

Fresh Vision

Faith pleases God. Surprise, you look at the disciples that Jesus chose. I'm like I read it, and I'm like well okay He can choose me then. I mean you look at who He picks. He's picking not just everyday blue collar people and fishermen, but even the dregs of society: hookers, and tax collectors, and thieves. To one He says 'truly this day you'll be with me in paradise.' And I just believe that if that thief hadn't died on the cross, he would have been also a disciple of Jesus from that very day.

So Jesus likes to use imperfect people to do impossible things. And He likes to use whatever little faith they have to move mountains in their life. It's by faith that we're saved, not by our works. It's by faith that we experience the indwelling of the heavens, and the out flowing of the heavens in our lives. You even look at the life of Abraham, who was very much an imperfect character, had many flaws and did some kind of bad things, and yet God chose him to be the father of the covenant, and when He chose him, it is said that Abraham believed and what did that mean? All you church nerds. It was accredited to him as righteousness. That he simply heard the word of God, and believed it. Believed the promise, it was accredited to him as righteousness. Faith pleases God.

And faith presses. It presses into God. It approaches the throne boldly with the kind of access that only a beloved kid, a beloved son, a beloved daughter has with their parent. It's the kind of faith that believes God really can do anything. That He wants to do great things in our lives, and that He's not holding our sin over our head. That's the gospel. Wow. It's the kind of faith that my kids have when they want me to do something that's impossible. I mean my kids are literally astonished. They don't believe me when I say something's impossible. They're like dad, you can do it. Dad, just do it! Like I can't.. it's impossible, I can't do that. But it's this exact kind of faith that Jesus teaches us that we should approach the throne of God with. Father, you can do it. Unlike me, an imperfect father, or our perfect Father in heaven who loves us and has all power says my child, I will do it.

See faith is this daily trust that what God says in His word is true and that God's promises are true, and that He loves us, and that He's not out to get us. Faith is not a leap. It leaps sometimes, but it's an enduring daily trust that God really can do the impossible. That God can do the impossible in your life. God can do the impossible in your life.

See I think when we become people of faith, we become people of vision because faith says God can do anything, and that gives us this.. I want to call it like a "what if" heart. What if? What if? What if? And we don't look at our age, we don't look at our sickness, we don't look at our poverty, we don't look at our lack of education or any of the other things that we think set us back, we just say what if? What if God really did want to start a ministry through me? What if God really did want to start a business through me? What if I could be married again? What if? What if? What if God could use me to bring my family back together? And I think that's the thing, that faith gives us this inner joy of dreaming again. That thing we had when we were kids to be able to just be like what if we did this? And what if we did that? You remember how fun that was, don't you. I certainly do.

I remember once when my dad and I, on a cocktail napkin, I was like maybe ten years old, we weren't drinking cocktails, so don't worry. When I was like ten years old, we drew a legit water park we were thinking of building in our backyard. Now I didn't know he wasn't actually thinking of building it, but in my mind I was like what if. What if we had a tubular water slide going from the upstairs bedroom down that landed on a trampoline and bounced you into the water: that would be amazing. And when we drew that thing, I felt alive, I felt excited.

And that's the thing, when we have a fresh vision for our life something new, something that we're excited about that could go anywhere. There's something about the soul that comes alive.

Can anyone attest to that? That even if we don't do it, it still brings us life because we've become people of possibility. We've become 'what if' thinkers. We become dreamers and that's what God has called us to.. God wants to do something great in your life. And very often, we disqualify ourselves. You're not disqualified. You're not disqualified. You're chosen, you've been given everything you need and you're not too anything to not do what God's called you to do. It's His power anyway, right? And this is what the passage is about today that Hannah read so eloquently: Matthew chapter 17. I'm going to read this to you, but it does not escape me that this is about a epileptic boy that is healed. In fact it's important for me even as I'm studying this passage. It says "when they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before Him. 'Lord, have mercy on my son,' he said. 'He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples but they couldn't heal him.'" Jesus, I think He's looking at His disciples when He says this. That's Bobby talking, by the way. "He says 'you unbelieving and perverse generation. How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here.' Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of the boy and he was healed at that moment."

