

May 10, 2015 Mark 6:1-6

***Happy Mother's Day!**

***Men's Retreat...**

***Week after week, words after words...I am not "fixed"...I still struggle, still lose sight of what matters...none of this works?**

***I breathed a minute ago...breathing must not work...cause I still need to breathe.**

***Eating, sleeping...doesn't work...or I wouldn't have to keep doing it.**

***Worship, word intake, spiritual disciplines...pursuing God...is like eating, sleeping, breathing...it is "works" as long as we are doing it.**

***As soon as we stop...eating, or breathing...certainly it will stop working.**

***I want to finish well...I want to live well...I am convinced of the purpose and nature of life...I understand that there are things I need to continue to choose.**

***Being here together is one of them...I do like it...but whether I like it or not...it is essential to the outcomes of my life.**

O. INTRO:

***Will Rogers said an expert is "A man fifty miles from home with a briefcase."**

***I call it simply "The expert is always from elsewhere" syndrome.**

***We forget that the expert coming to us from "there" is still from somewhere.**

***The result is that we just swap experts...we send you the guy we know and therefore don't fully respect and you send us the guy you know and therefore don't fully respect.**

***Why do companies, churches, governments often go elsewhere to find experts?**

***Military promotions (outside the Guard and Reserve) are most often given along with a new assignment in a new location.**

***I understand some of the rationale...broader experience, and the need for an other than localized viewpoint.**

***I am personally convinced that it is often due to factors that are less rational in their basis.**

Primarily...Familiarity breeds contempt.

-I know this person, he/she is not that different from me...therefore I cannot respect, follow, or learn from them...they are not special, because they are local.

***Familiarity breeds contempt because...we are looking for more transcendence in the lives of people we think we can learn from or follow.**

-We want someone who is "other" than me not like me...so that they are worthy of my respect, loyalty, etc.

*Part of this good...we would like to follow people who are actually walking in front of us in terms of experience, wisdom and the like (and not wondering around or lagging behind us).

*The result of this "expert is from elsewhere" mentality is often disillusionment.

*These experts turn out to be very much like the ones from right here...they are not all that transcendent.

*For example:

-Young man becomes involved in a cult because the cult leader is "other worldly" "sounds spiritual" "lives more than a normal life"

-While his parents and other local influences were so much like him...just too normal to be important or worth listening to or following."

*Disillusionment sets in when this supposed "transcendent" one is just just like us...usually, much, much worse.

*They often have less character than parents, or youth leaders.

*They turn out to be not such much transcendent as they are just flaky.

*What looked like more than "normal" person was just an "abnormal" one.

***Transcendent** is an adjective that describes something or someone beyond or above the range of normal or merely physical human experience...someone who surpasses the ordinary.

***Immanent** is an adjective that describes something or someone operating within our local sphere of existence and experience...one of us

*This search for transcendence outside of the immanent is often seen in people rejecting the faith, values, and perspectives of their parents or local community.

*There are times when this is good, because those values and perspectives can be wrong.

*For instance rejecting some form of prejudice that is embedded in a family, or a culture.

*There are times when this is not good if the rejection of beliefs and values is **only** because they are held by my family.

*Some reject certain truth claims and adopt others not because of a reasoned approach but because they have irrationally come to believe that anything normal for me (I grew up with it, my parents believe it) cannot possible be real.

*So, I will reject Christ and his claims...why?

-Because I have carefully considered them?

-No...

*Its because I have known about Jesus all of my life and my own parents believe as do others I grew up around.

*Therefore it cannot be true.

*Do you see the logical fallacy there?

"I have grown up with it and **therefore** it cannot be true." (very irrational belief)

*The fact is..."Truth has nothing to do with whether I grew up with it or my parents believe it or not...truth stands all by itself, it is self-validating whether we have experienced it or not.

*Jesus encountered this irrational..."The expert is from elsewhere" scenario in his own life.

*The people who lived in the area considered his "home" town could not believe that someone who was as "immanent"(one of us) as a local carpenter could at the same time be "transcendent" someone with something to say...someone with ultimate authority from above.

Mark 6:1 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! 3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." 5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

*Jesus is back home in Nazareth (not his birth town, but his hometown)

*And he is teaching in the Synagogue on the Sabbath and lots of folks are present.

*He is seen as a Rabbi so he is allowed to teach in this public setting, and the locals have some idea that he has become a well known, although, controversial public figure.

*The question that arises is one of authority.

*Where does this man get his authority?

*Specifically in regards to his:

1. Wisdom
2. Power to perform miracles

*No one doubted his wisdom

*No one doubted his miracles

*They doubted his authority was legitimate.

*They did not believe that it was transcendent in nature...he is no more than merely a local guy with some unexplainable ability.

