

## Faith in the Valley of Transfiguration (Faith for Demons and Taxes)

Matthew 17:14-24

#26 in our series "Jesus Stories"

January 11, 2015

Peter Hiatt

### Message

In Matthew 16 and 17 there are several stories that comprise a bigger story about Peter, faith, and building a church.<sup>1</sup> We've already preached a couple of sermons on this section of Scripture and discussed some dreams for The Sanctuary. So I'd like to remind you of those messages and keep going.

In Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus sits in front of the "gates of hell,"



in Caesarea Philippi, where Peter confesses "You're the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and Jesus says, "You are "Rock" and on this Rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

Then Jesus reveals that He will die. Peter rebukes Jesus; for how will He build a church with a dead Messiah? And Jesus says to Peter, "Get behind me satan. You're not on the side of God but men." And Peter obviously doesn't know how Christ's church will be built.

Then, in Matthew 17:1-13, "After six days, on the seventh day," Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain where he is transfigured (*metamorphao*) and shines like the sun as He stands next to Moses and Elijah. Totally flummoxed and discombobulated. Peter says, "Shall I build three tabernacles?"

See? He's trying to build the church but doesn't know how and isn't sure what it is. A voice booms from heaven: "This is my beloved son. Listen to Him." But we understand Peter. He sees that He must do something about it. What does He see?

---

<sup>1</sup> Since my name is Peter, we have faith and would like to build a church; they might be pertinent to us.

## What Peter Saw:

- The Superman
- The Son of Man
- God
- Man
- The Judgment
- The Word that creates all things
- The 7<sup>th</sup> Day, where everything is very good

Peter saw the Superman, the Son of Man, God and Man. He sees the Judgment, the Word that creates all things. He sees Jesus standing in absolute victory, in the seventh day, where everything is good. In the words of God in Scripture, in Revelation 21:5, He beholds that God in Christ “makes all things new.”

He sees:

God is better than you thought.

The love of Jesus is deeper than you know.

And the Spirit is everywhere working the wonders of mercy.

He sees what I believe The Sanctuary is called to preach. Well, what do you do with such an astounding revelation?

Instinctively, Peter thought: “Build a tabernacle.” Many of you remember that when the manifest presence of God was revealed to Moses on the mountain, as a bush transfigured by eternal fire, and then as a pillar of fire, that temporarily transfigured Moses. You’ll remember that God had Moses build a tabernacle.

[Drawing of the tabernacle]

The presence of God would appear above the Mercy Seat, on the Ark of the Covenant, in the sanctuary, behind the veil, which separated the manifest presence of God from dirt, decay, and bodily *excretia*.

So the high priest went through elaborate rituals to cleanse his soul of sin, and his body of dirt before He entered the sanctuary, behind the veil.

We naturally think something that is holy needs to be protected from the dirt. But maybe the dirt needs to be protected from the holy. I mean it wasn’t God that was in danger. It was people made of dirt.

Well, Jesus transfigures on the mountain, and Jesus transfigures for us. Most of the Christian church, that is the Roman Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox, and the Protestant church (like the Anglicans and many Lutherans) believe that the communion bread actually transfigures into the body of Christ.

It’s often called the “doctrine of the real presence.” Roman Catholics call it transubstantiation. People in my Presbyterian tradition say Christ is “spiritually present,” which often implies “not really present.”

In many American traditions (Anabaptist and Baptist) the “host,” the bread and wine is just bread from Safeway, wine from Tipsie’s, and nothing more. But for me, it’s much more. I can’t comprehend it, manufacture it or control it, but I’ve observed it.

I know from experience that communion wine burns Satan. I’ve listened to stories of visions and even experiences where in the bread took on unbread-like characteristics, like that of a beating heart.

I remember one gal who couldn’t swallow the bread until she prayed, “OK Jesus, you can come in.”

Well, I’m just asking, “When Christ transfigures, when the glory of God is revealed, what do we do with it?”

I find it fascinating that we either deny the transfiguration or we build tabernacles.

[Image of opulent container built to hold communion]

This is a tabernacle from a Russian Orthodox Church. It’s built to contain the communion bread, wine, the “host.”

[Image of an even more opulent and larger container built to hold communion]

This is the tabernacle from St. Martin’s Catholic church in Belgium.