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Let's just pause there for a moment. We do not believe that if you have epilepsy you're demon possessed. But the bible shows that sometimes demon possession could cause epilepsy, so let's just not get hung up on that, okay? "Jesus rebuked the demon, it came out of the boy and he was healed at that moment. Then the disciples came to Jesus in private." I love how it's in private, right? Cause they're embarrassed. Cause they'd been doing these great works for God, but it didn't work here. And they say "why couldn't we drive it out?" And Jesus replied "okay, this is the worst translation ever. "Because you have so little faith." I just want to pause there. Jesus doesn't say this. This is a bad translation. The bible is translated in the New Testament from Greek to English, and what it actually says here is because you are little faiths. So that doesn't really make sense in English, does it? It actually doesn't make sense in Greek.

So what happened was Jesus has this nickname for His disciples. Remember, these guys are like late high school/college age, okay? They're like between 17 and 23, something like that. They're young guys, and He has this kind of coach-like nickname for these guys. He calls them the little faiths. He says it through all the scriptures. Whenever it says oh you of little faith, what He's saying like.. He's like oh you little faiths. It's a noun. And in Greek the word is *alaga-pistoy*. It doesn't mean anything in Greek. You have to like tear it apart.

And basically this is probably the author Mark trying to take what Jesus was saying in Aramaic, which is like the common Hebrew language, and turn it into some kind of a Greek word. Basically Jesus had this nickname, and it's so hard to translate, and I was like if I were translating this just for my church, just for people in America and Southern California, how would I translate this? How would I translate this sentence? And the word I would translate it would be rookies. Because you're a bunch of rookies. That's basically what He says. Why couldn't we cast them out? And Jesus says because you're a bunch of rookies, because you're nubs, because you're scrubs, because you're green, because you don't get it. You don't get what I'm saying to you.

And see this is important because Jesus doesn't accuse them of having little faith. Jesus accuses them of having no faith. Not at all. And He says "truly I tell you, if you just had faith as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain move from here to there, and it would move. Nothing.. and it would move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

This is such a deep and important text, because first of all, the first thing we want to see from faith, I chose this awkward demon story for a reason. I know it makes us modern people uncomfortable to read texts like this, but I think it's so important for us to never forget that faith is primarily about authority; about the kingdom. It's about authority. You see that these disciples didn't seem to have authority over this demon. Why? I believe because they were doing it in their own strength rather than in the strength of the kingdom of God. I don't know, that's just conjecture. It's my guess.

But faith seems to be over and over about authority. You see it in the story where Jesus meets the Centurion, and the Centurion has a sick servant, and he just sends to Jesus, please heal my servant. So Jesus comes to his house and the Centurion comes out to Him and he's like Lord I'm not worthy enough to have you under my roof. And you almost read like I'm surprised you came all this way. And He says where is the servant? Let me go heal him. And Jesus says you don't need to do that. I get it. He says I am a man under authority, and I have men under me who are under my authority. I say to this one go, and he goes, and I say to this one come and he comes, and I know all you need to do is just say the word, and my servant will be healed. And how does Jesus respond? Unlike always criticizing people's faith, this time He praises it. I have never seen so much faith in all of Israel. The guy gets it that faith is about authority. It's not about your authority, but it's about submitting to the authority of the kingdom of the heavens and exercising the authority of the kingdom over heavens to do good over evil; to have real power, not from me, but from heaven.

Theologically we say that God gave authority over this world to mankind to care for it and protect it. We gave that authority over to hell in our sin and Jesus Christ came and took that authority back from hell. So in God's providence, His fullness or the fulfillment of His vision for this world became true when He took a new man, Jesus Christ and made Him the king of this world. And it is in His name that we do what we're called to do – great things, God-sized things. Not Bobby sized things, or Hannah sized things, but things that are so big and amazing only God could do it because it's under His power and His authority. It's a kind of faith that says that's God's mountain. He can move it. He put it there He can put it somewhere else. And that's the kind of faith that I'm learning to have and that I think all of us want to have. It's by this faith that we're saved, it's by this faith that we ought to pray, it's by this faith that we ought to build a church, that we do whatever it is that we're called to do.

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And so what's so great about this is that we often think that we have to have enormous faith to do big things. But instead, Jesus doesn't say that. He says you just got to have just a tiny bit, like so small most people can't even see it. Like if I had a seed on my finger, you literally wouldn't be able to see a mustard seed, it's so tiny. And He's like if you just had the faith of this mustard seed, you could do anything. Anything.