*He is a carpenter...very localized profession...very physical, non-transcendent in nature and we know his family (also a very normal group of people).

*So he worked with his hands, worked with wood....dead trees, the stuff of earth...didn't spend his days growing up in a monastery...like the Dali Lama.

*His family didn't have wings and halos...they went to school with our kids.

*I spoke with a friend about a ministry where young people raise support and go spend a period of time...months or years praying and worshipping round the clock.

*He asked my thoughts about it...I said, "If a young person asked me personally about whether they should go to this ministry and spend a year or so praying I would recommend they not do it."

*A two-story approach to life is already deeply embedded in our culture and in the Christian sub-culture...this could drive that view even deeper and make it harder to dislodge from this young person's heart and mind.

*For a young person who has not yet learned to "Bear the yoke while they are young" as Lamentations claims to be good idea...he or she is not likely to be helped by doing this kind of work.

*I would recommend they learn to pray without ceasing in a military boot camp setting, or worshipping non-stop while mopping a hospital floor, or framing a house, or adding numbers on a spreadsheet while working long hours in a cubicle.

*We tend to think that "spiritual" realities totally transcend physical ones...rather than them being in operation simultaneously.

*This leads to two-story living...rather than single story living.

*Single story living is where all truth is God's truth, all work (that is done in obedience and faithfulness) is God's work.

*The kind of living where the truth of the Gospel has bearing and application no matter where I am or what I am doing...Koch, Cessna, USD 259, Combat...golf course...

*A reality that exists as a unified whole rather a bi-furcated life with two separate but not equal realities.

*There is a need for spiritual disciplines...Jesus often pulled away to fast, pray, be in solitude...**and without these we will find it impossible to live a single story life**...but these disciplines are allow us to re-enter the everyday world and live in a single story fashion.

*In church history people had a hard time finding balance in regards to Jesus...he was either "All Spirit" and the physical was an illusion or he was all physical and not a transcendent being.

*In reality, he, unlike anyone else, was completely transcendent and immanent at the same time.

*For his hometown folks...Jesus looked way too normal to have "authority that comes from above."

*They didn't know where he got this authority: IE..."the wisdom of his words and the power of his actions."

*He was confusing to them...He acted with transcendence, but was way too immanent.

*He acts and speaks like he is from God...but he is one of us!

*So what was their response?

*They took offense at him.

*Word is where get our word "scandal".

1Cor. 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block(a scandal, an offense) to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

*What did Jesus do to offend them?

*Failed to fit into their mold, their presuppositions...he confused them.

*He acted and taught with transcendent authority...but he was one of them.

*This, they found offensive.

*They were offended by him...but Jesus was amazed at them.

4 Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." 5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

*Of course Jesus was rejected many times in many places but it seemed that his hometown was unusually non-receptive.

*The NIV says Jesus could not do any miracles there...but the word is *dunamis* (power).

*So the ESV says he could do no "mighty works" there.

*But he did heal some sick people...I would consider that miraculous in nature...it was just not his normal explosive display of power...why?

*What is Mark saying here?

*The Lord's display of power was limited because the locals did not believe.

*In fact they were so deficient in faith that he was "amazed" by them.

*This is the opposite of his response to the Roman soldier where Jesus was amazed at the level of his faith.

*One of the main emphases of Mark is that the faith response of people to Jesus was very important in how they experienced him in their lives.

Faith: What are we to think about it?

*Do God's movements in our lives depend on it a little, a lot, totally, not at all?

*There is no formula for faith.

*Faith is trust...confidence in God.

*How much faith is necessary to see God move?...quantity doesn't seem to be the issue but rather the focus seems to be on the authenticity of the faith...is it really there or not?

*Jesus spoke of two people with "great faith":

*Matt 8:10: Roman soldier..."just say the word, you don't even need to come."

*Matt 15:28: A non-Jewish woman who said "even the dogs get scraps"

*Their faith seemed to be "great" because it was expressed in simple confidence.

*They didn't seem to know whether Jesus would or would not grant their request...but they seemed quite sure that he could if he chose too.

*Jesus said a "mustard seed quantity" of faith was sufficient to move mountains.

*Clearly the point of this was to reveal that faith was not about trying to have a certain "amount" but rather to demonstrate that it matters if it is there or not.

*Quantity of faith seems to be about "me"...how much faith do I have?

*Quality or authenticity of faith seems to be about God...is my faith truly in him, completely in him?

***The Home Town Doubters**

*In our passage it is not that the unbelief of the people somehow "stole" Jesus' power so he could not have healed them even if he wanted to.

*Remember the miracles of Jesus were signs pointing to his purposes...not signs pointing to themselves.

