

Faith in Jesus

ODCC 09/08/09 (x.pages)

Text: Mark 4:35-41

Introduction

1. This is part testimony and part message today. I have been a Christian for almost all my life. I invited the Lord into my heart in a very simple and childlike manner when I was 4 years old.
 - a. I know I was 4 because it was before I started going to school and I started going to school a few weeks after I turned 5. Also, the women of the church would gather for a Bible on Wednesday mornings and because I didn't yet go to school, I went along and played with a few other children in my aunty's backyard.
 - b. Sunday school was held on a huge verandah and on the morning I invited the Lord into my life, it was a rainy day – not cold because it didn't get cold when it rained.
 - c. I remember it so clearly and I know that something happened that day. I can't explain it; I didn't understand it but it made a difference because I became the Lord's and He became mine.
2. Have I been a *goody two-shoes* ever since? No! I have not always behaved or responded or spoken, etc., as a Christian should.
 - a. I have disobeyed God and grieved the Holy Spirit, and done some things I'm not proud of.
 - b. I have also had some incredible dark days – and some times of extreme doubt.
3. There is one thing though, I never stopped going to church even when I was at my lowest (and one of my lows lasted a couple of years).
 - a. I have hardly missed church when you consider all the Sunday's I've been alive.
 - b. When my **life was not right**, I went to church and got a good dose of conviction.
 - c. In my **darkest days** I went to church and sat there with a lot of questions, and confusion and frustration.
 - d. In my **times of doubting** I went with a hard heart, with scepticism, and with fault-finding.
 - e. But I think I went because I have never been able to let go of God and He *certainly* has never let go of me.

When I read this story I think about my life and what it means to be a Christian.

Not always plain sailing

1. Jesus had been teaching the people and then when evening came He said to His disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."
 - a. I'm not sure how far they were to travel but to give you an idea of the size of the Sea of Gallilee, it is about 12 km across. It seems reasonable that the journey
 - b. There was obviously no storm when they set sail and there may be times when our lives are plain sailing – how we wish for lives like that!
 - c. That all of our plans and dreams and wishes are fulfilled; that no-one causes me grief; that no unforeseen tragedy breaks into my life; that my way is marked by success, etc.
2. But life is not like that. Everyone of us here have different lives. I've had some dark days, some sad days. I've had some knocks, some disappointments, days of despair. But overall I've had a such a good life.
 - a. I do not doubt that some of you have not been as fortunate as me. You've experienced circumstances beyond your control that could be described as difficult.
 - b. But I also know that if you compare you life to others, **in comparison** you'd be able to find more to appreciate than to regret.
3. "A *furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.*" A furious storm – the Gk word is "megas" which is made up of two words, *massive* and *frightening*.
 - a. It swamped their boat and it threatened their life, their very existence. They were on the verge of being destroyed.
 - b. They woke Jesus up and asked, "**Do you not care...?** I'm sure you have experienced times in your life when – if not your whole life – something very important was on the verge of being destroyed.
 - c. A storm, massive and so frightening, and threatening.
 - d. And when you pray it seems as if it seems as if the Lord is asleep or not even present

Faith

1. I want to tell you that He is always there and that He always knows what is happening and He always hears our prayers.
 - a. If the boat represents my life I would rather be in a boat with a sleeping Jesus than in a boat with no Jesus.
 - b. I do not know how anyone can face life, the present, the future or eternity without God – how can you go it alone?
 - c. The Lord has promised NEVER to leave nor to FORSAKE His people.
2. One of the secrets to living the life of faith which the Christian is called to walk is establishing this fact in your heart and mind and never allowing yourself to believe otherwise NO MATTER WHAT!
 - a. Did you read the news about the man and woman in America whose daughter recently died because they and some of their friends stood around her bed and prayed for her healing. While they were praying she stopped breathing and finally they called an ambulance but the paramedics could not resuscitate her and she died in their home. Now the woman has been sentenced and is serving time in jail and her husband is currently being tried for the same thing and will also most likely be found guilty and face a jail sentence. They will serve time for second-degree reckless homicide.
 In his defence, the father, Dale Neuman, said that he believed that God would heal his daughter because He promised to heal her.
 - b. I don't want to judge those parents – there are many who are having a field day at the expense of Christianity and at the Bible. They're asking, "Where is your God?"
 - c. I have seen God perform miraculous healing and change people's lives. I have experienced the power and nearness of God in many different ways. But there are times when it seems as if Jesus is asleep
 - d. When, like those parents, I have prayed, I have hoped, I have believed, I have quoted the promises, etc. but it has seemed completely futile.
3. It was said a couple of thousand years ago that all roads lead to Rome. That was because Rome was the centre of the known world and everything came from and led back to that great city.
 - a. I am not saying that all roads lead to God but for all believers, for your life and my life, I want to illustrate something this morning.
 - b. Consider a tree or just about any plant. It has roots that spread out and down into the soil. If you could pull that tree out of the soil and trace from the tip of each and every root, where would each and every root end? The answer is at the base of the tree.
 - c. Believers are like the roots of a tree. They are hidden from the real world where the light and life and oxygen and the glory exist.
 - d. Some of it filters down through the soil, water and nutrients and oxygen, etc. and the roots draw it in and feed it back to the plant.
4. Down where we are at the moment, we are unable to see the fulness of the glory of God; we do not see the fulness of His light; His presence is not poured on us as a downpour; we do not receive His wisdom in full measure, we do not audibly hear God's voice, etc.
 - a. But through His Word and by His Spirit we receive something of all that God has and all that He is.
 - b. And we draw it in and we feed it back to God because *in Him we live and move and have our being*.
 - c. Paul said, "*For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*" (2 Tim 1:12).
5. We may have to suffer excruciating agonies. Whether we suffer, for example the loss of a child, or the breakdown of a marriage, or illness, or the loss of work, or rejection, or doubt, or sin, or abuse, etc.
 - a. Let me encourage you to look to Jesus and to know this that your present is tied up in your future.
 - b. That our lives and all in it are drawing to a close but not to an end – that we ultimately end up in Christ.
 - c. This is what Paul the apostle meant when he said, "*All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Peter or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.*" (1 Cor 3:21-23).