

**“GENUINE, HUMBLE, STEADY FAITH”**  
**MATTHEW 14:14-20**

**Main Idea:** A genuine, humble, and steady faith in God pleases Him and welcomes Him to act powerfully in our lives.

I will open today's sermon with a discussion of what kind of people some of us were prior to salvation. Some of the people in our church family remember before they were saved, before they decided to follow Jesus, they argued with and mocked Christians. Others of you went to church for years, hanging around Christians, yet without being born again. Others came to church or decided to pray out of sheer desperation. Something really difficult in life pushing you toward any kind of hope. Not because you wanted a deep relationship with God but were willing to try anything. Another portion of you followed Christianity under parental or community expectations. I must also address those saints who may have been delivered from such darkness, such torment, that when you came into the Light you couldn't understand how you were so blinded and evil, completely ignorant to God and His righteousness. Lastly there are some of you who have faithfully served and walked in your calling only to reach a huge wall in your walk with God, a trial, a disappointment, or some sort of failure where you may be ashamed by how poorly you are doing. I am purposely trying to reveal your human nature toward faith and reveal in today's text that we haven't changed that much. While studying today's passage, I kept asking myself, and the Lord, why the demonized boy did not seem to be the center of the story in spite of the title that my bible has placed above it.

Why did Jesus seem to be all business and not as relational as other encounters? I will do my best to reveal His broader and more comprehensive work in this passage. A call to genuine, humble and steady faith in Him.

So, who was in the audience for this call to faith?

### **I. The Crowd**

This story begins with Jesus coming off the mountain with Peter, James, and John. Apparently to join the other 9 apostles. When they came upon the disciples, they found them arguing with Scribes in front of a large crowd. Let's look at all the characters of this story; we have Jesus, author and finisher of our faith, twelve disciples chosen by God in spite of their many blunders, curious by-standers, argumentative scribes, a desperate father & tormented son. Why are all of these characters so critical to this story? They were all there as Jesus spoke and performed a miracle. I believe Jesus knew every person there and wanted to speak to each. Just as today He wants to speak to each one of us through His word. The scribes were doing what they typically did, rejecting the messiah and arguing with His followers. Elsewhere in Matthew the scribes were spoken of as not speaking with authority, wrongfully demanding signs from Jesus, Jesus suffered many things from them, we're told our righteousness has to exceed that of the scribes to get into heaven, the scribes were indignant when Jesus was worshiped in the temple, and Jesus says to them woe, because they are hypocrites keeping people from God. The scribes were absolutely seen as faithless and known for twisting and perverting the things of God.

**“The crowd”** represented those locals curious enough to hang around Jesus and the disciples, looking for a variety of things. Some maybe on their way to believing in Christ but still not considered followers.

**The Father** who knew enough of Jesus reputation and even the disciples for their ability to heal the sick. This man would have been so utterly helpless and desperate for his son to be healed. We don't know why the son became demonized. We don't have much information on them other than this plea for help.

**The 12.** These men chosen by God to be close to Christ. To receive special authority and promises. These men had a track record for having repeat bouts of little faith. Even after having been witness to so many miracles. In Matthew 10 Jesus gave them authority to cast out demons and to heal. Mark 6 tells us that they did in fact cast out demons and healed many. Did they lose their authority? What happened? Peter was told, "You of little faith" when he sank in the water. When they worried about bread Jesus said you of little faith. Then Peter rebukes Jesus. Confused faith at times. The little faith they had was genuine but it lacked humility and it lacked steadfastness.

Besides Jesus Christ, all the men of this story had issues with their faith in God.

## **II. Desperate Dad & Tormented Son**

Let's consider the attention grabber in this story. Any parent listening can understand that special kind of desperation when you your kid is suffering, and you cannot do anything about it. It is a horrible and deeply disturbing feeling. Intense desperation can make the sanest of people try anything for a cure. I suspect this man's belief in Jesus and the disciples was more a desperate hope that he could just find any help for his son, I don't blame him. Can you imagine having a son that would constantly be under threat of falling into a fire or drowning in water? Two things you need for survival and comfort have now become incredibly dangerous and a curse. Bodies of water used for bathing, fishing, and washing were now associated with drowning. Fire for warmth or cooking was now an opportunity to be horribly burned. The enemy of our souls is so cruel. This man's story is enough to evoke high levels of sympathy and compassion. Combining the terror this boy endures with the fact he was like this for years created a moment for the scribes to cast a shadow of doubt on the disciples and their master. Luke tells us that the man begged the disciples to cast out the demon, but they could not. This boy convulsing, foaming at the mouth, being shattered to the ground. Imagine, you are 9 of the 12 disciples who had recently been authorized to cast out demons and heal the sick, and you cannot do anything to help this boy. People are watching, scribes are mocking, fear, doubt, humiliation, discouragement, and unbelief abound. How does Jesus answer this desperate situation? Does He comfort the 9, sympathize with the father, and chasten the scribes? No. Shockingly, He lays out a rebuke and reveals His frustration with mankind. It is at this verse, that the scene shifts away from the sad plight of the father & son, away from the arrogant scribes, away from the discouraged disciples and puts the light solely on Jesus.

## **III. How long am I to bear with you?**

"O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?" We have to pause with this kind of statement from Jesus. We need to remember that He is love, that He came to save, that He is full of grace, mercy and truth. Jesus is meek and lowly. Satan and His demons are cruel and full of hate. Jesus accomplishes so much with this surprising answer. I believe His answer blankets over all listening. He rebukes the scribes for their rejection of Him and how they have perverted the scriptures.

