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Mennonite Japanese Church in Vancouver

Mark's Gospel 9: 17-29

From Tokyo, Yoko Lee

Help me who is without faith

Hello everyone. Good morning. Around this time, Covid-19' vaccination has begun, and although there are pros and cons, we feel a little relieved. I pray that your health will be protected both physically and mentally.

Christianity attaches great importance to believing in God. "Faith" is far superior to doing good, and it saves us so much that we can go to heaven. What is faith that it goes far beyond our religious efforts? According to the Old and the New Testament Theological Dictionary (supervised by Tsutomu Oshio and Shyogo Yamatani, Shinkyō Shuppansha published, pp. 248-254, 2004), "Faith is the work of God and Jesus that seems impossible by overcoming fear and doubt., The determination or attitude of the human being to entrust everything, and as a result, peace and joy are given." Faith is an attitude that entrusts everything to God. This comes from a relationship of trust with God.

Two years ago, a Youtube video of a father and child in a battlefield in the Middle East became a hot topic. It seemed that they had heard a bombing sound outside. However, the girl, who looked like a 2 or 3 years old, was hugged in her dad's chest and she was laughing loudly merrily. Run away quickly! It is dangerous! It was such a dangerous situation that I wanted to say it was like that. But why was the girl able to laugh while the bomb was falling? Because she entrusted everything to her father and put all her trust in him, so she was full of peace and joy as the bomb fell. This is exactly what the Bible says about faith. Do you trust God so much? Sure, I do! Are you really? When asked twice or three times, I'm going to lose confidence.

Today's story is about Jesus healing a man who is obsessed with evil spirits. This is very meaningful story because it is written in all three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Looking at verses 17 to 20, this father's son was obsessed with evil spirits and fell down and blew bubbles everywhere. Matthew

chapter 17 states that he was suffering from epilepsy. Although epilepsy has appropriate medication treatment these days, it is still a brain disease that is difficult to cure completely and they have to take medicine for the rest of their life (Psychological and Clinical Dictionary, Baifukan published, p684-688, 2001). In the days of Jesus, epilepsy was an incurable disease that could not be cured at all, so it would have been so desperate that I thought it was the work of evil spirits. However, since the Bible clearly says that it is a demon, I would like to consider the relationship between demons and illness together next.

In this despair, the father heard the rumors of Jesus. He first took his son to Jesus' disciples. Perhaps he was hoping that it would be easy for Jesus' disciples to cure. However, it was a big mistake! The disciples could not drive out the evil spirits. After all, the child's father complained to Jesus. Teacher you can do this, but why your disciples can't? No way!

Jesus heard this and said this. He felt sad, "O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" It seems he was a little angry. The disciples would have sweated a little and their spines became pinned because Jesus who was normally gentle was scolding them. It was as if Jesus was scolding parents because of their children.

Here, the father asked Jesus. "But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Jesus said, "If you can'? Everything is possible for him who believes." The father cried when he heard this. "I do believe! Help me overcome my unbelief!" This man acknowledged his lack of faith and prayed for his strong faith. And Jesus healed this man's son because of his faith.

After that, the disciples who came home secretly asked Jesus. "Why couldn't we drive out this evil spirit?" To this question, Jesus answered, "This kind can come out only prayer." Jesus is teaching the importance of prayer from this story.

You realize that the famous verse was born from this episode. "If you can'? Everything is possible for him who believes." When I was in junior high school, I read the Bible after believing in Jesus, but I couldn't believe the Creation, and I had a hard time believing in the miraculous stories in the Bible. But I really want to believe it, but I couldn't. One day I closed my eyes for a long time and clenched my teeth strongly. Because I thought I could start to believe if I couldn't see anything or put more effort into it. However, no matter how much I closed my eyes and put effort into it, I still could not. After that, I prayed to God, "I want

to believe. Please help me to believe." Then, a few months later, I was able to believe in the words of the Bible suddenly. I still remember such a wonderful feeling refreshed as if I drank a coke in the middle of a hot summer. But unfortunately, I haven't really prayed for "my faith" since then. And when I read the Bible and saw miracles, I thought that they were true for this person, but not for me. Naturally, I cannot pray with faith. I always thought it was difficult to believe even when I face to difficulties. How about everyone?

