

The Object of Our Faith

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[0 : 00] Scripture reading coming from Matthew chapter 9. So please follow along on your screens or in the bulletin or in your own Bibles.

In Matthew 9 verse 18 we read, While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and she will live.

And Jesus rose and followed him with his disciples. And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment.

For she said to herself, If I only touched his garment, I will be made well. Jesus turned and seeing her, he said, Take heart, daughter. Your faith has made you well.

And instantly the woman was made well. And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, he saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion.

[1 : 20] He said, Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping. And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand and the girl arose.

And the report of this went through all that district. And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, Have mercy on us, son of David.

And Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this?

And Jesus said to them, Yes, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it done to you.

And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, so that no one knows about it. But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

[2 : 32] As they were going away, behold, a demon-possessed man who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke.

And the crowd marveled, saying, Never was anything like this seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casts out demons by the prince of demons.

The word of God. Thank you, Bernard and Anjali. Good morning, Watermark. It's really great to have you this morning.

And my name is Alan, and I oversee the youths here at Watermark. It's such a joy to be here this morning, just ministering the word of God for all of us. I just pray that his word be revealed, and just that God would minister in our hearts this day.

So we have been going through the Gospel of Matthew, and we are at chapter 9 today. And we have been just looking at what it means to be following Jesus in our everyday life.

[3 : 39] Just last week, towards the end, we were seeing this crowd that were around Jesus, that they were marveling, and they were looking at the miracles of Jesus. And they were, like, glorifying God.

But then we saw that this crowd was not really coming to Jesus. They were not really following him. And at the other side, we saw Matthew, a tax collector, a despicable man, just a man who was despised, a sinner.

And Jesus calls Matthew and says, follow me. And Matthew leaves everything and follows Jesus. Whenever we see Jesus interact with people, he always comforts and confronts them.

He would always calm them, and at the same time, he would always challenge them. Last week, we saw the comfort was that he came for sinners, that he was here for sinners. We are all sinners. He's here for us, that he died for us.

He paid the price for our sins, and he brought us salvation. He got us eternal life, which is not only for the future, for now. And we have hope. We have life. We have everything in Jesus.

[4 : 44] And that's comfort. But then the challenge was in this, that he bids us to follow him. And not just follow him, but follow him with everything that we have.

Not just follow him by adding him, a little bit of him in our life. Not just by adding him a little bit in our culture or system. You see, many times we think that following Jesus is like upgrading our iPhone X by adding a new cover, a new protector, a little bit of design, or maybe even upgrading our iPhone X to iPhone 12.

You know, same, same, but different. A little bit of change in the camera, but it's the same thing. But actually, following Jesus is like throwing away your iPhone X and getting a totally new product. It's total change.

Everything is different. And everything is oriented around Jesus. Now, he's calling us to follow him. All in. And in the element of following Jesus with everything that we have, there is something inside of it.

And that is faith. Now, we can get into the definition of faith. And this is what faith is. This is not what faith isn't. Or this is a picture of faith. And this is what, or maybe we don't even know what faith is.

[5 : 51] But let me stop you there. Because what I want us to do today is for us to actually take a walk. Now, before you start putting on shoes and your mask on, let me stop you. This is what I mean.

Let us take a walk with Jesus in today's passages. Because he will be talking about faith. Actually, as we sit there, we'll be seeing a lot of things that will happen. Imagine yourself sitting down with Jesus in verses 14 to 17, where the John disciples are asking Jesus, challenging Jesus about fasting.

And Jesus talks about new wine and going to the old wine sake. And all this stuff. Basically, Jesus tells them that, hey, you cannot just add me into your life. You cannot just add a little bit of me into your system.

But you've got to orient your whole life around me. If you are following me, you've got to follow me with everything that you have. Jesus, imagine you're sitting there. Now, as you're sitting there, a series of things start to happen.

That tells us about faith, that which Jesus is calling us to have on him. And that's the journey I want us to take today. And as we take this walk, we'll see three things about faith.

[6 : 57] Desperate faith, action-led faith, and the object of faith. But before we get into that, let's get into the story. Because in this passage, we'll be encountering three characters.

The ruler, the bleeding woman, and the two blind men. Let's dive into the story. So in the story that happens, the first character we see is the ruler.

When we look into the other Gospels, we see that this ruler is a synagogue leader. And his name is Jairus. We find that his name is Jairus. Okay, so a synagogue, he's also a synagogue leader.

