

Do you trust Jesus? Do you trust God? That is the question that Mary asked in the skit and indeed the question Jesus is asking us today. Let us pray:

One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

Believing that Daddy can see him. Believing that Daddy will catch him if he jumps, that's one thing. But it takes *TRUST* to actually jump.

Do you trust Jesus? What does it mean to trust Jesus? That is not the same question as do you believe in Jesus. And even that question invites different ways of looking at the question. Do you believe Jesus existed? Do you believe Jesus was a good guy? Do you believe in the lessons Jesus taught, in the morals he calls people to live by? Even, do you believe Jesus was crucified and resurrected?

You can answer all of those questions yes, and still not trust. Trust is different from belief.

Trust is more than belief. **Beliefs are opinions or judgments I've concluded are right.** Faith is a deep-seated confidence and trust is that faith and a decision to act on that faith. Trust is deciding to jump.

Beliefs are propositional by nature: ideas, concepts, immaterial and invisible things that exist in my mind. Faith is the evidence of things unseen and invisible, the substance of immaterial things like hope.

Beliefs cling to what I'm already convinced is true and insist that truth fit my preconceived assumptions. Faith is letting go of my preconceived assumptions, finding the courage to open up to truth as it is. Belief told Peter that eating unclean animals was wrong. Trust and faith allowed Peter to listen to God, to accept that any animals God said were clean were clean and gave him the courage to go a minister to a Gentile when God told him to, even though it was unlawful for a Jew like Peter to associate with a Gentile.

The Bible is full of men and women letting go of what they believed in order to experience deeper faith in relationship with the infinite God, who is beyond our understanding.

Hebrews 11 lists an entire series of faithful people, beginning at the beginning:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable **sacrifice than Cain's.** Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks . . . ⁷By faith Noah, warned by God

about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.

⁹By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise."

In each case, Abel, Noah, Abraham, it wasn't about just belief. It was about faith. It was about trusting God and acting on that faith, about taking that step, about making that leap—there's a reason we call it a leap of faith, after all. Trusting Jesus—that's what makes it real. That is what takes belief and turns it into reality. Trusting Jesus, making that jump, that is what unlocks the potential of the kingdom of God. That is what makes the magic, the miraculous, the spiritual happen.

But it isn't about just belief or even faith. ! John puts it this way:

"⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. . . . 2 . . . ³Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments.

⁴Whoever says, "I have come to know him," but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; ⁵but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: ⁶whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked."

Walk as he walked.

Walk in the light.

Obey his commandments.

Act. Step out. Jump.

How did Jesus walk? He healed the sick. He fed the hungry. He taught children, he taught everyone who wanted to learn. He told truth to power, truth they didn't want to hear, truth that put a target on his back, truth that got him arrested, convicted and crucified. He sought forgiveness for everyone—even those who crucified him, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." That was his walk.

What were his commandments? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your mind, and with all your soul. Love your neighbor as yourself. Love each other as Jesus loves us.

Deny yourself—take up your cross and follow him.

Be a servant—whoever would be great must be a servant to others.

Feed the hungry.

Clothe the naked.

Take in the homeless.

Visit those in prison.

And be his witnesses in all the world.

That's how the kingdom of heaven becomes real. That's how our faith turns belief into real change. What does this mean, as a practical matter? What does this mean for us?

It can take many different forms—it depends on what God is asking you to do. You've heard me talk about meeting new people. Stepping out in faith may be finally inviting that friend or family member to come to church—and not just invite them, but pick them up and bring them to church.

Or maybe it means joining a group or taking up a new hobby so you can meet new people—expand your definition of neighbor.

Or maybe it means becoming an activist. I saw a report that says Las Vegas is 199th out of 200 cities in safety for children—next to last. Part of that is our education system, part is lack of services for children. Stepping out in faith may be stepping up to care about and contact leaders about those issues. To fight for this city's children—even if they aren't your own.

There are many ways that God may be asking you to trust, for you to step out in faith. Ask God to show you how you can be part of the kingdom. Ask God to break your heart for what breaks God's. And then get ready to jump. Amen.