

Theme: How Much Faith Is Enough?

Object: Mustard Seeds or small seeds.

Scripture: Luke 17:5-6

SLIDE When we come to church, we hear a lot talk about faith. We read about faith in the Bible and we sing songs about faith, but what is faith? When we say that we have faith, it means that we believe something is true, even when we can't see it. I heard a story that might help us to understand it better.

One day, a little girl got lost in the woods on a farm near where she lived. The farmer who owned the land found the little girl and said to her, "Don't be afraid; I'll take you home."

The little child looked up at him, and with a smile, said, "I'm not afraid. I knew you would come; I was waiting for you."

"Waiting for me?" said the man. "What made you think I was coming?"

"I was praying that you would," she said.

"You were praying?" asked the farmer. "When I first heard you, you were just saying 'A B C D E F G' - what was that about?"

She looked up again and said, "I wasn't sure exactly what to say, so I was praying all the letters of the alphabet and letting God put them together the way He wanted them to be. He knew I was lost and he knew how to put the letters

together better than I do."

Even though the little girl could not see God, she had faith that He loved her and cared for her. She had faith that if she asked Him to help her, He would.

How much faith is enough? Do we need to have a lot of faith, or will just a little bit do? The answer may surprise you.

The followers of Jesus said to him one day, "Give us more faith."

Jesus answered them, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." Do you know how big a mustard seed is? It is so small that you can hardly see it!

When we have faith in God, it isn't a question of how big our faith is - it is a question of how powerful our God is, and with God all things are possible!

Father, we don't ask you to give us more faith. We simply ask that You help us to use the faith that we have and trust You to do the rest. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Close in prayer

John 5:1-9

Sermon #27

Slide Yet Another Miracle!

I begin today with a quote by Peter Forsythe, the Scottish theologian from the 19th century, **Slide** "The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master". Today we will see this simple but true statement lived out. **Blank**

As we begin chapter 5 of the Gospel According to John it is still early in Jesus' ministry, He travels to Jerusalem and performs another miracle. Jesus was beginning to become a sensation in Israel. As the Apostle Luke recorded, **Slide** "So many thousands of people had gathered together (to hear Jesus) that they were stepping on one another." (Luke 12:1 NASB) **Blank** The gospels tell us that for three and half years Jesus walked the country performing many miracles and teaching the new covenant of God, that in fact, the promised Messiah was before them. Both His teaching and miracles attested to His being the Messiah. When John the Baptist had been imprisoned by Herod Antipas and while in prison he received word of the works Jesus was doing and sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" Jesus answered and said to them, **Slide** 'Go and report to John what you hear and see: *the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.'*" (Matthew 11:3-6 NASB) Jesus taught clearly that He was the Son of God, the long awaited Messiah and that the miracles were part of the evidence to His divine nature and personage. As we will discover in our study this morning Jesus performed many miracles and He used miracles mainly to alleviate peoples suffering. Wherever He went, He banished disease, raised the dead, cast out

demons and feed the hungry. Jesus genuinely cared for people and their sufferings both physical and spiritual. **Blank**

Jesus' teaching was a shift from the traditional ways of teaching by the scribes and Pharisees; Jesus' teaching was amazing and shocking to most. The scribes and Pharisees taught mainly from what other people, mostly rabbis, had written about the scriptures and about man-made added laws. Jesus taught powerfully concerning the kingdom of God. As a result **Slide** "... all the people were hanging on to every word He (Jesus) said." (Luke 19:48 NASB) Even Jesus' enemies admitted, **Slide** "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." (John 7:46 NASB) With this understanding lets begin this morning with John chapter 5. **Blank**

Please open you bibles to John chapter 5. John begins, "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." The phrase "After these things" indicates what John is writing about here took place at an unspecified time after Christ's ministry in Galilee had ended. As we saw last week the Apostle John only recorded one event while Jesus was in Galilee and this was to show how the royal official moved from unbelief to belief and in turn the official's whole household came to believing faith in Jesus. We know however, from the other three gospels that Jesus did much more during His time in Galilee. Jesus was rejected in his home town of Nazareth as seen in Luke chapter 4, He had an extended preaching tour as recorded in Matthew chapter 4, He did multiple miracles, signs and exercised demons from the possessed found in Mark chapter 1 and the story of Peter's mother-in-law in Matthew chapter 8 these are some of the events that took place while Jesus was in Galilee for the second time.

