



FAITH SAYS “YES”

Meditations by Subdeacon Dr. Joshua D. Genig

On St. Matthew 17:14 – 23

(Gospel for the 10th Sunday After Pentecost, 28 August 2016)

St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Redford, MI

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When you think of the Apostles, what comes to mind? Great men of devotion? Miracle workers? Scholars? Saints?

I know that, when I think of the Apostles, I often think of them as they are now. And when we think of them as they are now, it’s hard to see **us** in **them**. But what we hear today is the story, not of great Saints, canonized by the Church, but of ordinary men, from ordinary homes,

with—frankly—very ordinary lives. They were, for the most part, fishermen. They were blue-collar men, working 9-5, taking all the overtime they could get, just to put a little extra food on the table around the holidays. They were as many of us are. They were not rich or particularly brilliant. And, at times, they experienced all sorts of faults and failures, shortcomings and shames. And, today, is one of those times.

A father comes to Jesus asking for a miracle: “Kyrie, Eleison—Lord, have mercy on my son!” he cries. “Because I went to your disciples, and they couldn’t heal him!”

I went to your disciples, and they couldn’t heal him...

And what is most amazing is that they didn’t fail because they said the wrong words or forgot a step in the healing process. No, miracles are not magic. They failed because they didn’t have faith.

But that begs the question: **What is faith?**

Sadly, in our world today, we usually don’t have the slightest clue what “faith” actually is.

Here’s what **faith is not**: Faith is not a warm feeling, or a racing heart, or lots of tears, or good, solid explanations, or eloquent prayers, or speaking in tongues. Yes, some these things may be there **with faith**, but they are not faith, in and of themselves. Faith is much, much more mysterious than that.

Faith is that strange willingness, against seemingly all odds and, at times, even better judgment, to trust yourself to God. To believe that, even if the odds seem impossible, His promise is sure, His word is truth, and He will work all things, as the Scriptures say, for the good of those who love Him.

It’s like this: **faith is our “yes” to God when everyone else would tell us to say “no.”**

It’s the lousy job that you are grateful for because it pays the bills and gives you healthcare. It’s a bad diagnosis from doctors becoming an opportunity for prayer, not anger. It’s the kids awake in the middle of the night with fevers and viruses and nightmares and monsters becoming a chance to thank God for them, to hug them, and even to pray for them near your icons. It means believing that everything, every last thing, is within his merciful reach, and that nothing, as the Angel said to Our Lady, nothing is impossible for Him.

And that, it seems, is where the disciples went wrong today. It’s not so much that they didn’t believe He was God’s Son, the Christ, the Anointed One. It’s that they didn’t trust that the power He’d given to them would actually do as He said it would. They didn’t actually believe that He was true to His word.

And that, dear brothers and sisters, is one of the most profoundly comforting thing we can ever know about God: that He is true to His word. That He does not lie. That **what He says**, He does. And **what He does**, He means.

And when we have that kind of faith—not the faith of big paychecks or Ph.D.s or well-manicured families, but the faith of a child—when we have that faith—simple and small though it be—we can literally move mountains, whether they be real mountains or the weighty mountains of our sins, as the Fathers so often taught.

That is the kind of faith that God wants for us. A joyful, free, happy, cheerful, “yes” to Him—at all times, and in all places, so that, as St. Macarius of Egypt once wrote, our souls might “burn with a spiritual love and an unrestrained pull towards the even more glorious and radiant beauty of the spirit.” So that, “no longer look[ing] earthwards, [we might be] wholly engulfed by attraction towards Him” (*Homily 7,5 from the New Homilies*).

May God grant us this attraction, this love, this **faith**, for He alone is good, and loves mankind.

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen