

INTRODUCTION

One of the things that makes Christmas special are all the beautiful lights. However, in some cases people are taking decorations to the extreme and are trying to outdo their neighbors. It must be pretty intimidating to live next to a house that has thousands of lights on display. If some of you live next to people who go all out with Christmas decorations maybe you can do like one homeowner did. He just put up a sign that pointed to his neighbor's lights that said, "Ditto."

But the funniest Christmas decoration picture I received this season was a picture of this man who appears to be hanging from his gutter. It reminds me of Chevy Chase in "Christmas Vacation." But this is a dummy and it's a set up. The police made the owners take it down because drivers were having accidents looking at it. One elderly person suffered a heart attack when they got out of their car and tried to pick the ladder up to help the guy. So, you'd probably better not try this one.

This is the Sunday before Christmas and if you came expecting a Christmas message about the baby in the manger in Bethlehem, you're not going to get it. We all know the Christmas story because we've heard it for years and we've sung about it for the past three weeks. Instead I'm going to talk about the One whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas. This is a message about Jesus. Well, actually, since I've been in this series called "Parables and Miracles," every message is about Jesus. We either talk about the miraculous words of Jesus, parables or we talk about the miraculous works of Jesus, miracles.

The title of this message is "Two Words God Loves to Hear." We're going to focus on two miracles, the healing of two blind men, and a man who was mute and was given the ability to talk. As we read about these two miracles in Matthew 9:27-33 see if you can pick out the two words God loves to hear.

"As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!' When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' 'Yes, Lord,' they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith will it be done to you'; and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, 'See that no one knows about this.' But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region. While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.'"

Did you find the words? Two words God loves to hear are found in verse 28: "Yes, Lord." Those two words activate faith. When Jesus heard those words, "Yes, Lord," He said, "According to your FAITH, will it be done to you." And they received their sight. This is a message about miraculous FAITH that is activated by those two words, "Yes, Lord."

We talk a lot about faith, but many people don't really understand it. People who aren't followers of Jesus claim they just can't have faith, but everyone practices some kind of faith every day of their lives. There are at least five different kinds of faith.

(1) Natural faith

This is believing a bridge will support your car. When you drive over a bridge you are putting your faith in the architect and builders of that bridge. When you entered this room not long ago, you looked at the seat where you're sitting and you believed it would hold your weight; that's natural faith and all people practice it.

(2) Intellectual faith

You can read a recipe and if you follow it, you are expecting a good meal to be the result of your faith. Astronomers tell us the next solar eclipse visible in the U.S. will take place on August 21, 2017. There will be thousands of people watching that day, because they place intellectual faith in the astronomers' calculations.

(3) Historical faith

This is believing that George Washington was our first President. None of us have ever met him, but we have read about him and we believe the history books. These first three levels of faith operate in the realm of your mind and have nothing to do with spiritual faith.

(4) Saving faith

This is the kind of faith you exercise to trust Jesus for salvation. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:8, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith..." This is a faith that goes beyond believing in the historical reality of a man named Jesus. It is more than believing facts about Jesus. It involves trusting Jesus to forgive your sins and to take you to heaven.

(5) Miraculous faith

This faith says, "Yes, Lord, I will trust You for the impossible." This is the kind of faith Jesus was talking about when He said if you have faith the size of a tiny mustard seed, you can move mountains. This is the faith Jesus referred to in this passage of scripture. The first three kinds of faith involve the head, but these last two involve the head and the heart. We can learn from these two miracles how to say "Yes, Lord" and exercise miraculous faith.

1. "YES, LORD!" I WILL KEEP ON TRUSTING!

These two blind men demonstrated a great deal of persistence in their faith. First, you must remember they were considered unholy. Many of the Jews believed blindness was God's punishment for sin. In John 9, Jesus and his disciples encountered a blind man and His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that God's power can be displayed in his life." (John 9:1-2)

When they heard that Jesus could heal all kinds of illness, hope was ignited in their hearts and as Jesus passed by they cried out, "Son of David!" That was a Messianic term. They were professing their faith that Jesus was the Messiah. And notice they didn't insist that Jesus give them sight. Instead, they said, "Have mercy on us!" There is no evidence Jesus answered them or even acknowledged them. Instead, He left them and entered a house. Now, this was a critical point for the two blind men. They could have been insulted and turned away and left, but instead, they followed Jesus inside the house. They were persistent in their faith. Perseverance and stubborn persistence is a key to miraculous faith. The Bible says, "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised." (Hebrews 10:36)

Is there something you need in your life? Don't stop trusting God for it. Keep on praying. Keep on persevering! Don't give up on God. In Luke 11 Jesus tells a parable about persistent faith. It's a story of three friends. One traveling friend arrives at his poor friend's house after midnight. It was the custom that a guest should be fed, but the poor friend had no food, so he goes to the third friend, the sleeping friend. The poor friend pounds on the door of the house of the sleeping friend and says, "I have a traveling friend who has just arrived and I don't have any food. Please lend me three loaves of bread to feed him!" The sleeping friend says, "Go away! My door is locked and all my children are asleep. I can't help you." But the poor friend keeps on pounding on the door, and finally the sleeping friend gets up and gives him the bread." That's the story Jesus told and then He said, "Ask—and keep on asking. Seek—and keep on seeking. Knock—and keep on knocking and you will receive.

