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## Summer Preaching Series: Questions of Faith

*How Can We Have Faith?  
Can I Question My Faith?*

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A Sermon By  
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August 6, 2017  
Grace Episcopal Church  
Silver Spring, Maryland

*An audio version of this sermon may be found on the Grace Church website at  
<http://graceepiscopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017-08-06-RDM.mp3>.*

The Rev. Richard D. Meadows, Jr.  
Grace Episcopal Church  
The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost  
August 6, 2017

How can we have faith? The simple answer is that it is a gift from God. Paul write, Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren and sisters, I would not have you ignorant. There are different kinds of gifts and the Holy Spirit distributes them. To each of us is given gifts that are for the common good. Faith is one of those gifts. Gifts are given in adoration of who you are and what you mean to God. You are a child of God and in return you are given gifts from God and faith is one of those marvelous gifts. The Bible emphasizes in many places that faith is a gift. Galatians 5 says that it is a fruit of the Spirit. The Bible also specifies the way, or the means, that God gives faith to people. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of God" (Romans 10:17). It is the Word of God in conjunction with The human spirit that produces faith.

Faith is a Gift A gift is not earned by some good deed or kind word, and it is not given because the giver expects a gift in return—under any of those conditions, a gift would not be a gift. It is a gift from God.

We live by faith. We live for the things we can not see. Think of the times in your life when you did not know what to expect. Your faith keep you going. You were as the late congressman and pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem USA, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell would say "Keeping the Faith Baby!"

There are many reasons we have faith. There is faith heals, faith that removes anxiety and it is a free gift. There is faith that moves sycamore trees and mountains. Because of the unknown there is Faith that turns fears into faith. Faith comes by faith. It comes with and through the word of God. It is a foundational biblical principal that is placed within us so that salvation comes into our lives. We are saved by faith, healed by faith, kept by faith, delivered from danger by faith. The old folks would say prayer is the key and faith unlocks the door.

The book of Hebrews 11:1 Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. It gives us confidence and assurance. If we could see it or if we knew how things would end up, it would not be faith. Faith has blind corners and unforeseen waters.

In the Christian life and Christian belief faith is a connection to God. We are connected to a God by faith and a mere mustard seed size amount is enough to have God move mountains for you. It is hope to be fulfilled in the future tense, that is not seen presently in any tangible way. It is the desire for something to come to pass and you have no clue as to who, why, what or how this is to happen.

It is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

I'll give you an example from the life of Jesus and his interaction with a Jewish woman. In Jewish religious culture if someone had a disease they were considered unclean. During their sickness they could not have normal relationships with people in the community, they could only do so by going before the priest to be certified that they were healed.

There was a woman and For 12 years of her sickness, This woman had the means to seek out medical help, however after 12 years of paying for medical attention and finding no cure she could no longer afford the cost of her treatments. The treatment she was receiving did not work. She has spent all of her money. She is not cured and her body is still hemorrhaging blood. 12 long years of treatment and still no cure.

Here is where faith comes in. She now only has faith, no money just faith that something can be done. She hears of one Jesus of Nazareth who has been meeting people in crowded market places healing them of their

diseases and goes to meet him there. The crowds are huge and her ability to garner his attention is limited. She decides to settle for touching the hem of his garment. Maybe she heard that in the land of Gennesaret that when people had knowledge of him being in one place, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased.

They found out that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole or healed of their diseases.

She approaches him, touches his hem and is healed. Jesus knew in the moment she touched him and wanted to converse with her. He must have had a goose pimple moment. Jesus says to the woman who carefully approaches him for her healing, woman your faith has made the whole. Your faith and your ability to see who I am in your most desperate moment has made you well. Her hope was her her faith.

Your hope is your faith and it comes with hearing the word of God, about God. Remember Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God. It is not the healing itself but the trusting and hoping in God part. A small amount of faith connects you to God and it is a gift that you receive from God to hope for a better outcome.

Second, can you question your faith? Well when stuff doesn't work out when by faith when you/I hoped it would, it would only be natural to question why you would hope for something and it does not come to pass.

Oh the religious folks of our time would say you can't question God, but if faith is a gift from God, then I'm hoping God is responsible and sense God is the giver of the gift, God should be questioned about the reasons I must still struggle through what I asked God by faith to be moved i.e. This big old mountain in my life I'm looking at. Lord you said if I had the faith of a mustard seed I could say to the mountain move and it would be uprooted and cast into the sea. "Then why am I still looking at this mountain. Lord I am questioning you about faith, the gift that comes from you. "

When you find yourselves in precarious situations or times where you don't see light at the end of the tunnel, or can't seem to get it together or the times when we feel hopeless, Having faith is the easy part, questioning God is fair and the hard part. I exhort you question the one who made and Created all things. Paul says in tough times, we are More Than Conquerors 31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? Mountains, poverty or sickness?

As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered..." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Question of faith moments are intimate, heart to heart, you and God moments. Paul considered these trying moments to be grace moments. Where grace was sufficient.

You don't need permission from the clergy to be angry with God, question your faith, have doubts or fears.

Have that conversation with God. You'll feel even closer, more loved and you will be assured God loves you. Let's conclude with words of Adam Clayton Powell and today's Collect. Mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may by faith behold the King in his beauty; who with you, O Father, and you, O Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Keep the faith, baby! Amen.