

McCabe United Methodist Church
Faith for the 21st Century: Following a Global God (Part 4)
Ephesians 1:18-23 *Mark 1:14-20: March 17 & 18, 2012
Pastor Rick Fossum

Do you have that kind of faith? I'm talking about the kind of faith that Simon Peter and Andrew had. I'm talking about the kind of faith that James and John had. One day, they were working on their boats. They were fishermen. Jesus walked by and called out to them, **"Come and follow me?"**

And each one dropped what they were doing and followed Jesus.

That's Faith with a capital F.

Do you have that kind of faith? Would you do what they did?

I remember when Jesus first called me. It was my *'get out of the boat and follow me'* moment. I didn't do so well. I don't remember the exact words, but it went something like this: **"Rick, I've got plans for you. I want you to sell your home and your business and become a pastor."**

My first response was *'no way'*. I had lots and lots of doubts. I doubted I was pastor material. I doubted God's plans. I doubted everything about it. Plus, I was fine with the life I was living. Two, three, four years or more passed before I finally agreed.

I didn't have the kind of faith that Peter, Andrew, James and John had in our reading from Mark. I'm not sure if I have that kind of faith today. What about you?

Jesus said in Matthew, **"Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."**

I don't think my faith has ever moved a mountain. Has your faith?

This is the fourth message in a series Ray and I are doing called *'Faith for the 21st Century'*. Today, we take a look our faith. Jesus, in Matthew 28, tells us, **"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."**

Making disciples of all nations and baptizing them and teaching them takes a lot of faith and maybe that's what's wrong with our world today. We don't have that kind of faith.

Last week, Pastor Ray talked about *loving the overlooked*. He quoted statistics from North Dakota about homeless people living here. He talked about a world where thousands of children are dying every day. A world where people are choosing violence and hatred over love and compassion. A world that desperately needs the kind of faith that can move mountains.

Do we have that kind of faith?

Paul, in Ephesians, tells us that we have a “*tremendous power available to all who believe.*” Did you hear that? We have a tremendous power within us. And we need it! Without this tremendous power, you and I won’t be making many disciples . . . not to mention, moving many mountains. Without this tremendous power, we won’t be able to make much of a difference in the world around us.

Listen to this parable. A man was given an empty, antique, wooden dynamite box. The box was made in the 19th century. The man valued this box. Especially, he liked the warning that was printed on the side of the box: DANGER! DYNAMITE! At one time, there was dynamite in the box and it was dangerous. It had the power to blow up things both big and small. Now, the box was empty.

Eventually, the man forgot about his dynamite box and it ended up in his workshop. Pretty soon, he started using it to store his odds and ends. A screw driver, an old hammer, some glue, some old paint cans, some pieces of old boards.

By the way, have you noticed that there seems to be some force in the universe that doesn’t like empty boxes?

Anyway, the point of the parable is this: We start out life with this empty box. As we grow, we start filling our boxes with all kinds of stuff. Some of the stuff we put into our boxes is good and some isn’t so good. We add a little bit of this and a little bit of that and pretty soon, we wake up one morning and our boxes are almost full. We’ve become busy. We’re committed to our jobs, our families, our hobbies, our yards, our cars and truck, our friends, our investments. We have obligations and plans and not much time for anything else.

And so we come to church one Sunday morning and the pastor starts talking about faith. “**Faith that will move mountains,**” she says.

And we go, “*where is mine? How come I don’t have that kind of faith?*”

The reason is this: faith is not in our boxes! We never took the time to build a connection with God. And the little faith we do have has gotten lost amongst all the other stuff we have in our boxes.

We talk and talk about how God loves us and how we're called to help make the world a better place. But, unless we clean out our boxes and make room for faith, we'll never be able to help make a better world. I'm talking to all of us.

A missionary was given a car to drive. However, the car wouldn't start without a push. It took him a few days, but the missionary came up with a plan. He went to a nearby school, got permission to take some of the kids out of class and had them push his car. He did this every day. During the day, he would either park on a hill or leave the engine running. He thought he was being creative.

Finally, a couple of years later, the old missionary was re-assigned to come back home. A new missionary took this place and was given his car. The old missionary proudly explained how he got the car started every day. The brand, new missionary nodded his head and then he opened the hood of the car and looked around. He found a loose cable and gave it a twist, sat down in the car and turned the key. Guess what? It started just like it was meant to start.

The power was there all the time. It was only a loose cable that kept the old missionary from putting that power to work.

We have the power within us. In fact, we have a tremendous power within us. Whether we use this power or not, is up to us.

Do you remember the movie, *What about Bob?* Richard Dreyfuss plays a psychiatrist and Bill Murray is one of his patients. Dreyfuss, the psychiatrist, writes a book called *Baby Steps*. The book is about taking baby steps before you move onto something bigger. If you want to get well, you take baby steps toward wellness. If you want to be a lawyer or doctor or mother or teacher, you take baby steps toward that goal.

If you want faith. If you want to be a follower of Jesus Christ, if you want to make a difference in the world you begin by taking baby steps. You get connected or re-connect to Christ. You make room for God in your box and you start growing your faith one step at a time.

Maybe, right now, you're hearing a small voice telling you to grow your faith. Is there someone that you need to call or something you need to do? When is the last time you cracked open your Bible? When is the last time you said a prayer? When is the last time you helped someone who wasn't a family member or a friend? When is the last time you asked Jesus, **“OK Lord, here I am. Melt me. Mold me. Use me. I am ready to be one of your followers like Peter, Andrew, James and John.”**

One night, the great Napoleon was talking to a friend about life. It was dark outside. They were standing by an open window and looking out. In the sky, way off in the distance,

were stars. You could barely see them. The stars were like tiny pin-points of light. Napoleon pointed to the sky and asked his friend, **“Do you see all those stars?”**

“No,” his friend answered. **“I don’t see them.”**

“That,” said Napoleon, **“is the difference between you and me. I see the stars and you don’t.”**

Each one of us, has a tremendous power within us. It’s a power that will help us look beyond the ruts and routines of today. It’s a power that will help us to see beyond *‘the way things have always been’*. It’s a power that will help us see the stars and in the process of seeing the stars, maybe . . . just maybe it will help us move a mountain or two.

This world needs people of faith. It needs people like you and me to claim the name of Jesus, clean our boxes, and put our faith to work and follow Jesus.

Let’s pray.