A great acrostic to remember for prayer is PUSH. That stands for Pray Until Something Happens. Keep on persisting in prayer until God answers your prayer, or He reveals to you that it isn't His will, but don't give up on God!

2. "YES, LORD!" I WILL BELIEVE WITHOUT SEEING ANY EVIDENCE!

After the two blind men persisted in following Jesus He asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" That's when they said, "Yes, Lord!" I can just see Jesus smiling as He reached out and touched their closed eyes and said, "According to your faith, will it be done to you." And suddenly, they could see.

Jesus didn't say, "According to your FATE, it will be done to you...or according to your FAME...or according to your FORTUNE...or according to your FEELINGS...it will be done to you." He said, "According to your FAITH, it will be done to you."

The world says, "When I see it, I'll believe it." But Jesus says, "When you believe it you will see it." Jenni and Jason lived in Columbia, Missouri for their medical residencies and when I visited I couldn't help but notice on the car tags that the state slogan for Missouri is "The show me state." I was curious about the origin of that statement, and there is some disagreement about where it came from, but the most popular story comes from a Missouri Congressman Willard Vandiver, who served in Congress around the turn of the 20th Century. In a speech before Congress he once said, "I come from a state that raises corn, cotton, cockleburs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me." And some say that's how Missouri became the Show Me State.

There is an inherent tendency we all have toward skepticism. And when it comes to scams and advertising today, let the buyer beware. But when it comes to believing God, you must believe before you see. The Bible says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1)

One of the first Christian books I ever read was John Bisagno's little book entitled, *The Power of Positive Praying*. I learned in that book that faith is not believing God *can* do something; faith is believing God *will* do something.

What are you trusting God for right now? Is there something you're needing from God and you don't see any visible evidence that God is answering your prayer? Instead start acting on your faith, and start thanking God before He answers your prayer.

3. "YES, LORD!" I WILL TELL OTHERS ABOUT YOU!

Jesus told the two blind men NOT to spread the word about what He had done, but that was a directive that they couldn't follow. Everyone that knew them as blind men wanted to know how they received their sight and they were compelled to tell everyone about Jesus. Jesus sometimes told people not to tell others about their miracle, because He didn't want everyone in Israel with the same disease or illness seeking Him out. But you know what strikes me as ironic? The people back then that Jesus told NOT to spread the word about Him, told everyone. And those of us today who have been COMMANDED to spread the word about Jesus, don't tell anyone! Isn't it ironic, don't you think?

Let's take a moment and notice that second miracle. There was a man who was unable to talk because of control a demonic spirit had over him. Did you catch that? A demon was preventing him from talking. After Jesus got rid of the demon, he could talk. What do you think He said? We aren't told, but I'll bet the first thing out of his mouth was, "Thank You, Jesus!" And I can imagine that everywhere he went he told people about the difference Jesus made in his life.

I don't have any trouble believing a demon was keeping him quiet, because I believe Satan and his demons will do everything in their power to keep you quiet when it comes to talking about Jesus. It's like that mute button on your remote control, push it and the sound goes off. If Satan had his way, every time you start to testify about the goodness and greatness of Jesus, he is pushing that mute button as hard as he can!

Christmas is a good time to remember that this whole movement started with 120 people in an upper room. Jesus commanded them to go to all nations and simply tell everyone who He is and what He can do. And that's what the early Christians did. Satan tried to mute them as well, but he couldn't.

I love the story about Peter and John, who were arrested and commanded *not* to speak about Jesus. The Bible says, "They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after

day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ." (Acts 5:40-42)

Today it is estimated that there are 2 billion Christians on this planet. And it's because generations of Christians have refused to be mute. They have refused to be silent. Even at the threat of death and torture, they have continued to proclaim the good news that Jesus is Lord.

We're part of that great line of witnesses. Don't let Satan mute you!

CONCLUSION

God loves to hear, "Yes, Lord!" Once a Gentile woman came begging for Jesus to heal her daughter and Jesus gave a very unexpected answer to her. He said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." Not Gentiles. "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." On the surface, it sounds as if Jesus was calling her a dog. But He was testing her faith. She said the two words God loves to hear. She said, "Yes Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." (Matthew 15:24-27) Jesus said, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."

Martha was the sister of Lazarus who had just died. Martha was confused why the Lord hadn't come according to her timetable. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will never die...Do you believe this?" Martha said, "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." (John 11:25-27) and moments later, Lazarus came out of the grave.