*Because of their unbelief Jesus could not unleash his power, and still be operating within his own purposes

*Why would he show his great power in their near complete absence of faith?

*What would have been gained?

*They acknowledged his wisdom and his power...yet he offended them.

*So...what would have been gained by a greater show of power?

*This helps us answer the question: "Why doesn't God make himself more obvious to people?"

*"If he would show up, do something amazing, more often, more people would believe."

*This is simply not true...history and experience does not bear that out.

*Clearly not everyone who sees...believes.

*Belief is when your whole being is set to act as if the gospel is true.

*Belief, faith is more than an immediate response to a sort of "miracle laser light show"

*Here in this narrative it appears there was near universal unbelief...so only a few (not zero) experienced his power.

*The woman with the 12 year disease showed a timid, stealthy faith...maybe even mixed with some superstition...but it was enough for Jesus to respond.

*These people were void of faith.

*In fact the situation was that in spite of his miracles, and wisdom, and authority...they had still had no faith...such that even Jesus was amazed.

*To me, to amaze Jesus is amazing.

*Two ways he was amazed...by the trust some placed in him even though they had little exposure to him...like the Roman soldier.

*The complete absence of trust some had in him...in spite of the evidence they had...like these people in Nazareth.

"Listen to this wisdom (not folly) and look at these miracles (not a fake)...we don't understand where he gets all this...so...lets all be offended."

"He must think he is better than us...who does he think he is...we know him"

*If what he had done already only brought this kind of response...why would he do even more?

*They would not start loving him and trusting him because he showed even more wisdom and power...they would be more offended.

*Jesus is smart...not a fool...he is not going to try what clearly is not going to work.

*Jesus is a gentleman...not a bully...he is not going to throw his power in their faces just because he can.
-These people, like everyone else in history, are free to reject him if they choose.

***Very often Faith is turned into a false dichotomy:**

*False dichotomy is a logical fallacy where an either/or scenario is presented as the only alternative.

*When in fact there is a third or possibly many more options.

*Here is a common false dichotomy related to faith and God's actions:

-Either healing (or some other action of God in my life, depends completely on the amount of faith I have)

Or

-It has nothing at all to do with my faith

*The biblical reality is that:

*Healing (And other activities of God in our lives) is related to the mysteries of the will of God **and** to my faith...both.

*Healing or some other response of God in our lives has something to do with our faith and yet is not reliant or completely contingent on the quality or quantity of our faith.

Again the two pole positions (imbalance)

1. It all depends on me (in this case, how much faith I can muster up)

2. It doesn't depend on me at all (I can do nothing, believe nothing, choose nothing...and God will do what he is going to do anyway)

***What does it really look like to have faith?**

*"Can you give me a formula for putting God to work in my life?"

*Offensive statement...yea, but in some ways its what we tend to think when we think of "more faith"

"What can I do in regards to faith, to get God to do what I really want him to do?"

*If we are honest, that is at times the motivation behind our desire to grow in faith.

*But faith in the Bible is trusting God...period.

*Growth in faith then, means we are learning to trust God.

*Faith is manifested in our asking God for specific things at the same time trusting God in everything.

Training to Trust:

*We have talked a lot about training to trust since we have been in Mark...growing in faith and love through personal choices.

*Not training in opposition to grace, but training in cooperation with grace.

***A loaded Question:**

"Can you choose, decide to believe something?"

*Some would say "yes" some would say "no".

*Let me rephrase it.

*I can choose to act as if I believe something is true but can I choose to, right now, believe something I really don't believe?

*We would all say "no"

*If you don't trust God, if you don't believe he is reliable...you cannot just decide by an act of your will to decide to "trust him."

***What can you do with your will?**

*You can think often and deeply about God's actions in your life and the lives' of others.

*You can act like God is trustworthy..."do the things you would do if you had faith."

*Over time, what might happen if you do this? You can come to actually trust him.

*My will was not used to "decide to believe what I really don't."

*My will was used to "act in ways that leads to growth in faith"

*When it comes to having faith in God one of the big mistakes that is often made is trying to work up emotional feelings of faith.

*"I believe, I believe, I believe...oh no, I don't really believe...forgive...I believe, I believe..."

*Someone I know spent the better part of a year in anxiety because she did not "feel" faith.

*The more she tried to choose to "feel faith" in God the more anxious she became.

*When she began to exert her will to read, think deeply about God...to reflect on his actions in her life and the lives of others.

*The more she did what she would do "if she believed"

*The more she spent time talking with others about the reality and faithfulness of God...the less anxious she became and the more she grew in her faith.

*Again, a focus on quantity is often..."How much faith do I have"
-Is self-focused

*A focus on God..."I want to love God, to know God, to experience and express God's love"

*Is the way faith grows.

