

INTRODUCTION

Are you living in the faith dimension? We basically live in a three dimensional world. There are three dimensions to time: past, present and future. In terms of space, there is height, width, and depth. For many years, television and movies were shown in 2-D. But because of filming technology and special eyewear, we can now watch a movie in 3-D in which objects seem to be coming off the screen toward us.

In mathematics and physics there is a theoretical fourth dimension in which time and space are united. (I know that sounds like an introduction by Rod Sterling to an episode of the "Twilight Zone") In all the science fiction movies and television shows, this theoretical fourth dimension is what makes time travel or warp speed possible.

And of course, you already know about the Fifth Dimension. They were a cool singing group in the 1960s who sang, "Would you like to ride in my beautiful balloon?"

Scientists have also suggested there may be a parallel dimension, or world, that coexists with our world. And according to the Bible, they are right. The Bible teaches that there is an invisible world that exists at this moment around us. It is a spiritual world. There are invisible angels and demons at work around us. I call this the Faith Dimension.

The Bible teaches there is THIS present world we can see, hear, taste, smell and touch. But there is also another world that is unseen by human eyes. It shouldn't be too hard to understand, because there are things in this building we can't see. Television and radio waves broadcasting shows and music are moving through this space at this moment. The only reason we can't detect them is because we don't have the proper receiver tuned to the right frequency. I could turn on an FM radio, and suddenly, we'd be aware of those invisible radio waves.

The same is true spiritually. There is a faith dimension where spiritual warfare takes place. And if you aren't aware of it, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. It just means we aren't tuned in to see or hear it. If a blind man says he can't see a rainbow, it doesn't mean there isn't a rainbow; it just means he can't perceive it. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." We spend a lot of our lives focusing on all this material stuff that is only temporary. But there is another world. Jesus lives in this Faith Dimension, and we can too.

The context our passage today is that Jesus and three of His disciples had gone up to the Mt. of Transfiguration. When they came down from the mountain they entered a scene of spiritual warfare. There is a desperate father seeking help for his tormented son.

Mark 9:14-32. "When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. 'What are you arguing with them about?' he asked. A man in the crowd answered, 'Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I

asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.' 'O unbelieving generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.' So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?' 'From childhood,' he answered. 'It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.' 'If you can?' said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for him who believes.' Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!' When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. 'You deaf and mute spirit,' he said, 'I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.' The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, 'He's dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?' He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.' They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.' But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

Just this past week the Pew Research Center released their findings on the religious landscape of America. Most news outlets declared the Christianity is on the decline, but the news is not all bad. The main finding that grabbed the headlines is that in the past seven years the number of Americans who "call themselves Christians" shrank from 78% to 71%. To me, that's good news because there are millions of people who call themselves Christians who aren't really born again. They are counterfeit Christians. And it's a good sign when they stop calling themselves something they really aren't. There was more good news in the report. According to the survey, the number of Americans who claim to be "born again" rose from 34% to 35%. And while the Catholic Church and the old mainline denominations membership shrank by several millions, the number of evangelical Protestants (that's us) actually grew by two million members. A born-again Christian is someone who lives in the Faith Dimension. As we examine this dramatic encounter, I want to introduce a key truth and then talk about three ways to know if you're living in the Faith Dimension.

KEY TRUTH: Jesus said, "Everything is possible for him who believes."

The key truth of this passage is found in Mark 9:23. Jesus was talking to the father of the demon-tortured boy and he said, "Everything is possible for him who believes." Before I give you the words to fill in the last blank, how would you fill it in? Everything is possible to him who works hard enough? Or for the one who "fights for his rights?" Jesus said, "Everything is possible for him who believes." Read that aloud with me three times, please. If you believe that and practice that, then you are ready to live in the Faith Dimension. Let's learn three aspects of living in the Faith Dimension.

I. FAITH EMBRACES A CYCLE OF WORSHIP AND WORK

Let's look again at the famous painting of the Transfiguration by Raphael. There are twin miracles happening, one of the mountaintop and one in the valley. On top you see a shining Jesus in the center, floating on air to convey His Divinity. Then on the bottom level, Raphael has captured the scene in the valley. The other nine disciples are on the bottom left. Surprisingly, they all look like middle-aged Italian men! There is a disciple in front reading a book as if he is searching for a medical cure (books with bindings were still a 1,000 years in the future, but we'll forgive Raphael that mistake.) The others are pointing to the tortured boy or to Jesus on the mountain. On the bottom right we see the mother, son, and father. The father is holding onto the tortured boy. His eyes are crossed and he has a crazed expression, with foam trickling down his chin. His body and feet are twisted in a painful contortion. But the look on the face of the father says it all. His face reveals desperation and frustration. He is desperate for someone to help his son. Raphael has brilliantly captured the overwhelming contrast between the glorious Mount of Transfiguration and the troubled world waiting below in the valley. That leads us to a couple of observations about worship and work.

A. We celebrate God's glory on the mountaintop of worship

The Transfiguration was all about seeing Jesus in all of His glory and worshipping Him—you could call that a mountaintop experience to be sure!

In 1982, California truck driver Larry Walters had always wanted to fly. But he never had the money or the time to become a pilot. Larry didn't let that stand in his way. He bought 45 surplus weather balloons and filled them with helium from the local party store. He hooked the weather balloons to his lawn chair and carried a CB radio and a pellet gun to shoot the balloons to descend. He tied a bag of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to his leg and was ready to fly. He cut the line tying him to the bumper of his jeep and up he went. He expected to soar around for a few minutes at two or three hundred feet, but instead the balloons carried him to 15,000 feet and the winds carried him into the approach corridor for LAX. He tried shooting a couple of the balloons, but dropped his gun. He was being pursued by police helicopters and police cars on the ground. After three hours, his balloon cables got twisted in some power lines and it was fortunate that Larry wasn't electrocuted. The LA police and fire departments rescued him and arrested him on the spot. A reporter asked Larry why he did the stunt. He said, "I just wanted to see how things looked from way up there." The reporter said, "Well, how did it look?" As he was being placed in the patrol car Larry smiled and said, "It was awesome, man! I felt close to God."

I don't know if I would have felt close to God in a lawn chair at 15,000 feet, but I do love going to a tall mountain and looking out at God's beautiful creation. Everyone loves a mountaintop experience. When I'm standing on a tall mountain, I see how big the God's world is, and it makes me feel smaller.

For Peter, James and John, it was truly a mountaintop experience to see Jesus in all of His glory. Peter wanted to build three shrines and stay up there and just worship. Can you look back to some mountaintop experiences of worship in your past? Maybe you attended a retreat, a camp or conference and you saw the glory of the Lord in a new way. Nobody wants to come down from

the mountaintop. Mountaintop experiences are wonderful, but you have to be sure you leave the mountain to go down in the valley with Jesus.

B. We find hurting people in the valley of service

The mountaintop is sweet because we commune with Jesus! But when you return to the valley, you will be ambushed by people who have all kinds of needs. That's why we should to always be a church built in the valley, not on the mountain.

I've been to the top of Mt. Tabor many times. Not surprisingly, there is a beautiful church now built on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration. It's a beautiful building designed by the famous Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi. You can visit it and see dark-robed monks quietly shuffling along asking the tourists to be quiet. They can be seen praying, sweeping the grounds, and tending their gardens. Meanwhile, at the foot of the mountain are thousands of people who have never entered that church. They don't know Jesus, and those monks aren't interested in leaving the mountain to tell them Jesus can save them and deliver them from their trouble.

Jesus spent most of his time in the valley dealing with hurting people, and so should we. It's so wonderful to gather and worship and praise Jesus. Every Sunday is a mountaintop experience for me but for the other six days of the week, God sends us out into the valley: in our homes, our neighborhoods, our jobs and we find hurting people who desperately need what Jesus has to offer. We need to love them and accept them and introduce them to Jesus.