John refers to the "feast of the Jews" six times in his gospel. However, this is the only time where John does not identify which feast it is. Since John uses the phrase

“Jesus went up to Jerusalem” a phrase that is used elsewhere and it likely indicates that this feast is one of the **Slide** three major feasts held in Jerusalem – Passover, Pentecost or Weeks and Tabernacles. As we are instructed in Deuteronomy all Jewish males were required to attend these. **Slide** “Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.” (Deuteronomy 16:16 NASB)

This may then explain why Jesus traveled to Jerusalem at this time. **Blank**

Jesus has traveled to Jerusalem and now we read He is at a specific location. Verse 2 reads, **Slide** “Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep *gate* a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda (*bay-thes-dah*), having five porticoes.” John’s sentence structure here is one that assumes that his readers would naturally know where the *sheep gate* is. This has led many theologians to believe that John wrote or at least began writing his gospel prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The word “*gate*” is not found in the original text and has been added, but is implied by the context.

Slide The *sheep gate* was the gate in the north wall of the city, near the temple, by which sheep were brought into Jerusalem and led to the sheep market and sold for temple sacrifices. Near this gate was **Slide** “a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda (*bay-thes-dah*), having five porticoes” or porches. This pool escaped the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The writing of a French pilgrim who journeyed to Jerusalem in 333 AD describes a pair of pools with five porticoes he calls the pools of Bethsaida (*bay-thes-dah*). The pools are located near the Church of St. Anne in the northeast quarter of the Old City. **Slide** Four covered colonnades or porticoes surround the two pools and a fifth colonnade separates the two pools. There was much debate that this pool could not have existed because experts could not believe a pool would have 5 porticoes, partly because it would have to be shaped like a

pentagon, so they thought, and this was not a design used by the Jews. They argued this was another example to prove the scriptures should not to be considered accurate and in places not true. **Slide** In 1888 the site was excavated and there they found twin pools, one 55 feet long and the other 65 feet long. These twin pools were fed by the large reservoirs called Solomon's pools. Evidence was also found of the 5 arched colonnades or porticoes. The Crusaders regarded this as the site of the pool in John chapter 5 and built a church over the pools with an opening in the floor to get down to the pools. The church had long fallen in ruin by the time of the excavation in 1888.

There has also been much debate as to the true name of the pool. This may be due to that this is the only mention of the "pool of Bethesda" in the scriptures.

However, the name used by John here is most certainly right and is supported by the Qumran scrolls. Bethesda (**bay-thes-dah**) in the Greek is a transliteration of the Hebrew meaning "house of outpouring".

With the truth of the scriptures reaffirmed and John's creditability intact as being inspired by God we now move to verse 3. **Slide** Reading, "In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered." Let me stop here because this is where the earliest manuscripts stop. We can see the scene of this pool, as we have now spent time describing it. This pool provides healing by the supernatural as implied by verse 7. Around this pool there are a variety of disabled people under the protection of the arched colonnades or porticoes or porches all desiring to be healed.

Keep this image in your minds as I take time to deal with the rest of verse 3 and all of verse 4. Reading beginning with the second half of verse 3, "[waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the

pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]” All the theologians I consult agree with my conclusion concerning the bracketed section in your bible of the second half of verse 3 and all of verse 4. First, the earliest Greek manuscripts omit this section. The omitted section contains several word-phrases foreign to John’s writings, including 3 not found anywhere else in the New Testament. These facts and the fact that there is no mention of angels in the rest of this passage indicates that this section was NOT part of John’s original account. At some point in the years following John’s original writing - scribes apparently added this material as a marginal note to present the popular belief that the stirring of the water was done by an angel. **Slide** The early church father Tertullian who lived from 160 to 225 AD and lived in Carthage in the Roman province of Africa, referred to the superstition of the angel stirring the water in his writings. **Blank** As time passed the scribe’s marginal note concerning the angel became incorporated into the text itself. Beside the pools being fed by Solomon’s Pools, it was also thought that the pools were also fed by an underground spring. It is this underground spring that possibly stirred the water. Verse 7 makes it clear that the water was stirred up and people who entered were healed. We will not spend any more time on this and move on.

Verse 5 tells us that among the disabled was “a man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.” What his illness was and how it was known that he had been ill for 38 years, John does not tell us. However, we do know that he either was paralyzed or too weak to move himself on his own and enter the pool. The fact that this man had been incurably ill for almost 4 decades provided Jesus with an opportunity to display His divine power. As we saw in chapter four the water from Jacob’s well could not satisfy the woman’s spiritual thirst and here we now see the water in the pool of Bethesda could not spiritually heal this disabled man.

