

Marks of a Genuine Faith

Mark 5:21-34

- Go ahead and open your Bible to **Mark 5:21-34**.
- As you are turning, let me ask: how many of you like to plan? You like a schedule or a routine, you wake up and have a good idea of how the day is going to go? You may even have a planner with your A1 priorities, schedule your time blocks to work on projects, etc.
- How many of you are “completers”? In other words, you hate to leave something undone. It may take a bit to get started, but once you do, you want to shut everything else out until it is done.
- If you are in either of those camps, what happens to Jesus and his disciples this morning is going to irritate and frustrate you.
- However, for all of us, we are going to see some incredible lessons about what genuine faith looks like from this passage.

- We are continuing our march through the book of Mark.
- Although we have been at this a while, let me remind you why we are looking at this book in particular: Many of us have lots of ideas about Jesus, but they are often influenced by what we see on TV, hear from friends, or read online.
- Sometimes, we pick up things here and there that aren't exactly accurate, and they skew our understanding of who Jesus is and how he works.
- Since we are called to follow Jesus and live like him, we ought to take some time to really dig in and study who he is and what he says and what he did while on earth.

- Of the four books of the Bible that talk about Jesus' life and ministry on the earth, Mark is the shortest. He gives us rapid-fire sections that show us different sides of who Jesus is.
- In this section, we see that through Jesus, God brings his power into our pain.
- We saw it as Jesus endured a physical, life-threatening storm on the Sea of Galilee with his closest disciples, eventually demonstrating God's power by calming the storm.
- Last week, we saw that same power calm a man who was untamable. He was possessed with a number of demons, and no one could contain him.
- Yet, Jesus brought God's power to work in his life, casting out the demons and restoring the man to right relationship with God and others.
- By working in that man's life, we were reminded that Jesus loves the outcast.
- This week, we start a story that will take us a few weeks to get through.
- However, we continue to see Jesus demonstrating God's power in the midst of our pain.
- Let's see how Jesus did that. Start with me in **verses 21-24**.
- I can't imagine a scarier situation.
- Jesus and the disciples, having just returned from across the sea, where they met the man with the demons, steps out onto the seashore and is immediately hit with a need.
- Unlike the demoniac, this man isn't a social outcast. In fact, he was a ruler in the synagogue, although I imagine not for long.

- He was desperate, though, because his daughter was sick and near death, and he knew only Jesus had the power to save her.
- He begs with Jesus to come, so Jesus sets out to the man's house.
- Just like almost everywhere he went during this season of his ministry, there was a massive crowd that was pushing and jostling all around him.
- That's when things get interesting. Pick back up in **verse 25-34**.
- This story interrupts the story of Jairus' deathly-ill daughter, and we are going to have to come back to that in a couple of weeks...told you that it would irritate the completers and planners in the room!
- It was tough for me because there are some great lessons to draw from that account, but we have to put them on hold.
- For this week, we're going to focus on this unnamed woman.
- Like the man from last week, this woman was an outcast, although not for such extreme reasons as demon possession.
- Even though she had a chronic medical condition that would impact her everyday life, on this day, she is bold enough to press through the crowd, touch Jesus' cloak, and find physical healing and peace with God.
- This woman's determination to get to Jesus is such a beautiful picture of genuine faith in Christ.
- In fact, if you leave here with nothing else, I want you to see that Jesus is moved by genuine faith.

- The disciples were chastised for their lack of faith during the storm, yet this unnamed woman is commended for hers.
- Let's look at three marks of genuine faith from this text.
- As we do, I want to challenge you. Would you be honest with God, allowing him to show you whether you have ever genuinely put your faith in Christ like this woman did?
- It may be that you are here this morning and have been in church your whole life, but you have never actually put your faith in Jesus and him alone.
- For this woman, her faith in Jesus was genuine because she realized that she had nowhere else to turn.
- **That's the first mark of genuine faith this morning:**

1) Genuine faith is desperate. (25-28)

- My heart hurts as I read these first few verses.
- Look back at them again... **(25-26)**
- This woman dealt with a chronic hemorrhage, so she was in discomfort for twelve years.
- Some of you have dealt with chronic medical issues, so you know some of the pain this woman endured.
- You have been from doctor to doctor, enduring painful and expensive treatment after painful and expensive treatment, and still nothing. The problem remains, and you have no more money or options.
- This problem was more than a physical ailment. Because of the Jewish law that said a woman was unclean when she was bleeding, anyone who touched her would be unclean. Not only that, but anything she sat on would also be unclean, and anybody who touched that would be unclean, so there was no way for her to have any kind of normal social life.

(Leviticus 15:25-27)

- Can you imagine this?
 - She is physically hurting, out of money, out of options, and can't be close to anyone.
 - She was in a desperate place.
 - When she is finally at the end of her rope, she hears something that she can hardly believe. Jesus is in town, and he has been healing people and doing all these miracles.
 - In her desperation, she knows that Jesus and Jesus alone can save her.
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- That desperation is a key characteristic of genuine faith.
 - It is when we come to the end of ourselves, and we cry out, "God, I can't do this anymore. I need you to save me from myself."
 - We see this time and time again in Scripture. In the Old Testament, we read Isaiah's account of seeing into heaven, seeing God as he really is, and falling down in fear. At that moment, he receives the cleansing from his sins that he desperately needs.
 - We see it in the thief on the cross, the man who was sentenced to die next to Jesus. Although one of the thieves cursed Jesus, the other cried out in desperate faith,
But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" (Luke 23:40-42, NASB95)

