



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

One of my preacher tricks is to do a quick Google search for quotes related to whatever topic on which I'm writing or preaching. Most often I use any of the quotes that I've seen. They just help get the juices flowing as I prepare what I'd like to say. In preparing for our sermon series on keeping our faith in unbelievable times and specifically on this topic of the interplay between faith and doubt, I turned once more to Google. (How did preachers do it before the internet?)

I searched for quotes about doubt, expecting to get some insight or thought that would spin me off into a different direction. What I found was a litany of quotes about the dangers and evils of doubt. How doubt weakens love. How doubt kills dreams. Doubt is a virus and faith is a vaccine.

Call me crazy, but I disagree. I think that in any step of faith, doubt will be a companion. Doubt is the other side of the coin of faith. Faith by scripture's definition is the "confidence in things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Things not seen... Faith by definition means that we are walking into the murky waters of the unknown. Where there is unknown, faith and doubt have a conversation. They live together.

It is true that doubt, fear and uncertainty can be faith-killers. But they can also be signposts that you are going the right way, that you are on an authentic and true journey toward the fullness of truth. It took me 23 quotes in that Google search before I found one that had anything good to say about the subject of doubt. It's from Victoria Erickson. "Are you feeling a bit shaken, maybe stirred, maybe fearful or doubtful and completely utterly wildly terrified? Good. Keep going."

Rev. Katie Meek, Associate Pastor

Consider the Source Mark 9:14-29

A Family Affair

Read John 13:1-15 together and discuss Jesus' actions. Why do you think he washed his disciples' feet? What is the meaning for us today?

Back in Jesus' day, people did not wear shoes like we wear today. They either wore sandals or walked barefoot, so their feet were often dirty. Washing feet was something a servant usually did when visitors entered the home. Simon Peter was very upset about the idea of Jesus, his Teacher, washing his feet. Jesus explains that he washed feet to set an example for the disciples so they could go and serve others.

In the past two weeks, you may have heard and seen pictures on the news of the destruction caused by Hurricane Harvey. Some communities were destroyed, others flooded. How can we serve those affected by this monstrous storm? Last weekend, many families gathered to help pack flood buckets and health kits for victims of Hurricane Harvey. We will have another gathering to pack buckets on Saturday, September 16. The church has also collected money to be donated to the United Methodist Committee on Relief. We can also pray for all those affected by this storm. If you attend Sunday School, there is always a mission opportunity to serve others. Currently, children are all bringing items for Thanksgiving meals that will be delivered to those in need of food.

Dear God, thank you for Jesus' example of service. We know He was teaching us to serve others. Help us to serve in our families, schools, communities and even those who may be far away. In Jesus' name, Amen.

— Jennifer Hall, Director of Children's Ministry

Monday: Mark 9:14-15

What was it about Jesus that inspired immediate awe in the crowd? Was it his reputation as a teacher and healer or something else? Some suggest that Jesus may have still been glowing from his transfiguration experience on the mountain.

- *Let's start this week focusing on Jesus. Imagine Jesus is in front of you. What do you see? What about him is wholly human? What about him inspires awe?*
- *What do you need from Jesus today? Tell him what you need and receive back from him what he gives.*

Tuesday: Mark 9:14-29

Let's focus on the father in this story. If his son has endured this affliction all this time, what brings him to seek a change now? What brings him to believe that change is possible?

- *What are your catalysts for change? What have you been holding onto that it might be time to let go? What's preventing you from that?*
- *When Jesus calls to the father's faith on behalf of his son the man says, "I believe, help my unbelief!" Does this strike you as true to your life, or is it foreign?*
- *Why does the healing happen even though the man admits to some unbelief?*
- *Where does the interplay between faith and doubt pay off for this man?*

Wednesday: Mark 9:14-29

Let's focus on the disciples in this story. Jesus' disciples have already been deployed to go about in pairs healing the sick and performing other miracles in his name. But here they cannot perform that miracle.

- *Why do you think they couldn't perform this miracle?*
- *Jesus says that this kind of miracle was only possible through prayer. But strangely, Jesus doesn't actually pray. Whose prayer was it? Is it possible that it was the father's cry for help to believe that was the prayer of which Jesus is talking?*

Thursday: Mark 9:25-29

Let's consider more about prayer today. There is this interesting theological dilemma present in the question of prayer. On the one hand, we go to God with faith trusting that prayer matters and is powerful. On the other, we know that there are many prayers for healing and change that seem to fall on deaf ears.

- *How do we go to God in prayer with faith that prayer matters?*
- *Is it right to go to God with outcomes in mind...heal me, help me, get me this job? What is different about this kind of prayer than one said for the sake of simply connecting with God?*
- *Why do you pray? Where does doubt come into your prayers?*

Friday: Psalm 74

The Psalms are one of the places where we see most strongly that doubt has a place in the life of faith. Israel's early expectation was that if they were faithful, God would protect them from their enemies. And yet, they were a small nation often at war with neighboring tribes. Later they would be conquered by one vicious empire after another.

- *Do you ever feel like the Psalmist did here...that God should have intervened and didn't? How do you reconcile this? How do you make sense, for example, of Hurricane Harvey? (If you didn't hear Rev. Will Cotton's sermon last week, you may want to find it on the iTunes podcast. More info at fumc-rr.org/media/podcasts)*
- *Read Psalm 27 and place it in conversation with Psalm 74. What do you see? Why do these two Psalms belong in the same book of faith?*