

Mark 11:20-26 | The Faith that Moves Mountains

Introduction

Do you remember a time in your life when you struggled with unbelief or doubt, even though God has clearly done work in your life previously? You are not alone. In today's passage we will see that the disciples struggle with just that and God gives them an admonition and encouragement.

Mark 11:20-21 As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. Being reminded, Peter *said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."

The disciples, though they had seen Jesus heal many people, raise the dead, cast out demons, feed the multitudes and a sundry other miraculous works, still they marveled at the withering of the fig tree. God had been teaching and preparing the disciples for ministry and now was no different.

Mar 11:22 And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God".

Some people have debated that this means to "have the faith of God", meaning that God possesses the faith that we need to have. However according to the Greek grammatical structure, GOD is in the objective genitive case in this verse, meaning that God is the object receiving our faith.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Faith is placing our trust or confidence in someone or something other than ourselves.

Given that the disciples had seen all that Jesus had done up until this point, I believe this was both a reprimand and an encouragement to the Disciples.

Mar 11:23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.

Jesus is using hyperbole here, as He often did, to illustrate the importance of having faith and the fact that nothing would be withheld from the person who possessed this type of faith. But there is also another aspect that we must consider here.

There are things mentioned in this passage that have great significance from a prophetic standpoint: Mountains and Seas.

Mountains:

In studying of scripture, we learn that God often refers to mountains as symbolic of where His glory dwells and was often representing the New Covenant in Christ / the Church. In the prophets He talks about "My Holy Mountain" - Isa 11:9, "The mountain of the house of the LORD" - Isa 2:2, "mountain of the LORD" - Isa 2:3

According to Dr. John Smith, a biblical scholar of the 17th century who did extensive research on biblical prophecy, mountains are also representative of nations, kingdoms and authorities.

Seas/Ocean:

Dr. Smith also states that the seas or oceans represent the gentile nations as in Isaiah 17:12-13 and Isaiah 24:14-15

Concluding thought:

What we have to realize here is that Jesus doesn't just say "a mountain" meaning there is a generic nature to his reference to any mountain, but that He said "this mountain" which would have been the mountain of the Lord, the mountain top where Jerusalem and the Temple dwelt.

Jesus, even in the midst of encouraging the disciples to have faith that God might do great things through them, was also continuing His prophetic illustration of the destruction of Jerusalem and the New Covenant being established with both Jews and Gentiles. By using the words "cast into the sea" Jesus illustrates the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews but also the spreading of the Kingdom of God among the gentiles.

Mark 11:24 "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.

Jesus was also preparing the disciples for their ministry and this was part of their training. They had already experienced healing the sick and expelling demons, yet they were surprised at the withering of the fig tree. The Scriptures elsewhere have the admonition to ask anything in the name of the Lord. Cross References for these verses.

Luke 11:9-10 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened."

John 16:23-24 "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full".

John 14:13-14 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it".

Does Jesus truly give us anything we ask for? What is the context of this passage?

We must be completely surrendered to Christ

- We have to remember that Jesus is talking to His disciples. These were men who had sacrificed their livelihood, their families, their homes, all to follow Jesus. They lived in complete surrender to him.
- *Mark 8:34-38 And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."*

The asking must be according to the Will of God!

- *1Jn 5:14-15 "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."*
- Jesus was constantly seeking to do the will of His Father, not His own will as is demonstrated in the following verses:

- John 5:19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless [it is] something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.
- John 8:28 So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.
- John 4:34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.
- John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
- When we look at the miraculous works of Peter, Paul, Phillip and other New Testament apostles, they were not looking to advance their own causes or bring attention to themselves, they were truly seeking the advancement of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God, which was God's will!
- Using "In Jesus Name" as a magic word for getting what I want.
 - In preparing for this message the Lord brought to mind a time recently God brought conviction upon my heart for the way I was treating my prayers to the Lord. Recently I was praying for Parker to go to sleep and I just mentioned a prayer to the Lord and followed it with "in Jesus name".
 - Do we dare use such phrases such as this to presume that God will give us what we want.

Acts 8:14-24 NASB - "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they [began] laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.""

- We are commanded to ask things "in Jesus' name" and we should. But we must inspect our heart to see if we are trying to seek our own profit or are we truly seeking the Glory of God.
- The Word of Faith Movement and Prosperity Gospel
 - Contrary to the desires of Christ, the word of faith movement has consistently contradicted and twisted the words of scripture to manipulate men for their own will instead of God's will. Much of what is taught is focused on glorifying self rather than glorifying Christ.

