Blackrock S. Eve Sept 8, 07. 2nd lesson

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Mark 9, 22 R.V. And he said "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, & help us. And J. said unto him, If thou canst! All things δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεύοντι.

We have in our Second lesson tonight the account of the healing of the demoniac child - and the story is used to give us a teaching about FAITH.

1) We first have the father bringing his boy to the disciples, but he found them incapable of doing any thing for him: and Christ's comment upon their incapacity was "O "faithless generation, how long shall "I be with you!"

2) Next, we have the father coming to Christ Himself, and saying "If thou "canst do any thing, have compassion "on us, and help us". "If thou canst", Jesus takes up his words — "if

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"thou canst", you say to Him - "all things
"can be to him that believeth." It lies
"with yourself as much as with Him."
(And the father throws himself upon
Christ's pity with the cry "Lord, I believe-
help thou my unbelief".

3) And lastly, when the devil has been expelled, and the incident is past, the disciples ask Jesus why they could cast it out, and they could not! "This "kind" can come forth by nothing but "by prayer [and fasting]." Prayer is the food and support of faith, and those who would do the works of faith - i.e. heal the sick, cast out devils, raise the dead - must live the life of faith, and keep faith alive and vigorous - and this can only be done by unremitting prayer.

3) (We mean "having no fears about his own ability to do things?"

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Now the first thing I want you to notice is that ~~there are TWO kinds of faith often~~ ~~in the gospels - faith whereby we help ourselves, and faith whereby we help others. But these two faiths are really the same.~~ For of course faith properly means "faith in God." We sometimes use the word "faith" in a wrong way, and speak of a man having faith in himself but that is simply an applied use of the word. The original meaning of "faith" means dependence upon something outside yourself - and you can see what I mean, when I say that it is really just as incorrect to speak of (e.g.) "depending on yourself as having FAITH in yourself. Why? Because the meaning of to "depend" is to hang - a coat "depends" upon a peg when it

HANGS upon a peg - and where do you think a coat would be, if it depended upon itself. It would very soon be on the floor. Properly speaking therefore, you can only DEPEND upon something that is not yourself, and the same is true of faith.

Now in the Gospels anyone who was to help himself, or help others, was told that what he needed was FAITH, faith in God. Now faith means - not merely that you believe that there IS a God, nor even that there is a MIGHTY God: St James tells us that even the devils believe that, and tremble at it. But faith means more than believing something ABOUT God, it means knowing HIM: believing that He is good and loving, and more, good and loving towards you.

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Further, it means believing that there may be some kind of connection or fellowship between Him and you: and that this connection with Him can so unite you to God that He can work in you and through you, with results which are impossible while you stand ALONE. And yet once more, faith means actually ENTERING into this "fellowship with God that you are persuaded of," and (ὡς εἰπεῖν) throwing yourself upon God.

Now faith (in a certain sense) is hard, because it does not come natural to us. We live in a world of sight, rather than of faith: our life is governed by what we see, or touch, or feel, or taste, or hear. If we can SEE a thing, we are satisfied that it is real - if we like a thing,

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We are satisfied that it is good, and we try to get more of it: if a thing hurts, we are satisfied it is bad, and we have as little to do with it as we can. Our natural life is, or can be, a life rather like that of the animals, reckoning only with things that appeal to our bodily senses.

~~[illegible]~~ But, on the other hand, faith is not really unnatural to us. When we are told to have faith in God, we are not told to do a thing which we were not born with a capacity for doing. But it is a hard thing to do, because habit makes it so much easier to use our bodily faculties; for a large part of our lives, we are obliged to use our senses and are not forced to use our souls.

But, properly speaking, it is as

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NATURAL - as much part of our nature - to use our soul as to use our eyes, or our ears or our hands.