[Image of an ornate and expensive monstrance]

This is a monstrance. It’s used to display the consecrated communion wafer.

[Image of a cardinal carrying a monstrance]

This is a cardinal carrying a monstrance, which contains the communion wafer.

The green cloth in his hand is called the “veil,” and it keeps him from touching the monstrance, which touches the host—the communion wafer.

In Roman Catholicism, a common practice of devotion is called “the adoration of the host” wherein believers sit in silence before communion bread in a monstrance or tabernacle, and that makes some sense; for Jesus said to Martha, “*One thing is necessary,*” and God said to Peter, “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him.” Even Baptists do this: They keep holiness in a tabernacle they call “the church.”

I remember being shocked when I first started preaching. The same people that told me dirty jokes in the parking lot would get terribly upset if I alluded to anything that they considered “dirty” in a sermon because it was holy inside the church building, and the dirt belonged in the parking lot, or that’s what they thought.

So, Peter sees the body and blood of Jesus transfigure on a mountain and wants to build a tabernacle to keep the glory safe from the dirt, or maybe to keep the dirt safe from the glory.

Well, Peter sees the Superman, and Peter sees something else: He sees “the Promised Seed.”

It seems to me that modern Christians have lost sight of this.<sup>2</sup> But from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of the Revelation, the Bible is the story of a Seed.

Genesis 3:15 “The seed of the woman<sup>3</sup> will crush the head of the snake.” Yet, the “seed of the woman” is not all of the woman’s children. We discover, in chapter twelve, that Abraham carries the seed, and yet the seed is smaller than all of Abraham’s descendants:

Isaac carries the seed.  
Then Jacob, who becomes Israel, carries the seed.  
Then Judah carries the seed, but it’s smaller than Judah and the Jews;  
    For David carries the seed.  
Then Solomon carries the seed.  
Wickedness increases and all men are lost...  
    Until the Promised Seed is revealed.

Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were made to Abraham and His seed. It does not say “and to his seeds” as of many but referring to one, “and to your seed, who is Christ.”

On the mountain, Peter saw “the promised seed.” The Jews believed the Messiah, the Seed of David, would rid the land of uncleanness, which is dirt. And they figured he’d use an army, which is why they were so disappointed in Jesus. But we Christians believe that Jesus is “the seed.” And you know a seed is an absolutely amazing thing.

A seed looks like a littler speck of nothing. Yet, a seed can transfigure into an entire new creation. It looks dead, and yet, it’s literally an author of life. Scientists can’t manufacture one seed. They can’t comprehend a seed, but they know a seed is an absolute treasure.

According to *National Geographic*, scientists recently germinated a two thousand year old seed from a Judean date palm found in Herod’s palace. It has become a tree.

In the Millennium building in London, and in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway, scientists keep seeds in vaults designed to survive nuclear war so that, in the event of a global apocalypse that kills all life, those seeds can become the new creation.

They keep them safe from dirt and decay –  
    Like a seed you keep safe in a plastic bag.  
    Like bread and wine, safe in a golden tabernacle.  
    Like Jesus, safe on the Mount of Transfiguration.

---

<sup>2</sup> Although we’re a very pornographic society, we’re also a very prudish society. We don’t like dirt and are embarrassed by sex. So, when the Bible uses the Greek word *sperma* we translate it “descendant” or “offspring.” The King James Version usually translates it “seed” but because we’re no longer farmers, and because we’re prudes that have lost touch with life, we don’t know seeds and what they do.

<sup>3</sup> Which is an interesting phrase, for somehow, the seed got into the woman.

Well, as we preached in November. Peter is not supposed to build a sanctuary, and I believe God has told me that I can't "build The Sanctuary," but like I said, I think I am, and we are supposed to sail The Sanctuary somewhere. We're supposed to take our faith beyond these walls.

Well, in Matthew 17:14, Peter, Jesus, James, and John have just descended from the Mount of Transfiguration into the valley. They have descended from a taste of heaven into the belly of Hell, and it appears that the "gates of hell" are prevailing.