One morning beside the Sea of Galilee Peter was miserable because a few nights earlier he had boasted that all the other disciples might leave Jesus, but he *never* would. Then Peter had denied Jesus three times. That morning over breakfast Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, do you truly love me more than these?" Peter replied, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you." (John 21:15)

Saul of Tarsus was one of the enemies of the early Christians. He had witnessed the stoning of Stephen. On his way to Damascus to arrest more Christians, Jesus met him and knocked some sense into him. He was blinded. Meanwhile, God spoke to a Christian in Damascus named Ananias and told him to receive Saul and take care of him. It would be like God telling one of us that Osama Bin Ladin had become a Christian and we should take care of him. The Bible says, "In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!' 'Yes, Lord!' He answered." The Lord told him, "Go find a man named Saul, and place your hands on him to restore his sight." (Acts 9:10-12) Ananias obeyed the Lord.

Even the prophet Isaiah wrote: "Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts." (Isaiah 26:8)

You'd better get accustomed to saying, "Yes, Lord" because in the last few pages of the Bible we read that multitude in heaven will shout out: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgements!" (Revelation 16:7)

The greatest blessings of my life have come to me because I have said, "Yes, Lord, I'll tell others about you." When I was 17, I was working as a lifeguard at a summer camp. I was planning on going to college and then to law school. But one evening I attended a special service for teenagers and the preacher said, "God called me to preach when I was seventeen years old and I've been doing that ever since." As soon as I heard him say those words, I clearly heard God saying to my heart. "David, that's what I want you to do." And I remember bowing my head and saying, "Yes, Lord." That was the summer of 1970 and it's hard for me to believe that this next summer I will have been preaching for 40 years!

Nineteen years ago, I was a pastor in Alabama having a great time serving in a wonderful church. I thought I'd be there until Jesus returned or until I retired. But a group of men and women from Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler invited me to come to Tyler and visit and talk about being the next pastor. I prayed about it and we visited in December of 1990, but I wasn't sure if God wanted me here or not. So in January of 1991 I accepted this group's invitation to come and preach in view of a call to be the next pastor. It was a cold weekend and I remember all the meetings and preaching in both morning services in what is now the Chapel. Most people were gracious and loved us, but I was surprised to find a small vocal group who didn't want me to be the pastor—and they didn't even know me! After the vote, which was well over 90% positive, I wasn't ready to commit to come. I decided I would just go back to the church in Alabama where I knew everyone loved me! We were scheduled to fly out on Monday around noon, and earlier that morning, Emmett Lawhon and a few men just asked me if I would join them and pray about it. I was already determined to return to Alabama, but it would have been rude to refuse to pray with these guys. So, we got on our knees in what was then the chapel (in the general vicinity of the foyer of the Lighthouse now). They prayed and cried and as I knelt there I sensed God stirring in my heart saying, "David I want to come and be the Pastor here." It wasn't easy but I said, "Yes, Lord." And I got up from my knees and hugged those guys and told them I would come. I went back to the Residence Inn and told Cindy and I think she said, "You did WHAT?" Well, that was one of the most blessed decisions of my life because I can't imagine my life not being here serving this wonderful congregation!

Is there something God is calling you to do today that you need to answer, "Yes, Lord?" Or is there something you really need from God today? Do you need healing? Do you need your marriage to be restored? Do you need deliverance from some addiction or harmful habit? Do you need strength to face a scary challenge? What is that need that when you wake up in the middle of night that you pray about over and over again? Will you cry out to Jesus and beg Him for mercy?

Like these two blind men, are you willing to persevere in your faith? Will you believe God without seeing any evidence? Are you willing to tell others about the greatness of the Lord?

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine Jesus is standing in front of you. He knows you have a need and He asks you, "Do you BELIEVE I am able to make this happen for you?" What's your answer? Are you going to say, "I don't know, Lord?" Or are you going to say, "Maybe, Lord?" Or maybe your answer is, "I hope so, Lord."

Jesus is waiting for you to say, "Yes, Lord!" Those are two words He loves to hear, and when He hears those words He says, "According to your faith, will it be done to you."

OUTLINE

Five kinds of Faith:

- (1) Natural faith: Believing a bridge will support your car
- (2) Intellectual faith: Expecting a good meal when you follow a recipe
- (3) Historical faith: Believing George Washington was our first President
- (4) Saving faith: "For by grace you are saved through faith..."
- (5) Miraculous faith: "Yes, Lord, I will trust you for the impossible."

1. "YES, LORD!" I WILL KEEP ON TRUSTING!

"You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised." *Hebrews 10:36*

2. "YES, LORD!" I WILL BELIEVE WITHOUT SEEING ANY EVIDENCE!

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." *Hebrews 11:1*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes