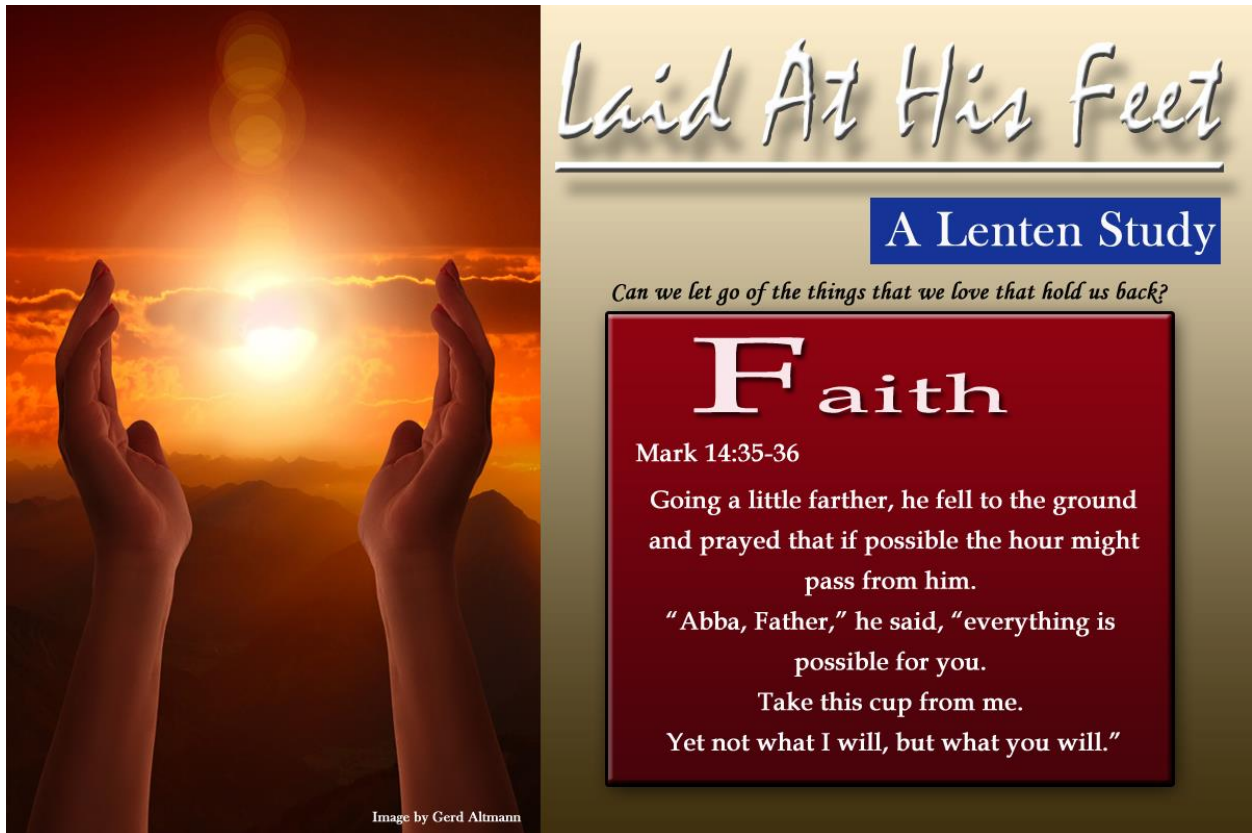


April 24, 2022 – Faith

Mark 14:35-36

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36 “Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”



Laid At His Feet

A Lenten Study

Can we let go of the things that we love that hold us back?

Faith

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Take this cup from me.

Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Image by Gerd Altmann

Give Me Faith

Elevation Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2HrFtR-SN0>

ANYWAY

Hey Jesus, I see you
On your knees
Before that tear-stained stone
As you pray there all alone.
Discerning,
Two paths forward.
One is safe
But missing grace
The other paved with pain
You'd be insane
To travel there.
So, why the prayer?
If the choice is obvious,
Why bother here?
Don't be a fool
And waste your death
On an ungrateful world.
Save yourself.
No questions asked.
The dies not cast.
Even those that you call friend
Are fast asleep,
Uncaring,
As your blood sweat
Covers the tear-stained stone.
You are so all alone.

Save yourself!
Call your army
They'll take you up
To the throne of God,
Away from the path of pain
Where your life will be drained...
Away.

And yet,
You ponder in prayer,
Lift back the layer
To what's beneath.
A greener grace
That needs release
Into a world where mercy
Has died a million deaths
Before this moment.