Now our text, Matthew 17:14-16

*And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, "Lord have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him."*

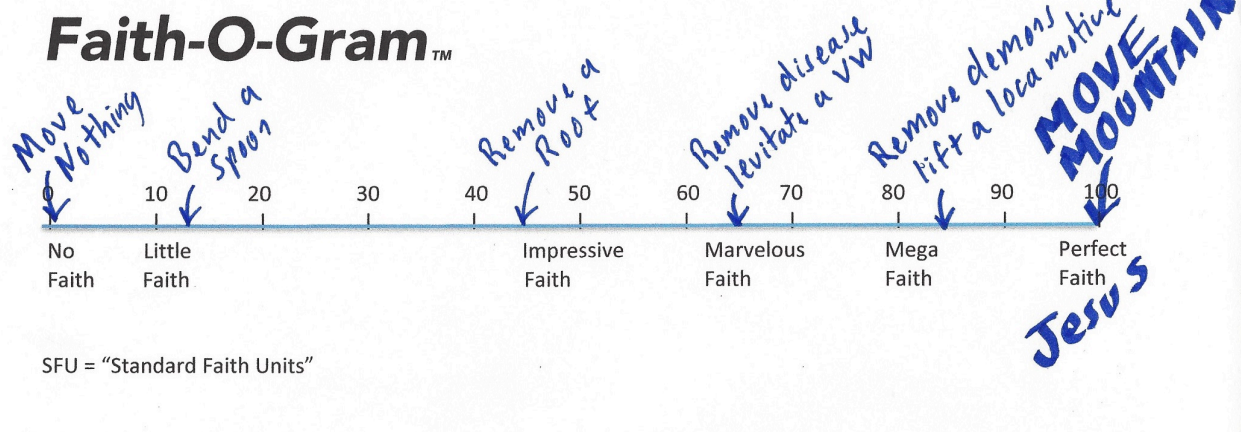
As we'll soon find out, and as Mark makes abundantly clear in his gospel,

- This boy has been afflicted with a demon from his childhood.
- The disciples appear to have been casting out demons for a couple years by now, for in Matthew 10, Jesus sent them out with authority over demons.
- But for these nine disciples, in the valley, this demon won't leave.

And Jesus answered, "*O faithless and ("perverse") generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.*" And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "*Why could we not cast it out?*" He said to them, "*Because of your little faith...*"

- He already said that generation had "no faith"—"*faithless generation.*"
- Now it appears the disciples have "*little faith.*"
- In Mark 2, Jesus sees "*impressive faith*" in four friends who remove the roof.
- Remember that a Roman Centurion, in Matthew 8, had "*marvelous faith.*"
  - And paralysis is removed from the Centurion's servant.
  - It's kind of troubling because Jesus says that he hasn't found such faith "*in all of Israel.*"
- Then, in chapter 15, Jesus finds "*mega faith*" in a Canaanite woman, and a demon is removed from her daughter.

So, if you mapped this out on our standard Evangelical American Faith-O-Gram, measuring faith in SFUs, **Standard Faith Units**,



It seems to me that...

- "No faith," 0 SFUs, could, like, move nothing.
- "Little Faith," I'm guessing: 12 SFUs, could, like, maybe bend a spoon.
- "Impressive Faith," 45 SFUs, could remove disease or levitate a Volkswagen.
- "Marvelous Faith," maybe 65 SFUs, could move a demon or lift a locomotive.
- And "Perfect Faith," 100 SFUs, could move a mountain.

So, we obviously need more faith right?

How do you get more faith?

Do you concentrate really hard like Luke Skywalker?

Or like the famous magician: The Incredible Burt Wonderstone?

Maybe you take classes about the stupidity of atheists and read books on proving the existence of God?

Or maybe you go to church a lot.

Maybe you keep your faith safe in the tabernacle—safe from the dirt and decay of this fallen world.

How do we increase our faith?

In Luke 17, the disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith, and He gives the strangest response. He talks about a little seed.