And the way that I read that is that God needs you. If like, and I've said this before, I say it in every altar call, if like 99% of you doubts everything, you think it's a bunch of hogwash, you just don't know about all this stuff, but one percent of you says I trust God; one percent of you says maybe, God can use that and use it in a big way.

You see in God's kingdom, seeds don't remain seeds. Seeds take root, seeds grow, and Jesus, in other passage He says and that mustard seed becomes the largest of the plants in the garden. We have mustard here in California, its native, and these mustard plants are beautiful. In late spring, they'll get up to like eight/nine feet tall, and birds will be in it, but it's just originally this tiny little.. it makes a whole hill of yellow. It's like God took mustard and was just like (BLOWS LIPS).

What I'm trying to convince you of today is something very simple that God can use your little bit of faith to do something enormous. And I think that's why so often God is sort of forced to use broken, imperfect people to do impossible things because the perfect people can't step out in faith yet, because things aren't perfect yet. I'll just let that simmer for a second. That there is a twist of weirdness to the real spiritual giants I've met in my life. They're just not really afraid of things not being planned out, they're not afraid of what other people think about them, they don't have as much of that worry undergirding – what happens if I lose my position? What happen if I don't get a job? What happens if this costs me money? What happens if this person isn't my friend anymore? And you see that true, like amazing people of faith have done a good job of just saying I'm not what I do, I'm not what I have, and I'm not what people say about me.

You see God can use, in all your imperfection, in all your weirdness, in all your brokenness, and your past, and your skeletons in your closet and everything, in spite of all that stuff, if you've got one bit of mustard seed faith, He can use you to do great things for Him. Do you believe it? I do too and I'm thankful for that. He's so good. He loves us so much. He's taking care of all that stuff. I'm so thankful. Thank you, Jesus. He can use your one percent to move mountains. And you can say to that mountain in your life be cast out into the sea. In Jesus' name, that's God's mountain. You move. And you say it with authority because you have it. Good.

I think very often in our hurriedness, in our impatience, see that's why faith is also a daily thing. We don't inherit our destiny. I think oftentimes because our dream is not big enough, but that sometimes and only sometimes, our dream remains unfulfilled because honestly it's just not big enough.

There's this great story of a pro golfer who went to somewhere in Saudi Arabia or the Emirates or something, and he was invited to go golfing with a Saudi prince. And this Saudi prince and him spent two days or so golfing together. They had a great time. They're slapping each other on the back.

So him and this Saudi prince are golfing together, and they become like best friends, and like the Saudi prince is putting him, this pro golfer, back on his like private jet to fly him back to LA, and he says to him 'before you go, I want to give you a gift. Something to commemorate these last couple days. This has been amazing.' And the pro golfer is like 'are you kidding me? This has been a gift to me. I'm astonished that you'd even say that.' And the Saudi prince is like 'please, let me just send you something.' And the guy says 'all right, why don't you give me a really great golf club, like your favorite golf club.' And he says 'done.' So this pro golfer gets back on a plane and he's flying back, and now his mind is starting to go wild. He's like what's this club going to look like? Is it going to be like gold plated with like diamonds on it and like a picture of the Saudi prince, and like what's this going to be. And like he starts wondering what it's going to be, and weeks go by and nothing's happened, nothing's showing up, and he's wondering if maybe this prince forgot. And then all of a sudden, a courier arrives with a package, and inside the package is a title deed to the Saudi prince's favorite golf club. A golf club, a country club. He misunderstood. He sent him a golf club.

And see what we learn from this story is that when we are talking to our Father, the King of kings and Lord of lords, we sometimes ask for a diamond encrusted gold plated golf club. God has something much bigger and more important in mind. Something that will last, something that will be blessing to so many, and very often in that waiting, we sometimes are brought to a crossroads to either let go of the dream, or just decide you know what, I'm just going to go double or nothing and make this dream even bigger.

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I refuse to give up on the fact that God's put this dream in my heart. If He has, don't let it go. If it's not from Him, let it die on the vine. But if it's from the Lord, He's put it in your heart, do not let it go. It takes awhile. It takes awhile.

And I love these big audacious dreams. The bigger the better. Because even if you don't hit it, you still do something awesome. I remember Nick Vujicic, who is a dear friend of mine, Nick is a famous preacher. I think he's probably becoming our generations Billy Graham, and you recognize instantly when Nick preaches, he has no arms or legs. He's been here lots of times. He's amazing. And I remember, maybe it was ten years ago, so a long time, he said I want to reach seven billion people with the gospel. And I was like so the whole world. Like the population of the whole planet. Why don't you just say the whole world? And I think to him saying seven billion is very specific. Like he knows how many people there are in the world, and he wants to reach all of them.