- He knew his life was ending, and in desperation, he cried out to the only one who could save him.
- The same is true of the jailer in Philippi who thought he had let Paul and Silas escape, so he was ready to commit suicide.
- When he saw that they were still in the jail, he asked them *and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."* (Acts 16:30-31, NASB95)
- When things were desperate, these individuals all cried out to Jesus to save them.
- Are you at a desperation point this morning? Maybe you came today because someone forced you to, and you didn't want to.
- You may be here and not even know why you came.
- Perhaps you thought you might try church, because it might help when nothing else has.
- If that's you this morning, let me tell you: I am glad you are here to hear that Jesus is moved by genuine, desperate faith.
- If you are here and you think you have a relationship with Jesus, but you can't ever remember a time when you were desperate to know him and be right with him, then I would challenge you to take a good look at your life and make sure you are genuinely saved.
- Genuine salvation comes through genuine faith, which is marked by a desperate desire for Jesus.

- If you are here this morning and you know you have trusted Christ, remember that you need him just as badly today as you did the day you first got saved.
- I heard a message from Paul David Tripp recently where he said

“Growth in the Christian life is growth from independence to dependence.”¹
- Your life as a believer should always be marked by a desperate faith that says, “God, I need your presence every moment of every day or I won’t survive,” because it is the truth!
- **Whether for the first time or as we grow in Christ, that desperation leads to the second mark of genuine faith we see in this passage:**

2) Genuine faith is reckless. (27-28)

- Read **verses 27-28** again.
- In our modern context, this may not sound like a big deal, but think back to what we have said.
- This woman was ceremonially unclean, and everyone she touched would be unclean as well, including Jesus.
- In her desperation, she is willing to risk making everyone around her unclean, potentially making them all angry with her, because she knew she needed to get to Jesus, and that he alone could save her.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/parenting-is-gospel-ministry>

- Many would consider that reckless. Couldn't she have tried to get someone to go on her behalf, kinda like Jairus was going to Jesus on behalf of his daughter?
- Genuine faith led her to throw aside any concern about her reputation, what others would think, or any other consideration and recklessly push through the crowd to get to Jesus.
- In fact, it was so reckless that she was afraid when Jesus called her out. Look back at **verse 32-33**.
- This could have gone really badly, yet because she was genuinely expressing her faith in Christ, he responded gently to her.
- When is the last time your faith in Christ caused you to do something reckless?
- When you realize that Jesus is the only one who can give you peace with God and true meaning and purpose in life, you can't help but run towards him, no matter the cost.
- Perhaps you approached someone you didn't want to talk to to tell them about Jesus. Maybe you have stepped out in faith in giving to support Christ's work through the church in a way that is scary at first. Perhaps your family even thinks your nuts for coming to church.
- Listen: the world around us doesn't live life looking to honor Jesus like we are called to live.
- If that's the case, then there are going to be times when people around you don't like what you're doing and think you are being reckless.
- There may even be times where other Christians think you are being too extreme in your obedience because God isn't

dealing with them about the same issues he is dealing with you about.

- Are you willing to be reckless in your pursuit of Christ?
- If you are going to follow Christ, if you have genuine faith in him, then you are going to be reckless!
- That's true of the ones who followed God and are recorded in Hebrews 11. We don't have time to cover it this morning, but you see time and time again that those who have genuine faith often obey God in ways that seem reckless to everyone else.
- Why would you do all that?
- **Because the third mark of genuine faith is...**

3) Genuine faith is effective. (29-31, 34)

- Can you imagine the way this woman felt?
- After suffering physically and emotionally for a dozen years, suddenly, in an instant, she is completely healed.
- Because she put her faith in Christ, he healed her of her condition.
- Read again how this all went down (**29-31**).
- The disciples were their usual dense selves, but their answer points to a very important truth: although there were crowds pressing around Jesus, there was only one woman who was healed.
- There may be a lot of people in churches across our nation this morning who are hearing somebody like me say things like I'm saying, and they think they are good to go, when they are simply a part of a crowd pressing around Jesus but they aren't willing to let him change their lives.

- They want to act like they are close, but in reality, they aren't letting him do anything for them.
- This woman separated herself from the crowd by expressing genuine faith that Jesus could save her.
- She believed a superstition that the clothes of a healer also had healing ability, but it was still a genuine expression of her faith in Christ.
- Jesus affirms that in **verse 34**...
- The language Jesus uses is interesting, though, because it implies more than just physical healing.
- Her faith didn't only cure her physical problem, it also cured her of her even greater problem: her sinful heart.
- In fact, I want to be clear this morning that the Bible nowhere claims that God will heal every physical disease or problem we have in this life.
- This woman's story isn't given to show us that we simply need to have faith in Jesus and we'll never be sick again; that isn't true.
- Although God can certainly heal physically, the greater healing we need is spiritual.
- Here's what the Bible teaches about our salvation:
 - For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB95)*
- You are completely saved by God's grace when he draws you to himself and you surrender in desperate, reckless, faith.
- From the moment you do that, Jesus declares over you, "Your faith has made you well, go in peace with God!"
 - "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. (John 6:47, NASB95)*

- Genuine faith is an expression of belief in the God who saves you from your sin and will one day save you from everything!
- That day, Jesus was willing to take on this woman's uncleanness, but it was only a picture of what was to come.
- In order to fully secure that woman's peace with God, Jesus would have to take every last bit of our sin upon himself and pay it all.
- On that day, he surrendered his life for us.
- Are you willing to put your faith in one who would do that for you?