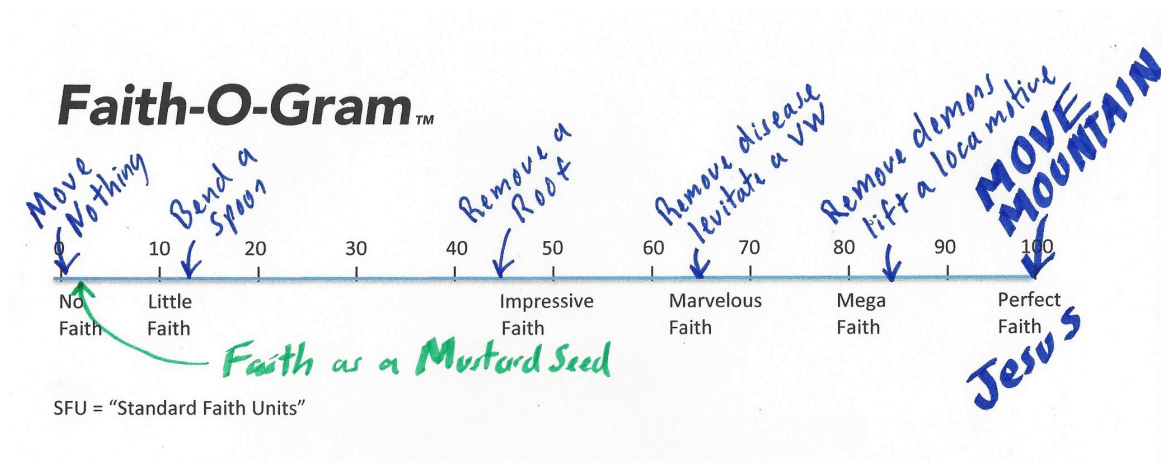
Verse 19

*Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."*

“Nothing impossible for you.” Stop and consider what an astounding statement that is. If nothing is impossible for you, it means that your will is entirely free; for whatever you will, happens. And if other persons exist, in that same reality, all wills must harmonize in a great symphony of desire we call heaven and the will of God.

Well, anyway, Jesus says, “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed you will say to this mountain move, and it will move.”

Now, on the surface, that’s a thoroughly bizarre thing to say, for in Matthew 13:31, Jesus already told the disciples that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, and then He told them, “It is the smallest of all seeds.” In other words, mustard seed faith is like 1 SFU,



And it will: “move a mountain.”  
 And that means, their “little faith” is not only the problem, but their “little faith” is the solution.

In other words, the issue is not the size of the faith but the nature of the faith and therefor, what you do with it.

Faith is a seed. It may look dead, but it’s alive. And maybe that’s why Jesus called them “perverse.”

To use a living person for love of sex is perverse. But to use sex to love a living person is holy.

Well, Faith is a Seed, and that means it’s not a technology.

Maybe Faith is like a Person, not simply an object for you to use.

Faith is not the kind of knowledge that you can take from a book or a class, or pick from some tree and apply to your life.

Faith is not knowledge you can apply to your world with the strength of your will.  
 As if knowing the good, you could choose the good.  
 It's not trying harder.

Faith is not knowledge you can take or simply a choice that you can make.

As I read in the Interpreter's Bible:

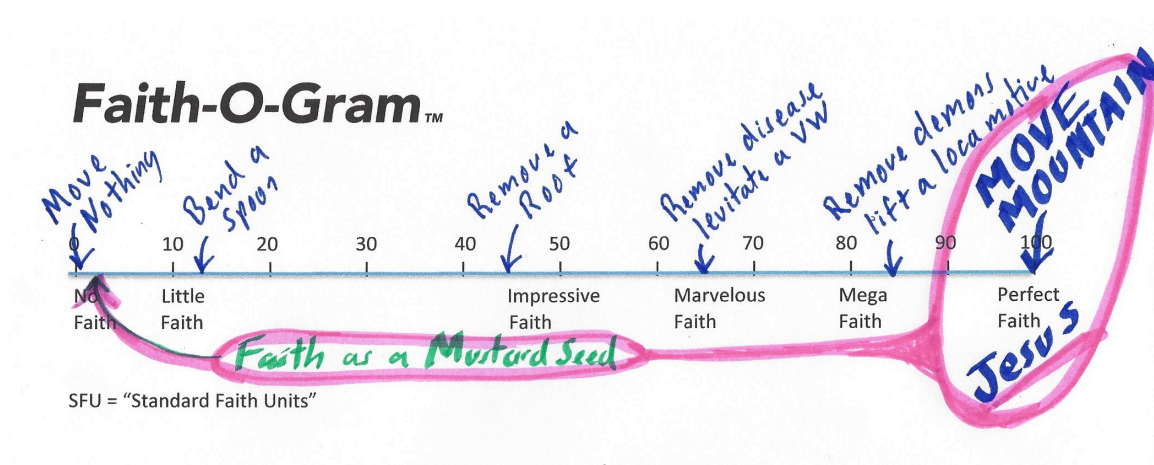
"True faith is not chosen by men: *It* chooses men," like Jesus chose Peter, James, and John.