Nick is a dreamer who gets it done. This year Nick has preached to over six hundred million people and he's only 34, so he's definitely on his way. And Nick is not a motivational speaker, as you might think. He is a bible gospel preacher. I was talking to him recently in an interview for TBN, and I asked him between shooting, because we're friends, we've known each other for a long time, and I was like do you ever get sick of like talking about no arms, no legs thing. And he's like no, it opens the door.

And you know what I think, I think Nick's thing about having no arms and legs is is that in a way it's been easier for him to let go of this world to embrace the next. He looks forward to the heavenly body the Lord is going to give him. He looks forward to giving me a hug with two arms when we get to heaven and when we get to the world to come.

And so all of us as Christians, we want that, right? We want to be thinking about heaven, we want to be thinking about the important things, the things that matter, but in a way, I would almost say Nick's body is poor, right? It's like almost poverty of the body, he also gets a richness of the spirit that so many of us or most of us don't have. You just see incredible faith and trust in God. You sit with him and it's like sitting with Jesus.

And so God's using him and so by having this big audacious dream, seven billion people, it doesn't matter that he can't walk. None of those things matter. He's going to get where he needs to go, amen?

And that's true of you. The bigger your dream, the more you could do in life. And the bigger your dream is, and the more impossible it is, the more you and everybody else knows if that thing comes to pass, it was God who did it and not him, and not her. And that's a big part of it, isn't it. That through the fulfillment of the big dream, you can say look you guys know I didn't do this. It was Him.

I think the biggest thing that gets in the way for most of us, and this is why I talk about it every Sunday, is shame. I don't deserve it. Bobby, you don't know what I've done. Bobby, I'm a failure. I've messed up eleven times. Do you know how many times we've been divorced?

God's never listened to my prayers. God can't use me to do a ministry. It's that kind of self talk, I think, that erodes our faith over time. That we start out excited but as time goes on and things don't come as quickly as we'd like, we let go of the dreams that He has put on our heart. And so yes, sometimes it's true. We don't deserve our salvation. That's for sure true.

We don't always deserve our dreams or our miracles or new relationship or a whole family or a ministry or even heaven. But isn't that what's so great about the gospel is God's not saying that over you. He's just not! He's saying what are you talking about? I love you! Everything that you are saying is what hell says over you, not what heaven says, not what I say. I love you.

Very often we're like that prodigal son. In the story of the prodigal son, he runs away, he takes all of his father's money, he spends it on prostitutes and gambling. He's working in the troughs with pigs, and he's a Jewish man. So he's there with pigs. The lowest of the low and he finally comes to his senses and he says I should just go to my father's house and be a hired hand.

And as he's coming home, what does he say when his father comes running out and throws his arms around him? He says father, I am undeserving to be your son, just let me be a hire.. and the father cuts off this practiced speech, he's like shshshsh stop. Put a ring on his finger, put a robe on his back, throw a party, this son of mine who was dead is now alive.

You see you can't be in the presence of God and not be His son or daughter. You can't be a hired hand, you can't be a servant. You either have to be gone, or you have to be a hundred percent. No lukewarm. You have to be a hundred percent His beloved child or just nothing at all.

When you're home, that's who you are. Can I get an amen from the redeemed saints who didn't deserve salvation, we didn't deserve His favor, we didn't deserve our miracle, we didn't deserve our

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healed relationships, but God did it anyway in His goodness, in His favor, in His life and He did it all in the name of Jesus who is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Don't give up on the dream or the vision that God's put on your heart if it's from Him. God's promise to Abraham was given to him when he was 75 and it was fulfilled when he was 100. That's 25 years Abraham had to wonder where is God. But he did it. And he created a family that outnumbers the stars in the sky. Wow.

Don't give up on your miracle because you're in a hurry, and don't give up your spiritual authority because you're in a hurry. Trust in Him. Write down your dream even if it's on a cocktail napkin. Begin to ask yourself what if. What if I made this bigger? And get connected with heaven. Read the word of God. Ask the Lord. Pray over your business. Pray over your finances. Pray over your family. Don't just pray over religious things. Bring the important things in your life to the Lord, and release your faith, and watch Him do good things in Jesus' name, amen.