He challenges the crowd to choose a path and end their lukewarm state. Jesus reminds the father that He is deity, holy, and not just a healer for hire. Jesus again calls the disciples out for their lack of faith, lumping them in with the faithless generation. Most importantly, Jesus reveals to all listening, this broken world is not His home. Jesus left heaven, willingly laid down His glory to become a man, to take on flesh, that He might endure being mocked and physically abused by His own creation, to become sin, to suffer and die, to provide redemption, propitiation, and salvation. Jesus, the son of man, did not enjoy life on this earth, He bore with it because of love. He endured the cross for the joy set before Him and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. His hard statement also reminds us that Jesus is holy, perfect, and without sin. The sinless spotless lamb of God mercifully spent time on earth to purchase us with His blood. He humbles all listening the world is full of sin and perversion and He is rightfully loathes it. The beauty of Jesus that always astounds me is His promise to resist the proud but draw near to the humble. The Father responds to Jesus in broken humility by kneeling, calling Him Lord and teacher. He also confesses His limited belief in Luke's account. "Lord I believe, help my unbelief!" Jesus quickly casts out the demon and restores the boy in front of all.

#### **IV. Faith & Prayer**

At this point, I sense the disciples were not yet humbled but only humiliated. They wait till they are away from the crowd and ask Jesus privately. "Why could we NOT cast it out?" It's possible the authority they had and their success up till now formed an independence, a self-reliance that they were now powerfully autonomous from Jesus.

Again, Jesus is not afraid to be painfully truthful as He points at the disciple's little faith. Their little faith was the problem. They still had authority, but something had happened to create this issue of small faith. This Greek word for little faith, oligopistos means lack of confidence or trusting too little. The issue was not outright unbelief or a rejection of Christ's power, but confidence or trust that was wavering, forgetting all that Jesus had done. They were looking in the right direction but not fully committed to dependence in God. What caused their trust and confidence to wane? I submit the answer is found in Mark's account. Mark 9:29 "And He said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." I know some of our Bible translations have a verse 21 in Matthew stating; "however, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." I will not speak on differing bible translations today, but we can agree that with Mark's account agreeing with prayer being the missing link. This is my understanding, so I invite you to prayerfully look to the word for your own conclusion. I believe the disciples had become self-reliant and began to slack off on praying to God. God is so faithful to chasten, to humble us when we try to serve Him in our own power. This issue of self-reliance is not an isolated event prior to Pentecost when the indwelling of the Holy Spirit began. In 2 Cor. 1 we see Paul and Timothy in a terrible situation in Asia. Paul describes their plight as "we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. God obviously delivered them from that trial but not without first teaching them the important lesson of being reliant on God alone.

What is revealed is prayer strengthens faith and a genuine steady faith depends on prayer. Maintaining a humble walk with God, steady service to God, and genuine reliance on God is maintained by prayer.

## **V. Small Seed Moving a Mountain**

The Lord Jesus solidifies His teaching on faith by bringing up the mustard seed, commonly known as the smallest of seeds. Jesus used the mustard seed in the Matt 13 parable describing the kingdom of heaven. This little seed is known for representing something so very tiny that becomes something substantial. I believe Jesus is looking for a simple focused and accurate belief, a faith, that is place solely on Him, a belief based on God's promises, a faith that does not rely on self, a humble faith that feels so very small and inconsequential before an awesome and mighty God. Here is the important piece of the mustard seed, the God breathed DNA dictates that seed will eventually become nothing else but a mustard tree. The seed has integrity to grow into one plant, the mustard plant. Our heavenly father is looking for us to have a faith that is sure and true regardless of experience or age. A faith in God knowing He is the author and finisher of our faith, and we must trust the Holy Spirit to mature us into the image of His blessed son Jesus. The Lord is stating, your faith is to be genuine, not an act, it is to be humble, dependent on God, and it is to be steady, trusting God to mature you.

I would like to encourage each one of us listening today.

Dear friend, are you in such a desperate situation that you have come to church, looking for something helpful in Christianity? Please know that not only can Jesus comfort and help you in your despair, but He wants all of you. He wants a relationship with you that will take you into eternity with Him. Please see Him as Lord and Savior and not just an immediate rescue. Scripture warns that without surrendering to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ you will be cast into hell forever.

Perhaps you are in full unbelief, standing away from the Lord Jesus? He is acknowledging you today. He has grace and mercy for you today. Humble yourself before Him, confessing your unbelief and ask Him to reveal Himself to you. Like the father in the story, ask Him to help your unbelief.

Brothers and sisters, do others of you consider yourself a believer but are more of an observer, watching in the crowd? I trust the Lord is calling you into an active faith, a faith that grows in maturity. A faith that fills you with joy and peace as you operate in the body of Christ.

Lastly, to you pastors, elders, deacons, and many other Godly leaders, are you trusting too little? Are you lacking in prayer? Are you lacking power to serve? Do you need to correct your belief, to put your faith in line with the little mustard seed?

Saints, we all need to hear this challenge of faith. It is a wonderful thing for God to refine and strengthen our walk with Him. Let us all take a moment to ask God to search our hearts and reveal areas that are "trusting too little" or areas that need help with unbelief. To stay genuine, to remain humble, and to ask God to keep us steadfast and unwavering.

Benediction: Jude 24 - "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only god our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever Amen."