men did.

Let's get on Jesus' frequency and have a faith that invites the grace of God into our lives and into the lives of many others. Amen.