So basically, a synagogue is a place where Jewish people would gather for their worship, religious worship, prayer, scripture reading. So Jairus is an important person.

He is a person. He's a religious leader. He's a man of status. A well-respected man. Educated man. And now we find that this Jairus is walking towards Jesus.

[7 : 54] Now remember that this place where he's walking towards is not like a secluded place. It's a very crowded place. There are the disciples, tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, religious leaders, John's disciples.

Now all these people are in this place. Because if you look at the previous verses, you'll find that all these Pharisees are there trying to question Jesus. Just looking at Jesus to challenge him. Now these people are seeing Jairus walk up, another religious leader.

Now the Pharisees must be thinking, oh here comes Jairus. Here's Jairus, bring it on. Bring on the question to challenge Jesus. Yes, Jairus is here. And they must be expecting that. But Jairus comes and he goes straight to his knees in front of Jesus.

Now imagine the atmosphere. It must have been dead silent. And in that silent, Jairus speaks out. And he says, my daughter is dead.

But come and lay your hand on her and she will live. I don't know, maybe the Pharisees started speaking to each other. Man, what is Jairus doing? Maybe we should take him out of his position or something.

[9 : 03] But if you look carefully, Jairus was in sorrow. His daughter had died. And he was in sorrow and he was pretty desperate for help. As Jesus moves on towards Jairus' house, we

encounter our second character, the bleeding woman.

We encounter her in a crowded place, in a very crowded place, almost like at Malachi Station in MTR at 6 o'clock where it's extremely crowded. And a crowded place, which is the last place she should be.

You know, she has been suffering from a discharge of blood for 12 years. And for a woman like her, there is a law that declares her unclean, which we find in Leviticus chapter 15.

It says, In other words, anything she touches will be unclean.

And whatever she touches, if I touch it or if anyone touches, they will be unclean. Being in a crowded place is the last place she should be. Because anyone she touches would be unclean.

[10:34] Nor can she, she cannot hang out. She cannot touch anyone. She cannot be in a group. She cannot go to temple to worship. And for Jairus' people, the temple was where the presence of God is. She cannot enter the presence of God.

She has not been there for years, 12 years. And she has not, maybe she has not even been hugged. Maybe she has not even touched her loved ones or families away. She has been quarantined.

Now, she needed healing. Not just for healing's sake, but for her life. To have her life back. She was in shame, pain, in pain, and desperate.

And finally, later on, after Jesus heals Jairus' daughter, we see, we meet our third character. We meet the two blind men. As Jesus is walking, we see two blind men shouting from the back, Have mercy on us, O son of David.

Have mercy on us. And it's pretty interesting how two blind people are following Jesus. I don't know how they're following two blind people. Maybe someone was guiding them.

[11:34] But these two blind people were following Jesus, even though they were blind. And the peculiar thing is that Jesus does not stop for them. And Jesus actually walks on. He goes into a house.

And these blind people follow him into the house. I mean, it's, blind people are usually beggars in those times. They cannot do anything about it, honestly.

What can they do? They're blind. And it's not a mystery that these people were desperate. These people really needed Jesus. They were really asking for mercy as they followed Christ.

Now, let's take a step back here. Do you see the desperate faith in these three characters? The father, Jairus, needed help badly because his daughter was dead.

He did not care for his reputation or status as he knelt down before Jesus. He did not look for a private time or a time when Jesus is maybe alone to reach out to Jesus. He was desperate. His daughter had just died.

[12:35] I mean, I'm not a father, but I can understand. That's devastating. Do you see it in the bleeding woman? She came to a crowd that could turn on her if they knew who she was.

If the crowd knew that she was a bleeding, unclean woman, they could have turned on her and it could have been a dangerous scene. She was desperate. It would have been shameful. It would have even been dangerous for her to be in that place.

I mean, she was desperate for Jesus to reach out right now. Do you see it in the two blind men who were shouting and following Jesus regardless that they were blind?

They followed still when Jesus walked on and entered the house. You see, they were relentless and they were desperate. Now, here's a question, church.

What have you been desperate for in the last few months? Was it your favorite football team to win? Was it your business to do well? Was it your career?

[13:32] Was it your investment to work out? Or was it anything else? When was the last time you felt that you needed Jesus desperately? Or have we been so used to Jesus that he was just a small part of our life?