But there is no doubt that - as things are - it is hard. It is hard to (feel at home with the idea of a God whom we can't see or touch - hard to reckon with His presence, quite in the same way as we reckon with things that our bodies like or dislike - hard to surrender ourselves to Him, when all the time our minds are telling us that since we can't see Him we can't be quite SURE that He is there at all - hard to do what we are told He wishes us to do, when we can see before our eyes things we would so much RATHER do. And yet this is what faith IS - obeying the inner witness of your soul, and ACTING upon it - taking it as a foundation-truth of life,

which can't be proved and yet you are willing to accept — that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Now there is no doubt that it costs everyone a struggle to live by faith. But it is the only way by which men arrive at power. By power, I mean, power for good: I don't mean power of body, and I don't mean power like that of Napoleon, but power to be good and to do good. And after all, there is no GREATER power than spiritual personal power, whereby a man or woman by influence, by example, by holy living, exercises a healing and vitalising ministry among all the people he comes in contact with.

Now in faith I can do that, in greater or less degree, for everyone who has faith, in proportion to their faith. §

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For what is faith, and how does it work? It means using your soul, letting your soul carry you out of the lower region of things that you see and touch, into that higher region to which the soul belongs, and where it is at home. When anyone lives by the body, his soul is cribbed and cramped and coiled, and can't do its work, and the man is left earthly and gross and unInspired. But when he lives by his soul, he is living a second life - not merely the life on earth where his lungs breathe, and his eyes see, and his feet walk, but a life amid the great spiritual realities which centre around God. He lives his true life in the invisible - God is his Friend, heaven (even while he lives on earth) is his home.

He governs his "life on earth" so as to make it all fall in with with his higher life, and the result is that he brings back to his earthly life a power and a fragrance and a serenness which altogether transform it. He has become so united to God, that God lives in him and works through him. He is a Temple in which God dwells - a channel through which God pours the living streams of His spiritual power - a musical instrument played by God's own hand.

Faith, in short, reinforces and enhances our own powers by carrying us altogether out of our self: as Isaiah says, "Lord, thou will ordain peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our works "in us". Man is true man, when God works his works in him.

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Now without faith – i.e. without this life with God, and this being empowered by God – we can do "little, if anything" that is really lasting for ourselves or our fellowmen. We haven't got it in us to do it: God made us for Himself and we have no power, except we find power in Him. Each of us is like the moon, which indeed gives the sun something to shine upon, but can't shine of itself. Can only shine, when the sun's rays fall upon it.

(You may say to me of course "But a great deal is done in the world by irreligious men, who never think of God." I answer "Whatever good is done in the world by irreligious men is done by virtue of that divine light in them which lighteth every man. Each of us lives & moves & has his being in God:

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and by virtue of that fact we have (whether we will or not) something of God in us. But when we come to the higher, more difficult walks of life, such as the service of other souls, the man without faith – the man who works without God – is absolutely futile. There is no spring, no power, no healing, no magnetism in his ministry – it is barren, unattractive, limp.

See this need of God Exemplified in N.T.

Our Lord is the great Example of the life of faith – the earthly life, i.e. inspired by the secret life of fellowship with God.

1) In His own life of temptation, He needed Divine strength: it was only after the descent of the H.S. at His Baptism that He was able to overcome the
2) Tempter in the wilderness. Again, He would spend whole nights in prayer to

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God, from which He would return to His earthly task uplifted & refreshed, ready to heal, to teach, and to bear our sicknesses. Again, remember
3) the night of wrestling with God in Gethsemane, whereby He was strengthened for the mocking, the scourging, the cross, and the desolation. ‖ (Christ's own life was a radiant example of the power of faith. And in His life with others, it was the same.
1) (Before choosing His disciples, He passed the whole night in solitary communion with God. Or take this
2) act of power that we are thinking of tonight: the calm strength He displayed was in part the outcome of the spiritual influences that had been playing upon but a few hours before on the Mount of Transfiguration. And when

the disciples asked HOW He could do what had baffled them, He made no claim to any thing which God could not have given them, "this kind goeth "not out but by PRAYER."

