

Good morning, I, Grantley have the joy of sharing with you this morning. A few weeks ago, a friend mentioned that the gospels only share twice that Jesus was amazed. The word “to marvel” or “to stand amazed” (*thaumazo in the Greek*) is common in the gospels. But it’s almost always used in connection with the crowd’s response to Jesus. They are usually the ones amazed or marvelling, not Jesus. In fact, there are only two times in the New Testament where Jesus is said to marvel. One is in Mark 6:6 and the other occasion is in Luke 7:9

Reading Mark 6 from verse 1 - Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Luke 7 reading from verse one - When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. ² There a centurion’s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³ The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, “This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵ because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.” ⁶ So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷ That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’

and he does it.”⁹ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.”¹⁰ Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

It seems, then, there are two things that make Jesus step back and say “Wow!” 1) Those who believe when it’s not expected they would. 2) Those who disbelieve when there’s every reason they should believe. As we can see both have got to do with faith or the lack thereof.

Hebrews 11 is an account of all the great men and their faith against impossible odds like Noah building an ark standing only on God’s word of an impending flood or Abraham setting out into the unknown following a word from God. Verse six says in this context “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

These are very strong words “without faith it is impossible to please God” The question is why does God place such a high value on faith, why is this the only thing that made Jesus marvel? Something I believe and you might differ with me is that God never asks anything from us humans that is not in His character; this means the reason why God expects us to live by faith is because He is living by faith. What, God living by faith – this sounds heretical, so let me back up my statement with a few examples.

Let us look at Job in the Old Testament; Satan challenges God that if Job is squeezed, Job will curse God. Either the whole story of Job is just a weird sort of Shakespeare play or alternatively there was a very real possibility that Job could have cursed God. God had that much faith in Job that God accepts the challenge, and we see that Job although cursing the day he was born, never curses God.

As we look at the crucifixion, either God had the faith that Jesus would actually go all the way to the cross and accept the humiliation and sheer agony with a real possibility that Jesus could turn around and say, “not your

will but my will” or the whole garden of gethsemane is some cheap theatrical second-rate play. That God looking at this rabble called humanity that is bent on evil, believes that He can unify the church with all its mess into a bride without spot or blemish for Jesus requires the utmost faith.

In the famous 1 Corinthians 13 passage it ends with “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.” Or as some translations put it “So these three things continue forever: faith, hope, and love.” Or as the New Living Translation says, “Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love” Very interesting that both faith and hope will last forever. I do not know why, but I am excited for when I get to heaven.

Moses sent out 12 spies to spy out Canaan; 10 came back saying although the land was wonderful, it was impossible to go in and only Joshua and Caleb in faith claimed that God would defeat their enemies. God rewarded Joshua and Caleb’s faith with the best of the land, and the other 10 were killed by plague because of their lack of faith despite seeing God forcing a very reluctant Pharaoh to release them out of Egypt.

The question is “is God saying wow as He looks at my life” — is God amazed at my faith. Am I continuously stretching myself.

A few years ago, it hit me that when I worry about tomorrow, I am disobeying Jesus’ command not to worry about tomorrow, as well as Jesus’ promise that He will look after my needs just like Jesus looks after the birds. As a result, I will do what I must do today regardless of my finances, allowing tomorrow to look after itself.

When we moved into our house, after all the expenses were paid, we had about R40,000 left over. We had two sheds behind our house, the one big enough for a three-bedroom apartment, the other could make a small single bedroom apartment. I said to Madelyn “we might have enough if we are very careful with the one bedroom unit, but definitely not enough for the three bedroom unit, so let us start with the three bedroom unit” Amazingly,

although we were tight throughout the whole project, we never needed to slow down or compromise on quality due to lack of finances. Today that 3 bedroom and now built one bedroom unit are blessing missionaries as they are transitioning between here and the place God has called them to serve.

My prayer is that I will never allow my finances to determine what I can or cannot do, but rather only the word of the Lord. However, finances is probably the easiest area to exercise faith as there are definite deadlines like rental, water, electricity that need to be paid. An area, Madelyn and I are having to exercise our faith is around our two eldest sons; although neither are serving Jesus, we have numerous promises from God that they will serve the Lord. The question is, what will we focus on, what we see with our eyes or what God has told us? For more than eight years we have chosen to believe God despite the fact we do not see any fruit and if anything, they seem to be slowly drifting further and further from the truth. Abraham chose to believe God for a son even though Sarah was beyond childbearing age and with each passing day the promise seemed more and more impossible until God did the impossible. Can we believe God for the impossible, will God be amazed as He looks at us trusting only on his word?

Let us pray: Father, I want you to look at me with amazement as I trust You for the impossible, Father help me, teach me how to walk in the realm of seeing the impossible become reality, that Your name may be glorified through my life and actions. Amen

Have a blessed day.