You see, it is so easy to forget Jesus throughout the week and just remember him on a Sunday or on our CGs or small gatherings. You see, it is so easy to forget Jesus in our workplace and our schools when making decisions big or small.

It is so easy to forget Jesus in all of our other parts of our life. You see, we tend to rely on our own wisdom. We tend to rely on our own self whenever we make decisions or whenever we are solving problems.

You see, Jesus seems to be taken out once in a while only. But do you remember what we were talking about right in the beginning? That when Jesus calls us, he calls us to follow all in. When he's calling us that we would need Jesus in everything that we do.

If you look, go to John 15, 5. Jesus says, I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

[14 : 46] For apart from me, you can do nothing. Can I define nothing to you? It means nothing. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing.

If I just turn that around, it means that we need Jesus in everything. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. There's nothing we can do without him.

Do we live a life that believes in that statement? Do we live our life in such a way that I need Jesus in everything that I do and everything I have in my life?

You know, there's a song, Lord, I need you. I need you. Every hour, I need you. My one defense, my righteousness. Oh, God, how I need you. I knew this one young adult back at my church, my old church.

And she was a young adult and she was part of the youth. And I was always amazed at how she used to pray for even the smallest of the smallest thing.

[15 : 45] You know, like she would have a day off and she's like, God, where can I go? And she would maybe even buy a small thing and she would like pray over it and say, God, I pray that this will glorify you. I'm like, even the smallest of the smallest thing, which we don't even bother about, she would pray over it.

And you see, what I saw in her was that it showed that she was so reliant on God, even the smallest thing. That she needed God, even in the smallest of the smallest things she did.

And she was always asking God and always needing God in all the smallest things. Things that we don't even bother God with. So, are we living and following Jesus, being desperately in need of him?

Or are we relying on ourselves and other things of this world? You see, we can put Jesus in a box and just need him when we are suffering or when we need something.

Not realizing that we need Jesus in our every part of our life. And we want, we need Jesus in our every relation, in our every decision, in our every thinking, in our workplace, in our school, in our anything.

[16 : 53] We need Jesus. Now, let's go back to the characters again. Let's go back to the story again. You see, these people needed Jesus desperately. These people were desperate for Jesus.

But you see, they did not just stay in one place. They did not just stay in one corner and just be needing of Jesus. But they actually moved out of their faith, which leads us to our second point, action-led faith.

Look at their lives. The father, Jairus, could have just stayed home and hoped for Jesus to come around. Maybe just hoped that Jesus would be alone when Pharisees are not there and reach out to him later on.

The father could have just stayed in a corner and waited for Jesus to come around. The bleeding woman also could have stayed, maybe isolated, and just wait for Jesus to be alone or maybe bring the mountain.

And she'll just go up to him in a crowded place. Or she could have just stayed outside or just waited for Jesus. And the blind people, same thing. They could have just stayed in the next side of the road, which we find that many people are doing that.

[17 : 52] They could have just stayed and just waited for Jesus to pass and they could have shouted. But no. They were all moving out in faith. You see, there was an action involved in faith.

You see, and that is what faith is, right? There is an action involved in faith. Hey, let me give you guys an image. You see, take a look at this, Jairus.

Faith is not believing that this chair will hold my weight. So faith is not just standing at the side and saying, yeah, this chair is going to hold my weight.

But faith is actually standing on this chair. So faith is not just standing at the side and saying, yeah, that chair is going to hold me. But faith is actually when you put your weight on the chair totally.

That is faith. You see, there is an action involved where you're standing on the chair. And there's a second thing that's involved that is that you're putting your weight on the chair. You're putting your whole life. So when Jesus calls us to follow him with all in, he's calling us to have faith in him.

[18 : 53] And this is what faith is. Not just standing at the side and saying, I believe in you, Jesus. Good job, Jesus. Yep. You died for me. But actually, you're putting your life, your everything on him. You see, you're relying on him. You could fall. But you're putting your faith on him. He who is trustworthy. He who is steadfast and who is a rock. You see, that's why we find that in Psalms, right?

Where, Psalm 19, where David says, like, God, you are my rock. I can stand. Because that is what faith is, that you're putting your everything on Jesus.

You're putting your faith on him. Think about it. If someone were to watch a movie about your life, would they see a person who follows Jesus? Would they see a person who has put their faith on Christ Jesus?

Or is our faith that something that just happens in our heart? Is our faith that something that's happening inside of us? Or is it something that can be seen in our actions?