In my experience as a pastor, I've known folks who want to stay on the mountaintop of worship. But I've also known Christians who never leave the valley. They work, work, work for Jesus but they never visit the mountaintop and enjoy sweet intimacy with Him. Worship is almost a waste of time for them. Or they say, "The way I worship is by working for Jesus." They look with disdain at mountaintop worshipers and wonder when they are going to come down and get to work!

But we must maintain a cycle of both worship of the Lord and work for the Lord. When we have been on the mountain and seen the glory of Jesus, we will be willing to go out into the valley and help others.

II. FAITH ENGAGES IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

There has been a lot of buzz about the newest installment of the Star Wars movie series coming in December. It will feature some of the original characters including Harrison Ford, who is 73, playing Hans Solo. Mark Hamill, age 64, will be playing Luke Skywalker. Of course, 64 is just about in the prime of life in my opinion.

My grandkids have really gotten into Star Wars and they love to tell me Star Wars jokes. Like this: What do you call it when Chewbacca gets chocolate stuck in his fur? A chocolate chip wookiee. Or, did you hear about the time when Luke Skywalker was at an Asian restaurant having trouble using the chopsticks? He closed his eyes and heard Obi Wan Kenobi saying, "Luke, use the fork."

I've often said that when it comes to the devil, many Christians have a misguided Star Wars theology. In Star Wars there's this mystical energy that permeates the galaxy called the Force. There's a good side of the force; and there's the dark side of the force. Some Christians think of Satan as some impersonal dark side of the force. But the devil and his demons are real. They are intelligent, malevolent, and organized. This young boy was suffering from a particularly malicious evil spirit who had tried to get the boy to harm himself. The father said the evil spirit had thrown the boy into the fire and water to kill him. Satan has a plan for every person created by God—and it is to destroy you. Jesus identified Satan's 3-fold job description in John 10:10. He said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

If Satan had his way with you he would STEAL your joy, peace, and security. He would KILL your self-esteem, your faith and hope. He would DESTROY your mind, your marriage, your family, and this church. He ONLY comes to kill, steal, and destroy.

It's important to point out that not every physical illness is caused by demonic control. Several times in the New Testament records Jesus cast out demons and healed the sick. This boy's agony was demon-induced. The evil spirit caused him to have violent convulsions, while screaming and foaming at the mouth. Our modern world often writes off demon activity as some old magic imagined by pre-scientific people.

Dr. John Philip was a Scottish missionary who graduated from Oxford University and then worked among the native Africans in South Africa. He saw many incidents of demonic influence in people. He compared demonic destruction to the Bubonic Plague in London. When the Bubonic plague was sweeping London in 1666, physicians didn't understand that an invisible germ was spreading it. The College of Physicians said fresh air was the cause of the plague. So residents of London sealed up their chimneys and filled their houses with smoke. Many died from the plague and from lung diseases. If they had been told germs were the cause they would have laughed.

Dr. Philip wrote: "Modern man has adopted this kind of attitude about demons. We tell them that the world is in the grip of Satan and he has countless hosts of invisible demons to aid him in his dark design against mankind. People look at us with pitying scorn and suggest we peddle our theories to the publishers of science fiction. But it is true all the same. Our world has been invaded by a virus far more deadly than the bubonic plague because it is able to think and because it directs its attacks against the soul instead of the body."

Dr. Philip is correct. The presence of demons is a fact in our world today, whether modern scientists admit it or not. There is some behavior that is so bizarre it simply can't be ruled as psychotic or sociopathic.

III. FAITH EXPECTS GOD TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

There is a scene of chaos, so Jesus pulls the Father and the tormented son away from the crowd so He can talk to him. In this encounter we can find three principles.

A. The church sometimes fails to help people in need

The father complained to Jesus that his disciples had tried to help his boy, but "they could not." Months earlier, Jesus sent His disciples out and given them power and authority over demons. I can just imagine Andrew as he walks up to the boy and says, "I can handle this." He points his finger at the tortured boy and says, "In the name of Jesus, demon, release him!" Nothing happens. He tries again, "I repeat. Demon, in the name of Jesus, come out of him!!" He looks at his finger as if to ask, "Is this thing loaded?" Phillip pushes him aside, "Here, Andrew, let me handle this." He tries—no success. Nathaniel tries—no success. Matthew tries. He fails. Here was a hopeful father who brought his troubled son to the disciples of Jesus and they couldn't help. What an indictment against them!