So, Faith is a seed and a seed is alive!

1. You cannot manufacture a seed.  
 Faith is not human technology or technique.
2. You cannot comprehend a seed.  
 The world's greatest botanists and biologists are still in awe of a seed, any seed.
3. You cannot control a seed except to surrender control of a seed,  
 Or surrender control to a Seed.

And that's what's so entirely counterintuitive about seeds, and so entirely counterintuitive about Faith: If you want a seed to work, you must plant the seed, and plant the seed in *dirt*, and that feels like death, for it *is* death, and then an entire new creation.

That Faith will move mountains!



In Matthew 13, Jesus says,

*The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.*

Hebrews 11:1 "Faith is the substance of things hoped for..."



I think we all hope for heaven. And if we have a slice of heaven, we keep it safe from hell. In fear, we keep seeds safe from dirt and decay.

Unless I bury a seed in dirt and decay,  
Unless I deliver (*paradidomai* is the Greek word for deliver, hand over or betray),  
Unless I deliver the seed to death in the dirt,  
It does not live, become a tree, and move a mountain.

But...

If I do plant the seed, surrender control of the seed.  
If I sow the seed and wait...  
It does a truly remarkable thing.  
One could say the dirt destroys the seed.  
But more accurately,  
The seed destroys the dirt. And it literally transfigures dirt into a tree,  
A tree that takes dirt, mixes it with Light, and produces Life, fruit and more seed.

You know, the cross is a tree. And we are made of dirt. And God is Light. And Jesus is the *"Light of the World."* *"And in Him was life, and that life is the Light of Men."*

On the tree, we took His life, and on the tree He gave His life.  
And that Tree of Knowledge became the Tree of Life.

Well, Jesus said, *"If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you will say...and it will happen."* In Luke He says a tree will move and *"be planted in the sea."* In Mark He says, Mt. Zion will move. Maybe Mt. Zion and the tree upon it will move to the nations, that is the sea.

Well, the seed will grow and move mountains, but you must plant it in dirt and decay. And that must be truly distressing, for it feels like death.

Next verse, Matthew 17:22-23

*As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "the Son of Man is about to be delivered (paradidomai) into the hands of men (made of dirt) and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.*

Faith is like a mustard seed.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed.  
And Jesus is "the seed—the promised seed."

Peter writes that we have been *"born again, not of perishable seed, but imperishable seed."* *"Through the living and abiding Word of God."* And Jesus is the Word of God.

In John 12, Six days before Mt. Calvary, Jesus says, *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit...And I, when I am lifted up*

*from the earth* (an he was speaking of crucifixion on the tree) *I will draw all people to myself.*”

So Jesus is “the Promised Seed.” And so, of course, Peter wants to keep him safe in some tabernacle. But He came to be planted.

And where is the King of Heaven to be planted?

His body and blood are planted in a tomb surrounded by dirt. But the gates of hell cannot prevail against Him. The tombs are opened, and He rises on the third day. His body and blood were planted in dust and dirt. And His body and blood are planted in you.

He said, *“This is my body and this is my blood. Take and eat. Take and drink.”* And on the tree (John 19:30) *“He bowed His head and delivered up (paradidomai) His Spirit.”* It’s the Spirit that descends on the church and cries out from the depths of your being, “Abba Father–Daddy Father.” That’s Faith. That’s the Seed taking root in a bag of dirt and decay that is you. That’s the old you being transfigured into the new you. When Jesus died, the veil in the tabernacle ripped and the Spirit of Christ invaded the people of dirt.

There are numerous places in Scripture where modern translations read as if we’re saved by “faith in Jesus.” But a literal translation reads, “We’re saved by the faith *OF* Jesus.” It is the faith of Jesus that is planted in the dirt that is you.

1 Corinthians 3:9 *“You are God’s field...”*

Actually, the Seed is planted in the dirtiest, crappiest, and most fertile parts of you, for *“where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more.”* Buried in your dirt and decay, and faithlessness, seeds eat dirt like Grace eats sin. There, Jesus cries, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,”* and *“Into your hands I commit my spirit.”*

That’s where Jesus has faith and gives His faith to you.

I’m saying:

This is not the tabernacle

[Drawing of the tabernacle repeated]

This is not the tabernacle

[Image of oppulent container built to hold communion repeated]

This is not the tabernacle

[Image of an even larger and more oppulent container built to hold communion repeated]

This IS the tabernacle

[Image of a man’s large belly with a tatoo that reads “god bod”]

And THIS is the monstrosity

[Images of people from every nation, tongue, and tribe]

A sinner transfigured by Grace!

Review:

So this is the tabernacle

[Image of a man's large belly with a tattoo that reads "god bod"]

Or maybe I should say, this is the tabernacle

[Image of a pregnant lady looking at her belly and a small girl next to her looking at her belly]

We are born of "*Imperishable Seed*."

And we give birth to "*Imperishable Seed*."

Jesus taught that we, the Church, are His Mother.

And so the faith implanted in Peter, on the Mount of Transfiguration, is to be planted by Peter in the Valley of Transfiguration. It's to be planted in Himself and planted in others.<sup>4</sup>

In *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Claus Haunzinger writes,

"Grain of mustard seed" is used here simply to denote the smallest quantity. A particularly big faith is not needed; the largest promise applies even to the smallest faith...If only there is real faith its quantity is irrelevant. Faith shows itself to be such by not looking to itself but solely to God. If it will only let God work, the impossible is possible for it...The faith of which the logion speaks finds its expression in prayer, which entrusts all things to God.

In Mark's version of the story, in the midst of chaos, dirt, and demons, the father of the boy afflicted by the demon prays, "*I believe, help my unbelief*." He takes the faith he has and sows it.

"I believe." That's the seed. "Help my unbelief;" He sows there.

Later Jesus says to the disciples, "*These kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer*," which paints a remarkable picture. The nine disciples had been casting out demons for two years, and so I'm sure they had confidence in their technique and their knowledge, their tech-knowledg-y. But they had not prayed, so their faith wasn't in God but themselves. And if they did have faith in God...well, they hadn't planted it. It had not been "delivered up to death."

---

<sup>4</sup> In *The Dogmatics*, Karl Barth writes, "Only faith is to be taken seriously; and if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, that suffices for the devil to have lost his game."

I told you a story a couple of years ago that I want to tell you again, because for me, it is mustard seed faith. Many years ago, I was praying for a friend afflicted by a demon due to things that were done to her as a child. She desperately wanted to be free, and so were exposing lies, and she was forgiving things that needed to be forgiven, for it's in those places that demons hide. I know this may seem utterly bizarre to you, but at some level, we're all engaged in the same struggle.<sup>5</sup>

It was about two in the morning, and we had been praying for hours, and this demonic spirit wouldn't leave. It would practically seize control of her body. At one point, her whole body went rigid, she gasped, then stopped breathing and fell over. I tried every technique I knew, "In the name of Jesus and under the authority of the eternal blood of the covenant...(blah blah blah)" I tried to utilize every bit of knowledge I'd gleaned from books. I yelled louder, trying to will harder. Aram, my associate, was quoting every Bible verse he knew. And still, she was lying there on the floor.

I bent over, and she still wasn't breathing. I looked at Aram, and Aram looked at me. And I suddenly realized: "We're dead!" She's dead, and we're dead!"—Two grown men at the house of a single dead woman at two in the morning. And the cops won't believe that the demon did it. And then, I don't exactly know where this came from; I mean, I didn't access it in my extensive and impressive storehouse of knowledge. I don't remember willing to will it. I'm not sure it was me, or maybe it was the real me, not the adult me, but the child me. I just muttered, "Jesus, help us!" And instantly, she gasped for breath, and we went on to get rid of that demon.

My friend was transfigured, and I think Aram and I were also transfigured. It was "faith as a mustard seed." Not faith in my spiritual technology, but faith in Jesus, and faith of Jesus—born in me, and born of me. And don't get me wrong, religious technology can be very good and helpful, but it can't move mountains.<sup>6</sup>

I think Jesus was saying, "Peter, never forget it's me. Faith within you is my Spirit in you. And this is where it grows. In your dirt, and Aram's dirt, and her dirt, at two in the morning.