[19 : 55] When we go to James 2.17, that's the exact thing, what James, we find here. In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by actions, is dead.

Basically, faith without action is dead. Again, let me define dead. It's dead. It's not growing. It's not going anywhere.

It's not alive. It's not moving. It's not moving. You don't even know if it's there. So faith without action is dead. It's not going to grow. It's not going to happen anything. It's not going to impact anything.

It's dead. So church, in what part of our lives have we seen, have our faith been unseen? This happened a few years ago when I was traveling early in the morning towards my workplace.

And I was in the MTR, extremely crowded. And I was not in the best mood. You know, like, it was too early, too crowded. And as I was standing there on the MTR, like, you know how the MTR goes.

[20 : 55] I saw this person sitting down. Man, he had a jolly face. You know, like, a really bright face. And that was very curious. And he was, like, looking around. I'm like, you don't see that often, right?

When everyone is buried on their phones and their smartphones. And this person was, like, looking around. And it did not take long for me to find out what he was looking for. And he calls this old woman. And he gives her his seat.

And he was looking for someone to give his seat up to. And then after a few seconds, he reaches for his bag. And he takes out a leaflet. And he gives it to this old woman. And I stretched out to see what it was. And it was actually a gospel leaflet.

It was a leaflet with a cross and about the gospel. And he started talking with her. And that was so challenging for me. And here I was, a Christian, with my face all like this.

And here was another Christian who was filled with joy, just looking out to share his faith. My faith was in my heart. And my face was all crumbled up. And here was a Christian whose faith I could see in his face, which was filled with joy and the actions that he took.

[22 : 06] You see, many times we are buried in our phones. But look around. There are things going on. There are things. There are people that are needing Jesus. Coming back to here, you see, faith involves action.

We can keep it in our hearts and never show it or never bring it out in action. But then it stops being of faith. It's not only in doing these things, you see. It shows in the way we act around people.

It comes out in the decisions, in the way we make decisions, big or small, whether we seek God's will in everything that we do or not. Or like we were talking about the first point, or whether we're needing Jesus in every small things that do.

And it shows. So in everything you do, in everything we do, do we seek Jesus and have faith in him? You see, in a few weeks we are having this citywide outreach also, loving the city.

Will you step out in faith to not only share the gospel, but actually love the city? Now that's challenging. That's very challenging, you see, to need Jesus in everything and to put our faith wholly on him, which comes out in action.

[23 : 12] But that is challenging. But let me invite you back to the story. Take a closer look at the stories here, at the events that have just happened. You see, we can talk about faith all day.

We can talk about faith, what is and what isn't. And I can give you an image and you can give me an image. And we can go through all this thing. But there's one very important thing, very valuable thing, that if we miss it, that if we get it wrong, that it would have been all in vain.

And that is the object of our faith. We all can have faith. But the question is, what is the object of our faith? What is the thing that we are putting our faith on?

Going back to the story, look at the faith of all these three characters. Jairus, Bleeding Woman, and the two blind men. They were desperate. They needed Jesus. They were coming out in action. He was coming out in the way they did it. But their faith was on the person they were moving towards. They were all moving towards the object of their faith, on whom their faith rested on.

[24 : 21] Jesus. If you look at verse 29, to the blind men, and Jesus tells them, according to your faith, be it done so.

Hey, we tend to think that this actually means that Jesus is saying, like, because you guys have a great faith, I'm going to give you a great healing. Because you guys have a level 10 faith, I'm going to give you a level 10 healing. No, no, no.

Actually, what Jesus is saying here is that, because you have faith on me, on the person of me, Jesus, so be it done to you. You see, many times we find ourselves putting our faith on anything else but Christ.

We put our faiths on our jobs for security and identity. We put our faiths on our careers for our value and status. We put our faith in ourselves to come up with, really come up with the right answers and solutions in life.

We put our faith in anything but Jesus. You see, we even put our faith in our religious works. We put our faith on our religious works, like praying, fasting, and gatherings, to get a sense that God is pleased with me, to get a sense that, yeah, I'm right with God because I'm doing these things.

[25 : 28] You see, those things are not bad. But if Jesus is not the center of it all, if Jesus is not the one that we're seeking, if Jesus is not the one that we're putting our faith in, then we're missing the whole point of it.

When I first came to Christ, I found myself that my Christian life was based on whether I was preaching or not, or whether I was leading worship or not.

