

N U R T U R E
F A I T H
with
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October 15, 2017

Hesitant Believers

READ: Mark 9:24 (Common English Bible)

“At that the boy’s father cried out, ‘I have faith; help my lack of faith!’”

MEDITATE:

The boy’s father cried out, “I have faith; help my lack of faith!” His cry is our cry. We live in an anxious time. Natural disasters, terrorist activity, and anger unleashed in the midst of shifting cultural values have brought uncertainty and fear. We may profess faith in God but that faith is hesitant, uncertain, and unsatisfactory. The forces of evil, destruction, and pain can do that; diminish a steady and certain faith in the presence and activity of a loving God. Faith may remain but it isn’t the robust faith we desire. Mixed with our faith is a good measure of doubt: “help my lack of faith!”

This father’s son is possessed with a destructive spirit. Since an early age, this spirit has thrown the boy into a fire and into bodies of water with one intention: to kill him. The Bible doesn’t tell us how many years this has been going on but the father has now exhausted all hope for his son. Hope extinguished is reflected in the father’s question to Jesus: “If you can do anything.” It is a frail request. It is what anyone who has nearly given-up would ask. In modern parlance, it is a resignation to, “What can it hurt to ask Jesus to help.” The father has moved way past desperation.

It is then that the arch of the story shifts. Jesus confidently answers, “All things are possible for the one who has faith.” The father finds that he stands before a faith so glorious and strong, a faith that has sufficient resources to meet any need, that his prayer grows larger. Certainly, the father’s desire for his son’s wholeness remains. But suddenly present is something more. The father seeks to possess the faith he sees in Jesus, “help my lack of faith!” How many of us are represented by that father’s plea?

Each of us has felt the desire to find within our faith the resources to counterbalance the tumult of the world. These are desperate days we are living through. And as one tragedy follows another, we grow weary. Jesus does heal the father’s son. And when the disciples ask how, Jesus simply answers, “Throwing this kind of spirit out requires prayer.” Apparently, Jesus speaks of something more than perfunctory prayers offered before a meeting, a meal, or bedtime. If we wish to be glorious believers who call upon uncommon powers, we will fulfill the conditions of a more thoughtful, robust life of communion with God. This is a deeper prayer life than many of us have ever known.

