

Three Kinds of Faith and Believing is Seeing

John 11, 1-46

Lazarus' sickness

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.” John 11, 1.

Jesus' relationship

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” John 11, 5.

The call for Jesus to heal Lazarus' sickness

“The sisters therefore sent to Him, saying ‘Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick’” John 11, 3.

Jesus' response

“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it” John 11, 4.

“When therefore He heard that he was sick, He stayed then two days *longer* in the place where He was.” John 11, 6.

Jesus purposely delayed coming to Bethany until Lazarus was dead, that he might raise him from the dead:

“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep.” John 11, 11.

“Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.” John 11,15.

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he found the limited faith of Martha and Mary as His obstacle

“Martha therefore said to Jesus ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died’” John 11, 21.

“Therefore when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” John 11, 32.

Martha and Mary believed that Jesus had the power to raise their brother up from the sick bed, but not from the dead. Their limited faith, which was controlled by circumstances and motivated by a fear of failure, restricted the power of Christ. We see a further example of this in the book of Matthew:

“And coming to His home town He began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they became astonished and said ‘Where did this man get this wisdom, and these miraculous powers? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?’ And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household.’ And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief” Matthew 13, 54-58.

Jesus attempted to kindle hope and faith in Martha:

Jesus said to her, “Your brother shall rise again.” John 11, 23.

Yet Martha’s faith was fundamental. A definition of “fundamental”: a basic and necessary component of something

“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” John 11, 24.

Martha declared her fundamental faith in a great truth, **but that is not enough.**

“Jesus said to her ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.’” John 11, 25.

Jesus declared that He had power over life and death:

“Do you believe this?” John 11, 26.

Martha evades the question by stating her fundamental faith in her creed:

“Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world.” John 11, 27.

It is not enough to believe in a creed only. Faith must go beyond your creed, to the living, all powerful Christ.

“Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God’ And they were even more astonished and said to Him, ‘Then who can be saved?’ Looking upon them, Jesus said, ‘With men, it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God’ Mark 10, 24-27.

Martha’s faith limited the power of Christ

“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled.” John 11, 33.

“Jesus wept” John 11, 35.

Jesus wept when He came to raise Lazarus from the dead and found limited, fundamental faith only.

“But some of them said ‘Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?’” John 11, 37.

A confirmation of Martha’s unbelief:

“Jesus said, ‘Remove the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, ‘Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead for four days’” John 11, 39.

Jesus again challenges her to believe:

“‘Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?’” John 11, 40.

Finally Martha believed, and waited to see the glory of God. Her faith no longer limited the power of Christ. She consented to have the stone removed from the tomb:

“Lazarus, come forth” John 11, 43

“He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth.”

Lazarus was raised up, and Martha saw the glory of God.

The statement “seeing is believing” is so common and well-entrenched in our language and mind. However, with the Lord you believe first and then you see. Faith comes before sight.

Unlimited faith pleases God and allows His glory to be revealed. Limited, fundamental faith hinders the power and the glory of Christ.

Interestingly, for those who do not believe and see, seeing does not necessarily produce faith in the Lord:

“Many therefore of the Jews who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.” John 11, 45-46.

“And he said, ‘Then I beg you Father, that you send him [Lazarus] to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may warm them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’” Luke 16, 27-31.

Other examples of 'believing is seeing': Matt. 9, 27-30:

“And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, and saying, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David.’ And after He had come into the house, the blind men came up to Him and Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘Be it done to you according to your faith.’ And their eyes were opened.”

Mark 5, 25-29;34

“And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse, after hearing about Jesus, came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. For she thought ‘If I just touch His garments, I shall get well.’ And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction...And He said to her, ‘Daughter your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’

Mark 9, 17-29

“And one of the crowd answered Him, ‘Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out. And I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it.’ And He answered them and said “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!’ And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, ‘From childhood. And it has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!’ And Jesus said to him, ‘If You can! All things are possible to him who believes.’ Immediately the boy’s father cried out and began saying, ‘I do believe; help my unbelief.’ And when Jesus saw that a crowd was gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it ‘I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.’ And after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out.”

Questions:

1. How do we limit the power of Christ in our lives through our faith? Do we believe that there are some problems the Lord can’t/won’t handle for us?
2. How does fundamental faith limit the power of Christ in our lives?
3. Do we ask God for a sign (Judges 6, 36-40) to know that He will do something for us (seeing is believing)?