So if I was leading worship and preaching, then I felt close to God. I felt like a holy person. I felt good. But if I was not doing that for a few months, then I would feel so, like I feel I was not pleasing God, and I would feel so far away.

So what happened was, you would find me very active at church, doing all these things, and people would be like, ooh, Alan, you're doing good. But then in reality, my heart was very far away from God. In reality, what had happened was that I had started putting my faith on my religious works.

I had started putting my faith on the fact that I'm doing all these things to get to God. and not putting my faith on Jesus himself. You see, if I was seeking Jesus, it would have made a whole difference in the way I did my ministry or approach to worship and preaching.

[26 : 46] Going back to the story, many commentators say that their faith was not the three characters. Their faith was not perfect. Their faith was actually still growing.

They were not there yet. You see, some of them came to Jesus as a last resort. I'm like, nothing worked. I'm going to go to Jesus. Some of them came to Jesus as, you know, in a very superstitious way.

But here's a beautiful thing. Though they had faith that was still growing, because their faith was on the person of Christ, they encountered Jesus.

You see, when we start putting our faith, not in work, self, or religious things, or anything else, but when we start putting our faith on Jesus himself, that is the place where we encounter Jesus.

That is the place where Jesus comes to meet us. I mean, look at those three characters. One was a religious leader, very important man, educated man, high status.

[27 : 43] The other was an outcast, unclean woman, a beggar. But Jesus meets them all through faith. You see, there is another side of the coin, though.

There is the other side to this story, too. You see, we can also live a life without faith. You see, we can be people who look at Jesus, touch him, and see him do miracles after miracles, but leave unchanged.

We can know a lot of things about Jesus, do studies after studies, theology after study. Those are not bad things. Do all those things, but still not encounter him. You see, when the bleeding woman was trying to touch Jesus in the crowd, there were already people around Jesus touching him, but they received nothing.

You see, it is possible to touch Jesus in the crowd and remain unchanged. It is possible to see miracles after miracles and ascribe it to the devil.

We might think that if I was in the crowd, I might have believed it. But actually, we find that many people were there and saw the miracles, but they did not believe it.

[28 : 48] You see, the human heart is capable of profound resistance and deep self-deception. We tend to put our faith in anything but Jesus. And faith is our last resort.

It may still be growing, but if it is placed on Jesus, on Jesus, it binds the sinner and the Savior together. I mean, isn't that beautiful?

Our faith might still be growing, but if it's placed on the person of Jesus, it binds the sinner and the Savior together. So if you're new or feel like you're not there yet, so if you're feeling that your faith is not great at the moment, if you feel like you're not right, come, come to Jesus.

Make Him your object of faith, not yourself or what you have done, because when you put your faith on Jesus, on Him, that's the place where you encounter Him. Because you see, Christianity is not a religion.

It's a relationship that you have with God. So you can have all this knowledge and all this studies and after all, and you can get all these facts right about Jesus, but at the end of the day, you cannot have relationship with a fact.

[29 : 55] You have a relationship with a person. And that person is Jesus. So come to Christ, even if you're weak in faith, even if you feel like you're not in the right place, but come to Jesus and put your faith on Him.

And even if you have been Christian for years and years and years, remember the sermon that we had a few weeks back about Jesus calming the storm. We saw that Jesus welcomes the weak in faith, but He pushes us to be stronger in faith.

And so this is what following Jesus in everyday life means, is to live a life of faith, faith in Jesus in every part of our lives.

You see, it starts by knowing that I need Jesus, that we need Jesus in every part of our life, and He's lived out by living our faiths in our actions, He's lived out in the way we live.

And our faith might not be perfect. It might still be growing and weak. But if the object of our faith is Jesus, that's the thing that brings us to Him.

[30 : 55] That's the thing that brings Jesus to us. So come. Come to Jesus. Even if you feel like you're not there yet, even if you feel like you're still weak, look to Jesus who is the perfecter of our faith.

Come to Jesus, even if you have been Christians for years and years, because we still need Him in every part of our life. Come to Jesus. Turn our eyes towards Him because we need Him.

You see, He is a God who is faithful. He is a steadfast God, unchanging. He is your rock. He is your cornerstone. He does not sleep nor slumber. He is with you.

He promises that He's with you till the end of ages. So church, come have faith on Jesus, for He is Christ, the object of our faith.

Let me invite us to take some time to think about it, to reflect on it. Take a moment to think about that. And as you're reflecting, let me just invite Zihau to guide us in this reflection.