How many times does this happen today? I fear that multitudes of hurting people come to the church of the Lord Jesus and are hopeful the disciples of Jesus, the church, can help them and they go away disappointed. How many times has a couple on the verge of divorce come to our church or any church, seeking help? They come and depart disappointed. They could say, "I brought my sick marriage to the church for healing—but they could not." How many times has a broken hearted person struggling with emotional and physical abuse come to our church and said, "I brought my battered heart to church for healing—but they could not." Those words "they could not" keep echoing in my mind. We must remember that the church is the Body of Christ, but it is comprised of fallen, sinful, imperfect people. Churches will sometimes disappoint you, but Jesus never will.

B. We can admit our lack of faith to Jesus

The father didn't have perfect faith; he had a weak faith. He said, "Lord IF you can do something, please help us." I believe that brought a smile to Jesus lips. He said, "IF I can? Everything is possible for him who believes." At this point, you expect that the correct answer would be: "I DO BELIEVE! Hallelujah!" But I love this father's honesty. He said, I believe. I just need you to help me with my UNBELIEF." He was waffling between belief and unbelief. Jesus didn't condemn or criticize him. He didn't say, "No miracle for you." He granted the father's request. He *did* help him with his unbelief.

Maybe that's where you are right now. You are hurting and struggling. Maybe like this father, you have a loved one who is suffering, and you want to trust God for a miracle. It's okay for you to say to Jesus, "I believe, Jesus. But help me with my unbelief."

C. Jesus can release you from spiritual bondage

This poor lad had been under the demonic control of this malicious spirit since he was a little boy. Jesus commanded the spirit to leave and to never come back. With one final convulsion, the spirit obeyed Jesus and left the boy. The boy was so exhausted it was as if he was dead. But Jesus lifted him up and sent him on his way. I wish Raphael or someone had painted a picture of the lad after Jesus set him free. He would have been smiling with clear eyes as he hugged his mother and father. With a glance back at Jesus, he mouthed, "Thank you Jesus."

Do you need to be set free from some bondage or burden today? It may be a sick child, a sick marriage, a sick heart or a sick checkbook. Do you hear Jesus saying, "Bring your problem to me?" He sees your need and He cares. Will you cast all your cares upon Him today? He cares for you. When you come to Him, He can REALLY set you free. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:34-36)

CONCLUSION

There are two worlds, two dimensions. There is the physical world, it's everything we can see and touch. But there is another world, a Faith Dimension where you focus on the spiritual world. Where is your heart? C. S. Lewis wrote: "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

We all were made for another world. This world will never satisfy you. So live in the Faith Dimension and you will find the presence and power of Jesus.

OUTLINE

KEY TRUTH: Jesus said, "Everything is possible for him who believes." Mark 9:23

• • •

I. FAITH EMBRACES A CYCLE OF WORSHIP AND WORK

- A. We celebrate God's glory on the mountaintop of worship
- B. We find hurting people in the valley of service

II. FAITH ENGAGES IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." *John 10:10*

III. FAITH EXPECTS GOD TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

- A. The church sometimes fails to help people in need
- B. We can admit our lack of faith to Jesus
- C. Jesus can release you from spiritual bondage

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." *John 8:34-36*

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations and/or use material that is not under copyright. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material stimulate your own Spirit-driven preparation—*it is never intended as a substitute for your own study of Scripture.*

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, it is good scholarship (not to mention the right thing to do) to cite the source. If you are teaching, you may simply preface your remarks by saying something like: **“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”** This simple citation also applies to any work you may publish, too, as I routinely publish my material in books that are protected by copyright.

This careful effort on your part may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you. I trust you will find that additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners.

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas*