

COME TOUCH HIS ROBE:

DON'T QUIT---KEEP ON BELIEVING

Believing! I guess that is what we would say about those who won medals at the Winter Olympics. From skiers to snowboarders to skaters to bobsled runners to hockey players those who stood on the podium to receive their medal believed in a dream. For one of the United States skiers it was a miracle because she had broken her leg last year and didn't know if she could make the Olympics much less win a gold medal. Tears were in her eyes as they placed the medal around her neck and they played our national anthem as the stars and stripes were raised.

Believing! That's what we are all about. Believe...don't give up. What would have happened if our great scientists quit when things first failed? We wouldn't have some of those great inventions we enjoy. What would have happened to this church if you had decided 4 years ago you didn't want a newly retired pastor by the name of Dick Piscatelli a man who some say speaks funny? Some might have thought, "Let's close the doors." Now we believe God isn't through with us. Even Cub fans believe. It's not the curse of the goat. It's having faith in a team that will get it done. Look around during a ball game at Wrigley and you see signs that say "we believe" and you know, one of these years it's

going to happen. And maybe a string of World Series appearances will be in the making. Keep believing.

Even in our faith we are told to believe. Jesus tells us that over and over again. He may not use those words, but he tells us to fear not, or not to be afraid, or trust in him and trust also in God. Believe is an easy word to say but a hard thing to do. Oh it's easy to believe when you are on the mountain top, like the disciples were last week. But when they faced Holy Week that was a different story. You will see what happened then. How about the guy that was down in the valley with a son who was ill and the disciples couldn't help the man? When they came down from the mountain this guy ran to Jesus and asked for his help. In fact, let me use his words, *"If you can do anything for him please have pity on us and help us."* Jesus ponders the request. Looking in the man's eyes he saw tears of hurt, tears of sorrow, tears of frustration. Jesus grasps the man's hands so that he could focus on him and says, *"You said, 'If you can.' ... All things are possible for the one who believes."* You talk about being put on the spot. That little word 'if' is more powerful than one can imagine. Mary and Martha said to Jesus "If you had been here our brother would not have died." Someday I'll preach about the 'if's' of life. But for today we remember that the man with the son held to his little faith and replied, *"I do believe....help me to believe more."* With that little bit of faith, Jesus heals the boy. Yes, nothing is impossible with God.

And that brings us to today's story. We heard about this man the first week in Lent. His name Jarius. His problem, his daughter was critically ill. He came falling at the feet of Jesus begging...in front of the other religious leaders, the members of the town council, he fell begs "Jesus please, please help me."

If you remember the story Jesus they began their trek to Jarius' home but on the way a great crowd had gathered to see Jesus. Among them a woman who had her own problem. She believed if she touched a piece of Jesus' clothing she would be healed. She reached out, touched his robe and yes, she was healed. But here lies the problem. This took time. The conversation Jesus had...the time to check who touched him...it took precious minutes away from their journey to Jarius' house. And that brings us to today's story. Hear God's word of hope for we who have fears and doubts. Jesus encourages us never to give up. **READ 5:35-43**

"No sense in bothering Jesus now, your daughter is gone" the servants said to Jarius. It stopped him dead in his track. It stunned him. He looked at Jesus with hurting eyes thinking, "if only we hadn't stopped for this woman." Jesus took him by the arm and said, *"Listen to me. Don't be afraid. Believe in me."* I might add Jesus saying, *"Nothing has changed. Continue to believe."* Jarius looks at Jesus, looks back at his servants. He can still hear their voices with the bad news, 'she's gone.' Ringing in his ears are Jesus' words, 'just believe.' Jesus could have said. "Jarius, you had faith enough to come believing I could help you. Don't give up

now. Don't quit believing. You just saw the power of God for yourself when that woman touched the very tip of my robe. Keep trusting and let's go home."

I bet there was silence as they walked. Jarius trying to exercise his faith, trying to rely on his God as he searched his mind for God's word hid in his heart looking for encouragement. Stories like the parting of the Red Sea by Moses. Or the water flowing from a rock after Moses struck it with a stick. Maybe he remembered the story of Naaman being healed of leprosy after dipping in the dirty Jordan River 7 times. Yes, Yes, God did these things. And with each step he fought unbelieving thoughts. He heard the voice of his servants saying what was. He heard the voice of Jesus saying trust in what is to be. And he walked in silence. When they reached his home sure enough mourners had gathered. Others came out to confirm the servant's story. Even his wife ran to embrace him and they grieved together for he was too late. He looked at the mourners, looked at Jesus and whispered in her ear, "Honey, don't quit believing. Jesus is here. Keep believing." Then Jesus took them to the little girl's room, called her to rise and immediately she woke, got up and Jarius and his wife heard great words of hope as Jesus says to them "give her something to eat."

Let me tell you three things from this story, things you can hang your faith on when your faith is tested.....

First, remember **WORDS OF FAITH**. “Don’t be afraid. Just believe.”

During the storm at night and Jesus came to the sinking boat and scared disciples Peter said if that person walking on the water was in fact Jesus, let him walk on water. And so Jesus beckoned him to step on the water. And sure enough, Peter walked on the water until Satan whipped up the winds a little stronger, and brought down heavy rains to attack Peter’s faith and when he took his eyes off Jesus, when he began to doubt he could do it...he began to sink. “Jarius, keep your focus on me. Read my lips! Don’t quit! Just believe.” Words of faith.

Second, remember **WORDS OF HOPE**. “The child is not dead...just asleep.” Even though word came his daughter was dead Jesus told him not to listen to those around him but keep on believing? There is hope. One hymn says, “Hope for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.” Isn’t that what our faith is based upon? Hope for tomorrow. Hope for today. God’s undying faithfulness. We have someone greater in this world. We have our God. Words of hope that sustain us.

The third words that we should remember are his **LOVE AND POWER**. “Young girl I tell you to stand.” Notice that. When everyone else had given up, Jesus says, “I tell you to stand.” It is by his grace we are healed. It is by his mercy that we have the gift of eternal life. All of that comes because he loves us.

This morning you have heard another story from someone you know. You got a little glimpse of what God has done in the life of Carole Jean Piscatelli, one who likes to stay in the background, but today stepped forward to tell her story. We need to hear each other's stories because they do so much for us. We hear how others were touched by God found words of faith, words of hope and felt God's love and power in their lives. And we think, hey, if God could do that for them, why not me? Jesus says....all things are possible for whoever will believe.

In a few minutes you will be invited to come to the banquet table of grace to come touch his robe. Come join him for a meal. Come and continue to believe in the one that died to set you free. Come, touch the robe of grace, mercy and healing and humbly kneel before him and hear those wonderful words of faith, of hope, and love and power. Don't quit! Keep on believing!"