Jesus sees this poor man lying beside the pool “and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said to him, ‘Do you wish to get well?’” Here is a verse where the New International Version or as I often call it the “Nearly Inspired Version” compared to the New American Standard Bible, King James and English Standard versions differs slightly, but the slight change makes a difference in the understanding of the verse. In the NIV we read, **Slide** *When Jesus saw him lying there, and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time.*” This translation implies that Jesus *learned* of the man’s condition by inquiring. But the Greek indicates that “Jesus knew” because He knows all and does not need to inquire, for He is divine. **Slide** Jesus says to the man, “Do you wish to get well?” Now on the surface this question seems a little out of place. After all if the man did not want to get well he would not have been at the pool. Jesus’ question in truth serves several purposes; it secured the man’s full attention by its bluntness, it focused squarely on his need, it contains the facts of his deep desire to be healed, but it also communicated Jesus’ love and concern when no other had taken the time to help this man. The ill man sensed that the man standing before him knew his predicament and is interested in helping him. He answers Jesus in verse 7, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” Obviously the ability of the pool to heal is limited to one person at a time. Sounds like what they should have had by the pool was what so many government offices have – a machine to take a number and await to be called, however that could take nearly 38 years as well. This disabled man was hoping Jesus might wait with him for the water to be stirred and place him in the water. The possibility that Jesus might heal him never entered his mind for he did not even know who this man was that asked him the question, “Do you wish to get well?” We are shown he did not know who Jesus was later in verse 13. The man’s

answer shows his sadness and maybe even bitterness and his desperation that he is never able to get to the pool fast enough. **Blank** In some ways he is exactly like people we know today. They only believe in the world before them or they either do not believe in the power of God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit He sent or they believe Christ is limited by what they think is possible. Never in this man's wildest imagination would he have recognized how radically his life was about to change. Look at the change Christ has made in your own life; whether radical and quick or gradual your were spiritually dead and now are alive in Christ.

Ready or not Jesus' powerful words in verse 8 changes everything. Jesus commands, **"Get up"**! I think this will be like what happens on the last day as we see by what Jesus says beginning in verse 27 of John chapter 5. Please turn in your bibles and follow as I read the mighty words of our Lord Jesus, **Slide** **"God...as the Father...has given him (Jesus) authority to judge, because he is the Son of man. ²⁸ "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, (Both the living and dead will obey Jesus' voice and His commands) ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment."** **Blank** Jesus possesses the authority given Him by God the Father and He commands the crippled man saying, **"Get up, pick up your pallet and walk."** This short sentence and command contains three imperative verbs that express the completeness of the healing; the man was to stand, he was to carry his pallet or straw mattress he had been lying on and finally he was to walk away. On a larger scale this is also what happened when Jesus spoke **Slide** the entire universe in existence and every star and planet into its proper place by His mere word. Jesus's words are words of power and authority. **Blank**

There is also symbolism found in Jesus' statement when He said, **"pick up your**

pallet.” Jesus’ is not only speaking about the physical mat of straw, but the man’s sin. Jesus’ is telling him to stop sinning lest something worst happens to you. This may also imply that the man’s physical disability was the result of sin, but whether it means that or not, the implication is there – you are healed, sin not more. Before Jesus spoke the man could not lift himself up – let alone pick up his mat. Once Jesus spoke he was able to stand and easily carry the burden of the mat. We are all guilty of sin, unless we repent and unless we place our faith in Christ, which gives us a heart to repent, we too will suffer because of sin. When we have faith and obey Jesus, the burden of our sins becomes as light as the man’s mat. I have known Christians who believe in Christ, have faith in Christ, but their faith is limited and they suffer because they either do not believe Christ can heal all wounds and forgive sins or they refuse to forgive and the “root of bitterness” eats at their souls and bodies like a cancer. Just as this man did not hesitate and obeyed – so must we.

Slide “Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience. Whoever strives to withdraw from obedience, withdraws from Grace.” Thomas Kamps, German 14th century theologian.

Part one of this incredible story of Jesus’ miracle in this mans life comes to an end in verse 9, **Slide** “Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.” Think of the completeness of this man’s healing – for 38 years he had not used his legs, the muscles would have been weak and underdeveloped. Yet, instantly he stands, and he walks and he carries his mat. As Forsythe said, **Slide** “The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master”. This man obeyed his Master.

In closing, as, Paul Harvey use to say, in the next teaching you will hear the “rest of the story.”