What makes you think
That when you sink
Into black obsidian,
The darkness of oblivion
Won't eat your soul?
Devour your spirit?
Disappear you
From the hearts and minds
Of men,
Who seem to have already

Forgotten you,
As they sleep
Through your misery?
Be wise
And take the road to safety.
Live to fight another day,
Another way,
Rather than find yourself
On display...
Dying,
Placed there
By the very people
That adore you.

Faith don't work
'Til it happens,
'Til you need it.
'Til it is all that's left.
You think your faith will save you?
What's that you say?
Faith won't save you?
Then what will?
What's that you say?
You don't need saving?
You have faith
That salvation
Has come to you?
You choose the wrath

On this ridiculous path,
To save...
...Me?
You won't even save yourself!
I'm not on that path.
But you say I am
The path into oblivion
Paved with obsidian
Stained by blood
And self-righteousness.

Go back to your prayers
"Son of God,"
I am not awed
By your foolishness
Or the pain you seek.
I'll stick to the path I'm on
And in spite of you
I'll carry on
Until I fall
And touch the wall
Of oblivion.
Can't you see?
My faith's in me?
How very strange
That you would die for me...
Anyway.

Many years ago, I was involved in a production of a one-act play called “The Egg.” I wish I could remember the name of the author, but my memory fails me and my searches have garnered no results. It is not the play itself that is so important as much as the story behind the play. For the play I had to use a German-Jewish-American dialect, a task that I failed at miserably. Still, the story was important enough that I give it my best shot.

In the story, an elderly gentleman arrives at a museum carrying a case, saying that he wants to make a donation to the museum. The museum workers gather around as he opens the cases and presents... an egg, a very old egg, a very old unrefrigerated egg, carefully wrapped. Well, no one can imagine why this old gentleman would think that the egg was important enough to give to a museum. So, the old man tells them the story behind the egg.

He and his wife, who were both Jews, had been fleeing the Nazis in WWII, intending to make their way to America. They found themselves hiding in France, dying of starvation. The man’s wife did not have the strength to continue on, so, the man went in search of some food. He found a farm nearby and managed to steal a couple of eggs. Rushing back with the food, he discovered she had succumbed to starvation. He ate his egg, but he carefully stored the other one in his backpack. Using whatever he could find, he managed to bury his wife. Eventually making contact with the French underground, he had managed to make his way to America and settled in New York. He had kept the egg as a reminder of that day when he had to bury his wife. Now, he was getting old and wanted to give the egg to a museum. The museum employees did not want the

egg. It seemed to have no value, but the docent at the museum understood that the value was not in the egg itself, but in the story behind the egg. She carefully wrapped the egg and promised the elderly gentleman that she would find a perfect spot for it among the other artifacts collected from WWII and the Holocaust, along with a typewritten account of the story behind the egg.

Okay, preacher, what are telling this story for? This is supposed to be a message about faith. This whole series, “Laid at His Feet,” has been about digging into our core values and laying our Anger, Jealousy, Judgment, Prejudice, Pessimism, Pride, and Disbelief at the feet of Jesus. That is the only way we can draw closer to him. We have to remove the barriers that prevent the Holy Spirit from accessing the things that we cherish the most. We often feel it is completely okay to cling to this baggage that drags us down. Like Tom Hanks in Joe Versus the Volcano, we really like having that baggage around. We think it provides some kind of safety net for us. We truly do not want to be separated from our baggage. We think that lugging that baggage around is good for us.

I hope you have learned enough from these messages to see that Jesus doesn't want us to haul that baggage around. He wants us to let go so that he can deal with it. And way too often, we lay it down, only to pick up again later. It is almost as if we feel naked without that baggage. That's because, when we drop it, we allow Jesus into the recesses of our heart to clean out the garbage and that can make us very, very uncomfortable. We become ashamed to let Jesus see the lack of care we have shown for our soul. He can see that cobwebs have formed, dust has settled, furniture is dirty, and the floors need mopping.

This last piece of baggage that I want to talk about, we don't even consider to be baggage. It's easy to see how all the crazy sin in our life is baggage, but this? This seems so totally contrary to the rest. And because of that, it is the most difficult piece of baggage to lay down.

I'm talking about Faith.

Whoa there, preacher. Hold on a minute. Why would God ever want me to lay my faith down? My faith is what brings me closer to God! My faith is my anchor! My faith gives me purpose! It is my faith that brings me to church on Sunday morning!

That's where the essence of the problem lies. At some point as Christians, we have to give that faith over to Jesus. Dropping it at the foot of the cross leaves us totally unprotected before God. As long as we control our faith, we can put a barrier between us and our Lord anytime we want. It is a safety net for us allowing us to keep our distance from the blessings God plans for us.