Although I have been a Christian for over 30 years, I was still embarrassed to have this problem. However, God answered this question and worries. Shyogo Yamatani, editor of the Old and the New Testament Theological Dictionary, wrote: He said, "I believe in Mark 9:24. I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief, which is very important, expressing the difficulty of faith and the impossible without the help of above. There are many meaningful words." Theologians have studied and said that it is very theologically important that we need to pray as the father in today's text. "I believe. Please help me overcome my unbelief!" When I found this, the burden on my shoulder was gone. I realized that faith is something that can be received or strengthened with the help from above. Therefore, if you feel that you have no faith or lack of faith, you can pray to God, "Please help me without faith." Faith is not necessary just to go to heaven. It is also necessary for us to overcome the difficulties faced in reality like the father of today's text. In the Bible, we Christians have been given many gifts of the Holy Spirit to win the world and serve the church. From 1 Corinthians 12: 9, Paul lists the gifts of the Holy Spirit. "to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers,...." I was surprised at how "faith" was contained in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That is why we Christians can ask the Holy Spirit to give us "faith" as a gift from our God Father.

When we are living a church's life, we think that this person has a large faith and this person has a weak faith, and you realize that there are individual differences in faith depending on the person. Even in today's text, the father of son who was obsessed with evil spirits, said, "If you can? If possible?" and reproved Jesus for his suspicious faith. His disciples had no power of faith or influence and could not drive out evil spirits, and they were scolded by Jesus. However, there are occasions in other Bibles that praise faith. Matthew 15:28, also praises the Canaanite woman, who also brought her demon-

obsessed son, for her faith. In addition, Jesus praises the faith of the centurion. What we can learn from these is that the faith that Jesus praises is "faith that challenges the impossible and trusts Jesus undoubtedly."

Remember when we were a little kid. One day, when a dad buys bread and brings them home, the child will think that my dad is a bakery. One day my dad bought a toy for his car. Wow, the child will think that my dad is a car factory manager. But how surprised the child is when he grows up and realizes that his father is the president of the US. We may underestimate God. Hebrews 12: 2, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." The source of faith is not us. The person who created the faith, the source of the faith is Jesus, and the person who grows and completes the faith we have received is also Jesus. And if you know and believe that Heavenly Father is omnipotent, there is nothing he can't do in this world.

Hebrews chapter 11 describes many of the ancestors who have won the world by faith. "This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death. Faith empowered Sarah to have a child, even though she was old. By faith Abraham! By faith Moses ... "Here, faith is trust in God. This strong bond is a blessing from God and a medium for overcoming hardships. As Hebrews 11: 6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." God is most pleased with our faith. And while living in this world, we can see many miracles. Even if we look at the work of Jesus, he blesses those who have faith in him, heals our illnesses, and drives out evil spirits, showing many miracles.

So how should we build a relationship of trust and faith with God?

John 14: 12-17, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to my Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.-the Spirit of truth." Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit helps our faith and allows us to do more than the work that Jesus did. Today's the disciples who were scolded for lack of faith were able to demonstrate the power of faith after the Holy Spirit came. They healed sick people and even revived dead people. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can challenge the impossible.

I am a negative person a little bit, and I didn't pray a lot to God for big wishes. I thought about things within my own efforts and didn't expect much from God. But now I realize that it is a big sin to not expect anything from the omnipotent God. I repent of my unbelief now. However, recently I have witnessed that God is willing to bless me for praying with faith in these two years. At that time, I never imagined that I could have such a relationship like this with Mennonites Japanese Church. While experiencing this graceful reality, I feel that God is telling me this way. "Pray with faith to me. I'm a heavenly dad who is more capable than the president. Can you believe me like that girl in the battlefield?" I have ever believed I didn't pray a lot to God because I lacked faith. So first, I must grow this weak faith. If you have great faith, you will pray boldly to God and solve things that seem impossible to do. I pray that our faith, which is the pipe of blessing, grows every day. "God, please help me who is without faith."

What seems impossible to you? It may be more difficult than usual because of the Covid-19 disaster. Brothers and sisters who are fighting against illness always have difficulties in daily life, caring for their families, dysfunctional relationships, and financial crisis. I have a prayer task for all of you to pray for. That is to return to Canada and meet my mother and all of you. This prayer task seemed impossible to me, and I feel like I was always praying, "God, if possible, let me return to Canada." Sometimes I was skeptical somewhere. But from now on, I will change my prayer. "I believe in Jesus. Please help me who is without faith." I want to experience how the Holy Spirit strengthens my faith and how Jesus, the founder of faith, completes my faith.

If you think we all lack faith, let's pray together from today. Let's pray, "I believe. Please help me without faith. Please help me to overcome my unbelief." And let's experience with Jesus' words to be accomplished in our daily life. "Everything is possible, anyone who believes can do anything."

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, please help us in our faith. And please guide us to walk with a powerful and influential faith. Please guide us to the Holy Spirit every day. I pray this prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.