- They teach that if you ask for anything God will grant it to you and then focus on earthly things
 - Money, Houses, Cars, Prosperity, Good jobs
- The main differences between what word of faith teaches and what the Bible teaches movement is:
 - What God will do FOR YOU instead of what God will do THROUGH YOU for HIS GLORY.
 - Focus on self instead of focus on God.
- Costi Hinn, Nephew of Benny Hinn said this after his exit from the Prosperity Gospel and Word of Faith Movement in a statement to Christianity Today:

“Though Jesus Christ was still a part of our gospel, he was more of a magic genie than the King of Kings. Rubbing him the right way—by giving money and having enough faith—would unlock your spiritual inheritance. God’s goal was not his glory but our gain. His grace was not to set us free from sin but to make us rich. The abundant life he offered wasn’t eternal, it was now. We lived the prosperity gospel.” Costi Hinn

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/october/benny-hinn-costi-uncle-prosperity-preaching-testimony.html>

We must be abiding in Christ.

- *John 15:5-8 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."*
- Just like a plant cannot produce fruit apart from the trunk of the plant and the roots that provide it water, minerals and other nutrients, so too we cannot produce spiritual fruit or supernatural fruit in our lives if we are not abiding in Christ as the source.
- Jesus here mentions that God is glorified when we bear much fruit. It is His desire that we bear fruit so He delights to provide us the means with which to bear much fruit.

We must be delighting ourselves in the Lord

- *Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.*

It's important to note that the context of this passage is Jesus performing a miraculous work, something supernatural and out of the ordinary. The exhortation that was given was not only for our everyday challenges but also a call from Christ to have faith even for supernatural works being done through us.

"Have faith in God", that he will enable you to perform whatsoever ye shall desire; which must be understood, not of spiritual faith in the promises of God, and person of Christ, but of, the faith of miracles, or faith in the power of God to perform things that are above the strength of nature'. - John Gill

"But his sense is, that, had they faith, they should be able not only to do such lesser miracles, as, comparatively speaking, the withering of the fig tree was, but they should be able to perform things much more difficult and surprising, whenever the good of the souls of men, the propagation of the Gospel, and the glory of God required them". - John Gill

Jesus made this promise for us who believe in Christ to do greater things than Jesus.

John 14:11-14 "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."

When we are abiding in Christ and seeking the will of God, then God has promised to give us what we ask for in His Name.

So why do we not see supernatural works of the Lord today?

1. Because of doubt which leads to fear of that which has been asked for coming to pass or fear that the Lord will not answer.
2. Because we are asking amiss in order to fulfill our own desires. (James 4-14)
3. Because we are not fully devoted to Christ as His disciples were. (Mark 8:34-38)
4. Fear of being associated with the word of faith or the prosperity gospel movement.
5. Because are not seeking the Lord with the prayer and fasting required (Matthew 17:21)

Mar 11:25-26 "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. ["But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."]

Other passages speaking about forgiveness.

Mat 6:14-15 14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Luke 6:37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Luke 11:4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

Luke 17:3-4 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Forgiveness is necessary for the exercise of true faith. It may be that the act of forgiving someone for their wrong against us **is** the mountain that stands in our way. We know that this phrase “move a mountain” was a common Jewish phrase in Christ’s day used to describe something difficult or impossible.

Forgiveness of others is not just something between us and our fellow men, but it is a reflection of His character in us because of the forgiveness He has given us.

The best illustration of this is the parable in Matthew 18:21-35 (READ PASSAGE)

The reason that forgiveness is so important to Christ is that this reflects on Christ’s character in us. If we cannot forgive those who have done wrong against us, how can we expect God to forgive us? We are acting in a way contrary to the nature of God if we do not forgive.

Conclusion

In closing I want us to reflect back on what we have seen from the Jesus’ teaching today.

How often do we find ourselves, like the disciples, standing in disbelief at what God has done. Where is our faith? We have seen God working in our lives time and time again doing miraculous things and yet some other “mountain” stands in our way and we doubt, stand stagnant in disbelief, perhaps even in sin or unforgiveness and we gawk at what God has done or is doing.

Perhaps we find ourselves facing a trial, difficulty, or stronghold that we feel like we cannot overcome. Just like the man in Mark 9:22-24 who’s son was demon possessed came to Jesus and said “I do believe; help my unbelief.” we need to come to God and ask Him to equip us to overcome those barriers in our lives.

In addition to this, Jesus said that we would do greater works than He because he went to the Father and we are told later in the New Testament by Paul to “Earnestly desire the greater gifts”. Jesus said that this kind of work only comes out by prayer and fasting.

No matter our situation, Jesus always comes along side of us and says “Have faith in God”.

1. Introduction
2. Mark 11:20-21 - The surprising fruit of faith
3. Mark 11:22 - The Admonition to have faith
4. Mark 11:23 - The
5. Mark 11:24 - Granting whatever we request
 - a. We must be completely surrendered to Christ
 - b. The asking must be according to the Will of God!
 - c. We must be abiding in Christ.
 - d. We must be delighting ourselves in the Lord
6. So why do we not see great works of the Lord today?
7. Mar 11:25-26 - Forgiveness as a critical part of faith
8. Conclusion