Here are some truths I want you to ponder:

- 1. It is not our faith in God that brings us closer to God, but God's love for us that brings God closer to us. When we drop the walls we have put up, especially the wall of faith, it allows God to move closer. God never goes where we do not allow Him. It isn't that He can't. He just won't. God wants us to drop our walls willingly, in order to let Him be closer to us. It is our own fear of Him seeing our dirty laundry that encourages us to put up the walls rather than tearing them down.**

- 2. Faith is not our anchor. Jesus is our anchor. Like I said in the message last week:**

**He does not live
Because I believe,
I believe
Because He lives.**

The more as we control our own faith in God, the more likely it will fail when we need God the most. Weak is the anchor of self-guided faith. We tend to forget that even if we choose not to believe, God still exists. His existence is not dependent on our beliefs. The minute we allow ourselves to settle into a faith that is controlled by us, it is also the minute that we choose to put a wall between ourselves and what God has in store for us.

- 3. Our faith should not give us purpose. How presumptuous of us to assume that God wants us to do things for the Divine. God, the Creator of the Universe, does not need our assistance. What He needs is our willingness to be vessels, so that He can do what needs to be done through us. It is God that gives us purpose, not our faith. When we fully trust God with our hearts and minds, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish as His hands and feet. If we choose to do what we do for God, we will become depleted, weary, and dejected because we are drawing on our own strength, all to gain a crown we don't need.**
- 4. And lastly, if it is your faith that is bringing you to church on Sunday, then you will eventually stop coming to church. Your own faith has little to no power, and at the first sign of trouble it will fail you. "I have faith**

in God. Why would this happen to me?”, “I have faith in God. Why can’t I do this thing?”, “I have faith in God. Surely, He won’t let anything happen to me!” When those things occur, instead of saying our faith wasn’t strong enough, we say that our faith was misplaced.

All of our lives, we have heard messages about how faith is core to our belief system. But the faith that Jesus is talking about is not faith in ourselves, but faith in God. And we can only get to that point where faith is our shield if we turn that faith over to God and let Him construct it to His liking and His nature.

I know that this concept of allowing God to deal with our faith may sound a little odd, but that is because we have grown up in a world that teaches us to believe in ourselves, despite God. How about we look at that as it really should be, where we allow God to fit us into His plan in such a way that He can use the skills that He has given us to meet His needs. It is not within our purview to determine God’s needs. We have to be pretty full of ourselves to think that the Creator of the Universe needs our input.

What He needs and wants is willing vessels that He can fill and use to meet the needs of the world at large.

Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Disciples cannot stay awake. They have no clue about what is about to happen. Jesus has begged them to keep watch and pray, but they can’t seem to do it.

Through tears and great drops of blood, Jesus is praying to His Father for a different path; a path that doesn't lead to Calvary; a path that doesn't take him away from his earthly ministry. A path where there won't be a great outpouring of sorrow. But that isn't the plan. Jesus has an out, though. He was offered that out when He first disappeared into the desert at the beginning of His ministry and was confronted by Satan. The world was His for the asking. All He had to do was ignore His Father and say yes. He could have been ruler over all the earth. But Jesus was not willing to pay the price and could see the bigger picture.

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36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Christ uses the term "Abba, Father," here. What's the difference? Don't we all relate to the concept of father? In Aramaic, the term Abba means a more personal relationship, a close relationship. The difference between a father and a daddy. The term dad or daddy is so much more intimate than father.

Jesus is seeking His dad's intimate input regarding this split path and the decision that has to be made. He sees this other path, a much easier path. But He also knows that His purpose cannot be accomplished

by taking that path. If He relied on His own faith, He might have continued to look for another way out. But instead, He allowed God to have His faith and lead Him where He needed to go, even knowing how difficult that path was going to be.

But that is how we allow God to draw closer to us. We can't send out a fishing line hoping we snag the hem of God's robe to draw Him closer. No! We have to allow him to come closer. He wants to. He wants nothing more. He wants to bless us with His blessings and strength. He wants to use us to create a world more pleasing to Him if only we will let him.

This week let's all take a look at our faith and see who is in the driver's seat. Are we allowing God to direct our faith, or are we choosing to direct our faith as a lure to bring God closer? Are we offering God a helping hand, or are we choosing to let God use us to provide a helping hand to others? Are we coming to worship our God on Sunday, or are we allowing Him to direct us in our worship?

Being able to ask these questions of ourselves is beyond difficult. We probably won't like our answers. But maybe, just maybe it will give us a foothold into how we can be more compliant to the essence of what God wants for us and His Kingdom.

God bless you all!

AMEN

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