See? Your faith doesn't belong in a golden tabernacle. It's important to come to worship on the mountain, sit, and behold "body broken and blood shed," but then you are to eat it, and take it to the valley. So, rather than trying to make more faith, take the faith you've got and sow it in the valley of your own bitterness and resentment, praying, "In Jesus name, I forgive."

Take the faith you've got and sow it in the valley of your own addictions and failures. Pray, "Jesus help me here!" Take the faith you've got and sow it in the valley of your own resentment praying, "In Jesus name, I forgive." Take the faith you've got and sow it in the valley of your neighbors' poverty, doubt, and fear, and as you are, love them as they are.

---

<sup>5</sup> Folks were actually terrified to go pray for her, but I had to. I was her pastor and it was my job, and my associate had to because I was his boss.

<sup>6</sup> I think that was mustard seed faith. Faith is trust in a person or even an extension of that person in you. It's Christ in me. I die and rise with him.

Don't be afraid to sow the faith you've got. You may feel like it's dying, and like you're dying, but it's a seed. (It may take 2000 years to germinate, but it is eternal.)

You know, I think I have a fair amount of faith for dealing with demons, but I don't think I have much faith for dealing with taxes, finances, and church programs. And remember, Jesus said, "You are Peter-Rocky, and on this Rock I will build my church.

Next verse, Matthew 17:24-27

*When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the [half shekel] tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?"*

This was a tax levied according to Old Testament law for the sake of building the tabernacle, now the temple—what Peter thought of as "church."

*Peter said, "Yes," And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "then the sons are free. However, not to give offenses to them go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up...*

Remember that Jesus calls Peter, "*Simon Son of Jonah.*" Jonah was caught by a fish and descended into hell. Peter will catch a fish and find treasure there.

*and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."*

As far as I know, this is Jesus' only "fund raising program." The Old Testament is detailed and explicit, packed with ecclesiastical technology regarding tithes, sacrifices, offerings, and taxes. But Jesus says, "*Peter, go catch a fish in the sea, and in the first fish you catch you'll find a shekel.*" That was the exact amount needed for the tax. Tax on a building that would soon be rendered obsolete and be destroyed by Romans because God, in Christ Jesus, was building a new tabernacle with living stones—sinners transfigured by Grace.

Peter couldn't build it, but God would build it through Peter. That wouldn't only involve demoniacs. It would involve taxes, finances, and even church programs, but it would all be built with "faith as a mustard seed." Christ's church is built with mustard seeds, as is an entire new creation. Mustard seeds planted in guys like Peter and you.

Imagine how Peter felt casting that hook into the sea. He was a fisherman. He had the technology, and in all his years, I bet he never found a shekel in the mouth of a fish. He thought: "This is stupid." He must've died a little, and then lived a lot. And remember Jesus said that He'd make Peter a "fisher of men?" And it was in the mouth of those men that Peter found the resources the church would need.

On Pentecost, Christ in Peter, Faith in Peter caught about three thousand fish, and they shared everything in common. It was the tabernacle filled with the glory of God. It was

people transfigured by Grace—The Church, and the gates of hell could not prevail against it.

Well, like I said in November: I think we've been to the Mt. of Transfiguration and seen that Jesus always wins; even when He loses, He wins, especially then...He wins!

But we're not supposed to keep that faith in a stone tabernacle or Sanctuary. We're called to take that faith and sow it in the valley. It may feel like death at times, but God will provide just what's needed, not more, and not less.

So, I've tried to not make things happen because I can't build the Sanctuary. But instead, I've tried to receive what is happening because God builds the sanctuary and provides treasure in the mouths of the fish. He provides through you, all of you, and many in great ways behind the scenes.

Last summer, Chris Fellure came to me in a way that I could see, and he said, "Peter, I think I'm supposed to help the church get organized, to care for itself, and to spread this message beyond these walls.

In December, the board hired Chris to do two things. 1) Direct the organization of The Sanctuary. 2) Direct the organization of something we're calling The Sanctuary Abroad. It's an increased internet presence: books, blogs, materials, Downside Up videos to take the message beyond these walls and pastor people that are not physically present in this place.