Now just as Christ's life, whether private or public, depended for its effectiveness on His soul's life with God, so does the life of men. Christ could not heal men, unless they had FAITH to be healed. There are places where we are expressly told that He could do NO mighty works, because of the people's unbelief. "Thy faith hath made thee whole", He said to one and another whom He had been able to cure. He followed up His strange action of blasting the barren fig-tree with those amazing words to the disciples "If ye have faith, & doubt not,

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ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, "Be thou removed, & be thou cast into the sea"; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Christ, you see, was a most profound believer in the power of faith, and we might say that his reason for coming into this world & was to lay open to men the way of faith. He had no desire to keep it to himself. He wanted to make all men know what power might be exercised through them. For faith does act so much gives us power, as enable us to be CHANNELS through which God's power is directed upon things. And therefore he called upon the disciples (and he calls upon us) to have faith in God.

We OUGHT to have faith - it is our duty - it is that we were put into the world FOR. The disciples did (not understand it - they came asking for faith, and Jesus would have none of it.) "Lord, increase our faith," they cried. Jesus says "If ye HAD faith, ye might "say to this tree, Be thou plucked up, and "it should obey you." Don't ask for faith, He says - HAVE it. God can't give it you more than He has done, in giving you the capacity for it. Stir up your soul's capacity - use what He has given you, and HAVE faith. Faith comes when people WILL to have it: in other words, people may FIND the invisible God when they desire themselves to find Him. And that may be done, above all, thro' PRAYER. Prayer is the deliberate "putting on one side" of outward and lower things,

and the taking refuge in God.
(And like all faculties which grow with use, the soul grows as we use it for prayer. It becomes more and more powerful over our whole life, and we bring back from our converse with God higher hopes, higher standards, higher desires, and greater strength.)
The man of faith carries God with him, and brings the power of God to bear on difficulties which would crush him.

Now that is the practical lesson I want you to take away with you tonight.

We talk about the "religious" life, but even tho' the religious life means a life of Churchgoing and good works it is (practically speaking) barren,

unless it is a life of faith, i.e. a life with God. Spiritual growth is next-door to impossible without God dwelling in us. ~~By that I mean that we are getting very little good out of our religion unless it is improving us.~~ And ARE we, as the Sundays and the years pass by, getting any greater power over our faults - Controlling our tongues, our tempers, our jealousies, our wayward wills, our idle thoughts - are we becoming masters in our own house, in fact? For it is only by God's working in us, that we can HOPE to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. We must live with God, we must let God have room to work within us, we must expose our whole nature to God's searching, kindling presence, if we are

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to be made new. For no goodwill of our own is strong enough however much in earnest we are – to conquer the appalling power which sin exercises within us. We want a deliverer – and – by faith – we ask the deliverer to enter in.

And similarly with regard to helping others.

We ought to want to be of use – that is one of the first teachings of Christ's religion. If we have faith, we shall desire to be of use, and God will use us. But always the amount of REAL good we shall do will be in exact proportion to the extent of our faith, i.e. to the amount of room we make in our lives for God. Christ said to his disciples "without Me, ye can do nothing!" and of course

He meant "nothing in my particular line." You cannot give what you have not got. There is not one of us but is connected with others, and of those others one or two are marked out as being SPECIALLY in need of spiritual strength, to overcome their besetting sin. We ought to help them. Sometimes we can help them without their knowing it - sometimes they must know that we are seeking their good. But whichever it be, the ONLY way we can help them is by the increase of our own faith - our own dependence upon God - our own quickened life with God. Then our prayers for them will have greater avail "the effectual fervent "prayer of a righteous man availeth "much" says St James: and again, the effect of our personal dealings with them

will be altogether stronger.
Our presence will be a support, a check, a consolation: we shall communicate spiritual force to them. They will know that we have been with God, without any failing. Those who bring God into their lives carry with them a mysterious kind of atmosphere, which makes itself felt with power: they carry God with them, and their influence cannot be hidden.
Every one that has faith & walks with God is one more window, through which the healing light of God's presence streams in upon the darkness of the world

So then, Christ says to each one of us "Have faith in God".
The secret of a blessed private life is "not I, but God living in me" — and

the secret of a 'life among others' which will be a blessing to them, is the same: true faith must find an outlet for itself in works of love, and love can only find its true strength in a living FAITH.