
Walking with God

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 7 June 2026

Romans 4:13-25 • Matthew 9:9-13,18-26



May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

Today's Gospel stories about the daughter of the synagogue leader and the woman with the haemorrhage tell us many things, but most importantly they teach us about faith. Neither the resurrection of the girl nor the healing of the woman would have happened without the absolute belief that Jesus could and would help them. It is this faith in Jesus' will and ability that saved them. Jesus is always looking for faith in us.

I have to think that Jesus was more inclined to help or perform miracles for someone who approached him in faith, just in the purely human sense. I am certainly more inclined to help someone if that person approaches me honestly and with a good attitude, and believes I can help them.

When I was a kid, I believed that my father could do anything. And with very few exceptions, which I didn't learn until later, he could! If I needed help with repairing a bicycle, or solving a math problem, I knew when I asked him that a)

he could help me and b) he *would* help me. I firmly believed that. I had great faith in his abilities and his fatherly kindness. So in a way, I helped to give him the power to help me. That seems to be similar to what happens with Jesus.

Look at what the two people in the Gospel say. The leader of the synagogue says, “My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” “... and she *will* live.” He is sure about it. He doesn’t say, “Maybe you can save her”; he says, “... she *will* live.” Jesus is God, but his human side, since he experienced all human things just as we do, must have been gratified, and hence he was encouraged to help this man. In the version of the story which Mark tells, Jesus says to the man, “Do not fear; only believe” (Mark 5:36). Clearly, the man does believe; and his faith is an important factor in his daughter’s resurrection.

Similarly, the woman with the haemorrhage says, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.” Again, that certainty: “... I *will* be made well.” Not maybe, but definitely. But it goes a little farther here. Jesus says to her, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” That’s a very definite statement. Jesus doesn’t say, “I’m glad you believe; now let’s go cure you.” Her faith has made her well.

The reverse of this is what Jesus encountered when he went home to Nazareth. The people there knew him, and they just thought of him as his mother’s son, not any special person. This rings so true, doesn’t it? You may be a great man or woman in your field out in the world, but when you visit your parents, you revert back to the kid you were when you were growing up. Jesus remarks:

‘Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.’ And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. (Mark 6:4-6)

Jesus finds that without that belief, that faith in him, he cannot do much — although he still manages to cure a few sick people, so he’s not entirely powerless.

Why is this? I think the answer lies in the fact that God created us not just to be his subjects, not just to serve him, but very often to serve with him. Ultimately, God is not limited by anything we do or don’t do. Ours is certainly not a partnership of equals, as we are very far from being God’s equals; but it is a working relationship, if you will. God chooses that we should act with him in order to accomplish his goals. I believe God wanted that from the beginning of humankind. God walked in the Garden with Adam and Eve until the fall. That idea of walking with God was quite literal then, and it makes quite a good image for us now, in what we call our walk with God.

This should colour how we think about our lives. If we are serious about following Jesus, if we want to see God's plans for humanity come to fruition, we should want to be a part of it. Our knowledge will never equal God's, but God wants to share many, many things with us, if we are open to that. So aligning ourselves with God doesn't mean only obedience; it means actively working with God to bring about the kingdom of heaven. An example appears early in the Bible, when Abraham and God are talking about the coming destruction of the city of Sodom. Abraham protests, in a very gentle way, against God killing the righteous inhabitants of the city along with the wicked:

Then Abraham came near and said, 'Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it?'
(Genesis 18:23-24)

Abraham continues gently arguing with God until God agrees that he will not destroy the city if even ten good men are found in it. (Ultimately, God doesn't find that many, and he does destroy the city.) This passage is often used to show that the Lord may change his mind; but I see it as a time when God chose to allow Abraham to help with God's plan. How extraordinary that God would listen to Abraham! Yet God wants us to walk with him and share in the coming of the kingdom.

How much, then, will God listen to our prayers? God will always hear them, because God desires our faith, our communication and our love. It is one of the wonderful things about our God. So let us do our best to walk with God, knowing that this is what God desires. Thanks be to God. Amen.