

“Whatsoever You Ask”
Mark 11:22-24
(Preached at Trinity, October 2, 2013)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, **Chapter 11** begins the week of Passion which was followed by the resurrection.
The chronology goes something like this:
Friday evening - Jesus arrived in Bethany before sunset prior to the beginning of the Sabbath. Bethany was the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. He probably spent the Sabbath rest with these friends.
Sunday – the triumphal entry; Jesus enters into the Temple and makes an observation of the circumstances in the Temple, returns to Bethany for the night
Monday – He curses the fig tree and then enters into Jerusalem for the cleansing of the Temple
Tuesday – the second part of the fig tree story.
2. Each of these accounts recorded by Mark are connected.
 - a. Jesus entered Jerusalem on Sunday and survey's the abuses taking place within the Temple.
Early on Monday morning He curses the fig tree as a testimony to God's curse upon ethnic Israel. While the fig tree gave great promise with its early display of leaves there was no fruit. While Israel was displaying all of the outward observance of Passover they were inwardly dead and fruitless.
 - b. On Monday evening Jesus enters the Temple and casts out the hypocrites, again demonstrating God's curse upon Israel.
 - c. On Tuesday morning they pass by the fig tree and it was dead and withered. Peter exclaims: "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."
As I pointed out, this is the 18th and final miracle recorded in Mark.
 - d. Peter once again was amazed at the mighty power of Jesus. Jesus took the opportunity to teach on the subject of faith and prayer.
3. In **Verse 24** Jesus makes an astounding statement:
"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* you."
4. This comes immediately after Jesus describes a faith that moves mountains:
Mark 11:23 NAU - "whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted* him."
5. How are we to understand this passage?

- I. First, Jesus speaks on the issue of faith
- A. Jesus spoke often on the subject of faith
1. He often rebuked His disciples for the weakness of their faith
 - a. Upon the calming of the storm
Mark 4:40-41 NAU - "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹ They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"
 - b. Regarding their concern for their earthly provision
Matthew 6:28-30 NAU - "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰ "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith!"
 - c. Of Peter's fear of walking on the water
Matthew 14:28-31 NAU - "Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"
 2. Jesus taught that nothing is impossible through God. We must trust His mighty power. Jesus also used the mountain metaphor in **Matthew 17:18-20 NAU** - "And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" ²⁰ And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."
- B. How are we to understand Jesus' words describing casting a mountain into the sea
1. Jesus is speaking here in hyperbole – an exaggeration, a figure of speech not meant to be taken literally.
 We often use such language often
 "I had to wait in line for an eternity."
 "He hit the ball a mile."
 "This thing weighs a ton."
 2. On the other hand Jesus is stressing that nothing is impossible with God. The mountain Jesus was referring to was the Mount of Olives – the sea was the Dead Sea.
 For the mountain to be cast into the sea would be a plunge of 4000 feet. The One who created the universe would have little difficulty moving a mountain.

3. Jesus is teaching that faith is an essential element of prayer. Without faith prayer becomes powerless
James 1:6-8 NAS - "But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."
James 5:14-18 NAS - "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵ and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit."
4. Prayer, however, must never be seen as a tool to test the power of God. There would be no purpose in seeking to accomplish such a frivolous act as praying for a mountain to crumble. But in times of great need God is able to do great things.
 - a. Elijah prayed for God to withhold rain
 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit."
 - b. Joshua prayed that God would stop the sun's progress through the sky and extend the day for their battle
Joshua 10:13-14 NAS - "And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. ¹⁴ And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel."

- II. Second, Jesus speaks on the effectual nature of prayer. He gives a grand promise:
Mark 11:24 NAS - "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be *granted* you."
- A. This is not a promise that God will grant every wish of carnal man
 1. The Charismatic "health/wealth" Gospel is unbiblical. Jesus is not promising us that we can increase our idols by asking God
James 4:3-4 NAS - "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

2. If the health/wealth Gospel is accurate we would have to say it didn't work for Jesus who died in poverty at an early age, yet He was a man of constant prayer.
3. Prayer is not a means of manipulating the will of God. Sometimes God's purpose is to deny our request.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 – "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Matthew 26:39 – "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*."

- B. We do have here, however, a wonderful teaching on the power of faith & prayer
1. The Apostles had already seen the impossible being done by Jesus. Water turned to wine, blind eyes opened, limbs restored, people raised from the dead. Even Peter had done the impossible by walking on the water.
 2. There are certain requirements for prayer taught here and confirmed by James
 - a. We must pray – the prayerless man cannot expect to receive from God
James 4:2 NAS - "You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask."
James 1:5 NAS - "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."
 - b. We must pray in faith
James 1:6-7 NAS - "But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord"
 - c. We must pray from a sincere heart – not from hypocrisy
James 4:3 NAS - "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures."
- C. We find another essential element in the Gospel of John
- John 14:13-14 NAS** - "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*."
1. "In My name" is not simply a formula for prayer. We often tack this expression on at the end of our prayers without considering what we are saying.

2. First, it means we have access to the mediatorial work of Christ. No one has access to God apart from Christ.
John 14:6 NAS - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."
3. Second, it means to pray in a manner consistent with His Divine nature and in accordance with His will.
 - a. "Name" in the Hebrew mind was an expression of the nature and character of the individual. We see this continually in the OT.
 - b. To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray for that which is consistent with the character of Christ. It is to seek His will above all else. It is to pray that His glory might be displayed through us.
John 14:13 NAS - "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."
4. This is the nature of the first petition in the Lord's Prayer.
"hallowed be Thy name."
It is a declaration of the absolute holiness of God
It is also a petition that God's holiness be displayed throughout the earth.
This should be the chief focus of our prayers.
Perhaps God will be most glorified if you are not healed of your sickness.

Conclusion:

1. May this direct our prayer life. We must pray. We must pray in faith knowing that God is able, if necessary, to remove mountains.
2. We must pray that God's glorious character might be displayed upon this earth. This may mean that our prayers may not be answered according to our wisdom. But we can trust that His wisdom is infinite and perfect.