***So is trust (faith) in God necessary to experience God in our lives?**

*Yes, of course...but our role is not to try and believe what we don't believe.

*The role of our will in all this is to: seek God, to put his word deep into our minds and lives, to worship him, to think about him, to talk about him with others.

*"But this seems to be a self-inflicted mind trick...why would I do what I don't really believe?"

***Important to remember:** This is not just solo human activity...God is real and he is at work in all this, empowering and giving fruitful results to your choices.

*I can desire to trust God, know that trusting God is good, right...but still just not trust him.

*What does that mean? That I can just tell myself "trust God!"...That doesn't work, not for long.

*I can move in my actions and thinking processes towards God...I can choose actions that would come if I trusted God.

*Faith in God will grow as I do.

*What If I don't have enough confidence in God to even move his direction at all?

*You do...or you would not even be asking that question...you would not care enough to ask it.

*So, move towards God like this..."God please give me faith in you."

*"Show me the paths that I can take that will lead my heart, mind, soul, body into deep confidence in you."

*"Jesus, I believe, help my unbelief."

*Watch him do what only he can do...build faith deep into your soul.

Paths & Process: choices and responses

*The paths he leads you down(choices you must make) and the processes he uses(troubles challenges)...they are of his choosing...you may or may not prefer them.

*However, you will, if you persist in seeking him...find that he will allow himself to be found by you.

***A Fact of human design...our affections (hearts) will follow our investments.**

***Don't spend your life trying to "feel faith"....spend your life pursuing God**

-Obedient choices

-Trusting responses

SMALL GROUP NOTES

Intro:

1. "Familiarity breeds contempt" ...where have you experienced this personally?
2. Why do you think humans so frequently struggle with this?
3. What is the faulty thinking involved in this approach to life?
4. Have you ever rejected something simply because it had become common to you, or your parents believed it?
5. What was the thinking fallacy involved in rejecting something merely because it has become familiar?

Read:

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Discuss:

1. Terry talks a lot about a "two story" and a "single story" approach to life. What does he mean by this and why do you believe (if you do) it is such an important concept?
2. How does this "two story" approach to life apply to this passage in regards to the way the people in Jesus' hometown treated him?
3. How is it that they could believe his teaching and his actions were powerful and yet doubt the source of his authority?
4. Why would the people become offended by Jesus' display wisdom and miraculous ability?
5. How much do you believe our faith has to do with the activity of God? Can you back this belief up biblically?
6. Why might it be true that Jesus could not do great works in his hometown because of the lack of faith there? Did the lack of faith limit Jesus or did the lack of faith cause Jesus to "self-limit"? Why do you believe this?

7. Do you believe more people would come to trust and love God if he did more miraculous, visible things? Why or why not?

8. The two opposite positions in regards to faith and God's activities are:

a. It all depends on me

b. It has nothing to do with me.

*The Biblical view is a balance of these two positions. Can you articulate a balanced, and biblical view of God's mysterious will and our choices?

Apply:

1. What does "training to trust" look like in your life?

*Or if you are not training, what could it, or should it look like?

2. Paths=are the choices God puts before us, Processes=are the challenges, trials, troubles he puts before us that are opportunities to trust him.

*What are the paths God has put before you that you can choose to learn to trust God?

*What are some the processes God is using to train you to trust? How are you responding? How can you respond differently (if you need to)?

3. Are you trying to "feel" like you have more faith rather than making the choices that will lead you to grow in your confidence in God? What would this look like in your life?

4. Maybe you are not trying to "feel" like you have more faith, instead you have become passive or cynical about spiritual growth? What has led to this passivity or cynicism? What might be the antidote?

The Gospel of Mark



*"For even the
Son of Man
did not come
to be served,
but to serve,
and to give
his life as a
ransom for
many."*

Mark 10:45

***"An expert is a man fifty miles from home
with a briefcase."***

Will Rogers



"The expert is always from elsewhere"

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stumbling block (*scandal*) to Jews and
foolishness to Gentiles...**

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What is "Great" faith?

**Why doesn't God make himself more
obvious, more often?**

Jesus was amazed by...

The faith of some

The lack of faith in others

A "faith" false dichotomy

EITHER

**God's activity in my life depends completely
on my faith**

OR

**God's activity in my life has nothing to do
with my faith.**

**The activity of God in my life is related
BOTH
to the mysteries of the will of God
AND
to my faith.**

***I cannot simply choose to believe something
I do not fully believe.***

***I can make choices that will lead me into full
belief.***

**This is not just solo human activity...God is
at work in all this giving fruitful results to our
choices.**

Paths: "Choices"

Processes: "Responses"

Don't spend your life trying to "feel" like you have faith.

Spend your life pursuing God...your confidence in God will grow as you do.