Two months ago, Kathleen Kegel came to me, and to the board, and said, "I'm available to pastor." You know Kathleen is an ordained Presbyterian pastor. Really, she's been pastoring us, as a volunteer for years. So, in December, the board hired Kathleen part-time to work as pastor of community life.

Kimberly Weynen has been doing that, and helping me since Andrew had resigned. Kimberly will still work with missions and groups, but will have more time to work with Sanctuary Abroad, with me, and our new Sanctuary Abroad committee chaired by Matt Kinner.

Ben Sullivan recently came back on staff to oversee media for The Sanctuary and The Sanctuary Abroad. And the worship search committee is searching for a permanent, part-time worship leader. Frances, Dee Dee, Angie, Susan, Glen, MyKayla will keep doing what we've been doing, and we're doing it all within the parameters of our budget as God sends fish with resources in their mouths.

I'm saying that I think we're sowing the faith that God has given to us. And we're looking to God to provide. At times, it may feel like we're dying, and one day, we will all die, but faith, Christ's faith, transfigures all things. While it remains in the stone sanctuary, or a gold tabernacle it transfigures nothing. But when it is planted in the soil of your heart, and when you plant it in the soil of the hearts around you, it transfigures all things—from people, to temples, to taxes, and even fish.

You know Jesus said, *"Faith as a mustard seed will move this mountain."*

Jesus said, *“Faith as a mustard seed will move this mountain.”* Maybe faith will one day move every mountain, but when Jesus said, *“This mountain...”* in Matthew 17, he must have meant the Mt. of Transfiguration. Perhaps Peter’s faith, or Christ’s faith in Peter, moved it into the depths of the abyss—the sea where it transfigures all sorts of dirty, slimy things, including fish.

When John Shea, who is a priest, was thirteen he was an altar boy assigned to meditate in the chapel one half hour upon the elements of communion. He says he fidgeted, glanced at his watch, and finally he glanced up at the communion wafer—the host.

Without speaking, the host spoke and said, “I’m more than a host you know.” John turned immediately and looked at the other altar boy. He was a fat kid with big ears. Everybody in school made fun of him. Without speaking, the boy spoke and said, “I’m more than a fat kid with floppy ears you know.”

At the end of thirty minutes John left the church. It was dark on the corner he saw an old woman with cane waiting to cross the street. She glanced at him and without speaking she said, “I’m more than a wrinkled old widow, don’t you know?” John looked up at the sky. The heavens thundered, I’m more than the sky, don’t you know?”

## **Communion**

So on the darkest of nights, The Seed took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you.” Don’t you know? Take and eat.” And he took the cup saying, “This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Take and drink all of you, my blood, don’t you know?”

So he calls you to His table. Break off and piece of the bread, dip it in the cup, and place it into your mouth and swallow it into your gut because you are more than dust. Don’t you know?

## **Prayer**

You know, I have worked in some really big churches: President Reagan’s church, other churches out in California. I was the pastor of a really big church. I love big churches. But sometimes I think, “God, The Sanctuary is little. It feels like a speck on my finger.” While we were just singing I felt like God was saying, “Well, Peter, look again at that speck. Is that a speck of dirt or is it a seed?” I think we are a seed. We are supposed to be planted. And that’s scary because that means you really don’t know what’s going to happen. And I don’t really know what exactly is going to happen.

We have a really great board. They’ve been thinking and praying. In December they made this decision to change the way we’re structured. And we’ve already gone through some significant changes when Andrew and Michael resigned. That allowed for a whole lot of reconfiguring so like I mentioned in the sermon, we’ve hired some part-time people. I’m going to have them come forward right now and we’ll pray for them.

I want us to sow them OK?

[The majority of staff proceeds to the front. Peter introduces the new staff members: Kathleen Kegel and Chris Fellure.]

Now we will pray for them and commission them. Let's also pray for ourselves, that we would sow our true selves, and that God would have His way with us.

Father, I thank you so much for The Sanctuary. Lord, I want to pray over everyone. There are so many people who have given here in so many unique and varied ways. There are people who I connect with online and through videos, who read things that are written here and connect from abroad. There are people in Evergreen.

Lord, may we be your seed. May you plant us for your purposes and for your glory.

[Peter prays for the entire staff and church at length.]

### **Benediction**

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*

Blessed are you—dirt bags; for you contain Eternal Seed that will not fail.  
Amen!