

Faith in the King

Mark 5:21-43

Rev Nick Speyer - 1-2-2015

A small boy wrote in a school essay, "Faith is believing something you know is not true."

In Greek "faith" is the same word as "believing" something. "Faith" and "Believing" look different in English but in the Bible they are the same thing.

In the story Peter Pan and Wendy the fairy, Tinkerbelle, has drunk some poison. It quickly had its effect: *"Her wings would scarcely carry her now. Tottering to her chamber she lay down on the bed. Peter's head almost filled the wall of her little room as he knelt near her in distress.*

Every moment her light was growing fainter; and he knew that if it went out she would be no more. She liked his tears so much that she put out her beautiful finger and let them run over it.

Her voice was so low that at first he could not make out what she said. Then he made it out. She was saying that she thought she could get well again if children believed in fairies.

Peter flung out his arms. There were no children there, and it was night-time; but he addressed all who might be dreaming of the Neverland, and who were therefore nearer to him than you think: boys and girls in their nighties, and naked papooses in their baskets hung from trees.

'Do you believe?' he cried. Tink sat up in bed almost briskly to listen to her fate. She fancied she heard answers in the affirmative, and then again she wasn't sure.

'What do you think?' she asked Peter.

'If you believe,' he shouted to them, 'clap your hands; don't let Tink die.'

Many clapped.

The clapping stopped suddenly; as if countless mothers had rushed to their nurseries to see what on earth was happening; but already Tink was saved. First her voice grew strong; then she popped out of bed; then she was flashing through the room more merry and impudent than ever."

What does it mean to believe in fairies?

Does it mean creating them in your own mind so they become real for you?

In the Bible believing in Jesus or having faith in him is something very different. What does it mean?

1. A world of need

Parents are deeply concerned for their children especially when they are sick. I love my beauty sleep but there were times when our children were sick. I didn't think twice about rushing off the hospital in the middle of the night and sitting there for hours to see that they were treated. I wanted to see them well.

First we meet a man, Jairus. His daughter is very sick, close to death and he is desperate. Jairus is a ruler of the synagogue and the Jewish leaders had now become hostile to Jesus. The fact that Jairus comes to Jesus shows he is desperate he must be. He has tried everything else. So he falls on his knees and begs Jesus to come and heal his little girl.

Jairus is on a rollercoaster ride between hope and despair. There were probably times of hope and times of despair in recent weeks. Now there is hope as Jesus agrees to go with him. Off they go.

But then ... but then ... there is a delay! Jesus has stopped to talk to a woman. This woman has been sick for 12 years why can't she wait. "Come on Jesus, my girl is dying!" But Jesus wants to deal with this woman's need.

To have this bleeding condition would make her unclean. She should not mix with other people or be with her family. Perhaps her husband would divorce her. To be unclean was to be unfit for God. It was a very serious situation. In Leviticus it says, *"When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge."* (Leviticus 15:25)

Jesus has come into a world of human need, a world of affected by disease, death, and fear. He has come into to a fallen sinful world.

Jesus comes to bring a kingdom that will free us from these effects of sin that cause such distress and heartache in this life, and to restore people to a relationship to God. These two people show the pain, fear and heartache of this world of need.

2. They are saved by faith

The woman knows she shouldn't be in this crowd. She comes and touches Jesus' clothes secretly, She is healed and she tries to move away quietly. But Jesus wants to talk to her. He wants her to know how she has been healed, that it is not some sort of magical power. He tells her, "Your faith has healed you."

Throughout the Gospel faith is trust in Jesus. It may not be a strong faith but it is coming to him with a need and trusting in him to deal with that need. The focus of faith is not on the result. It is not the power of positive thinking: "It will happen!", but trusting in Jesus, his promises and his power.

Jesus says, "Your faith has healed you" but the word here for healed is "saved". "Your faith has saved you." Jesus points beyond this healing to the way in which we are brought back to God. It is as we put our trust in Jesus that we are forgiven and brought into God's kingdom. We are made God's children now and for ever and Jesus wants to teach this lesson.

But Jairus is waiting. As time ticks by the rollercoaster is heading down hill fast as hope fades. And then the dreaded news comes, "Your daughter is dead." The rollercoaster has crashed. All hope is gone.

But Jesus says, "*Don't be afraid; just believe.*" "Believe"! What can he believe at a time like this?! But if he had been watching he would have seen this woman had been healed by Jesus. Jesus has said to her, "*Your faith has made you well.*" Like the woman he must put his trust in Jesus. He must believe what Jesus says. Jesus tells him not to be afraid. Faith will remove his fear and bring life to his daughter.

3. Resurrection life

Finally they arrive at Jairus' house. In those days they had professional mourners who played flutes and wailed loudly with the family. So when they arrived at Jairus' house there is a great noise.

Jesus puts them all out and tells them she is just sleeping. For him raising someone from death is as easy as waking someone from sleep. In fact if you have tried to get a teenager up you might say Jesus had the easier job!

Jesus just takes the parents, Peter, James and John with him. Jesus spoke Aramaic and his original words are preserved. He says, "*Talitha koum!*" Literally, "Little

lamb, get up” such gentle, kind words but such amazing power bringing life to a dead body. The dead girl is brought back to life. He takes the girl by the hand and raises her to life and she is well again, smiling, alive, and hungry!!

Mark says she “rose up”, words which echo the way Jesus raises people from death to resurrection life. Jesus is the one who raises the dead. We will only rise to life with Jesus if he raises us. It is only Jesus who can give us eternal life. It is only as we put our faith in him that we have life. His kingdom is where death has been defeated.

4. Faith in Jesus

This reading teaches us the importance of faith. It all depends on faith. But what does faith mean? It is not just imagining something in our mind. It is not just believing for a miracle, believing hard enough that something will happen.

In the Bible faith is all about trust in a person - Jesus.

Trusting in who he is - the Son of God.

Trusting his words: his promises and his teaching about God.

Trusting that his death on cross makes us right with God.

And trusting enough to follow him.

Do you trust Jesus like that?

See this chair. It looks very comfortable. I believe it exists. I believe it could hold me up. But it isn't holding me up is it? I'm not sitting on it.

I might trust the chair for safety when I drive (I place my keys on it.)

I might trust the chair to support my family (I place some family photos on it.)

Might trust the chair to look after me financially (I place my wallet on it.)

But it's still not holding me up. I have to actually entrust myself to it. I have to actually sit on it. (I sit) It is now supporting me.

It is the same with Jesus. I might believe that he exists, that he is Son of God and rose from the dead. Even the Devil believes these things but it does him no good.

I might pray for Jesus to keep me safe, to look after my family, or to provide for me financially. But real faith is when I entrust myself to him, like sitting on the chair. I stop trusting myself, that I am good enough for God. I trust his death

for my forgiveness, to make me right with God. I trust him enough to follow him with my life.

It is when we trust Jesus like that, when we give ourselves to him, that we become God's children and inherit all his promises. The more we come to know Jesus the stronger our faith becomes.

Do you understand faith? Have you placed your faith in him?
Is it confusing? Do you need to know more? Do you see how Jesus fits in? Who he is? What God promises?

There are courses like Christianity Explained or Christianity Explored that help with those questions. They give an opportunity to discuss and ask questions. I encourage you to do a course like these at a church near you.

One other thing, faith is not a leap in the dark. We can look at evidence for Jesus and his resurrection. We can look at the reliability of the Bible. These courses give you the opportunity to do this and to ask questions without any pressure or feeling have to have all answers.

Do you have real faith?