

Good morning! I am so glad you are here today.

My name is Kelly Tibbitts and I am one of the elders and teaching pastors here at Harbor and it brings me great joy to share a message with you today!

This summer we are in a sermon series where we are looking at passages from the 4 gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and we see Jesus having a face-to-face moment of truth with people just like you and me.

Have you ever had a 'moment of truth'? I like how John Emery described it a couple of weeks ago- a moment of truth is a conversation or situation in your past that's sort of seared into your memory... Where you had to make a decision that would shape your future?" An 'A-HA!' moment.

A moment where we make a decision and then life from that point forward looks entirely different.

One moment of truth in my life happened when I decided to join the team at Harbor.

I found Harbor because my sister started attending. I was serving a church near my home in New Hampshire. I loved Harbor and would listen to the messages and if I had a Sunday off, I would visit. I came to interview for a role here in April of 2012, and was asked to meet with the elders.

I was in the middle of a very busy season. My three daughters had lots of activities, and my calendar was filled with things to do.

I came to speak to the elders and it felt like every question they asked me was something I had spent my whole life preparing to answer. Soon after that night- the elder team offered me a role on staff.

But, it took a step of faith for my family to choose to leave the only church my children had known. To leave our friends, and a church that was 10 minutes away and start driving to Harbor.

We had no way of knowing if this would work out. In fact I was not coming to be a Director of Kids Harbor, I was coming to be a resident and spend six months to a year serving- to see if I was a good fit for the staff team.

So- not even a "real job"... My moment of truth involved taking a step of faith, with no promise that this role would out. I was leaving a church that had seen leadership in me and had encouraged me to become a licensed pastor. But I knew that God was calling me here to Harbor ...it was a moment of truth...and those moments can be very difficult.

Writing this message help me to see that once again, Jesus is asking me to take a step of faith as I have another moment of truth. Without faith, looking at the circumstances as we wait for our next teaching pastor is scary. But with the faith - I know that God is calling us to continue to be a community that helps people find their way back to Him.

Our moment of truth as a church is choosing to trust God, knowing that our best days are not behind us...God will do more than we can ask or think or imagine.

If you have spent anytime in church-you know that we often speak of this word faith. In scripture we see faith described as pleasing to God, and somehow –deep inside we know that faith pleases God.

Have you ever wondered-What is faith? And how do we
have Faith?

Have you ever asked yourself those questions?

Hebrews 11:1 tells us Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

It not based on ourselves, or what we see

Romans 10:11 says Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God

Matthew Henry's Commentary says ...Faith is planted by the Spirit of God. .

He continues and this is my favorite part

I would love if you would read it with me

Faith proves to the mind, the reality of things that cannot be seen by the bodily eye.

Sure of what we hope for; certain of what we do not see.

But-I do not have to remind you-having faith is hard!

Today, we will look at 2 moments of truth from the gospels and see two people taking a step of faith. It is not easy for them. The requests they make require them to believe what they do not see.

Faith is hard because life is hard. All around us there is pain and sickness and death. But faith is realizing that God is with us- the Holy Spirit was sent to be our comfort. He will never leave us- we are never alone.

We do not see with sight, what we can only see with faith... the kingdom of God is advancing. Light is defeating darkness. Christ is King. God is on the throne.

Today we will look at the faith of people that "insiders" in time of Jesus would have seen as outsiders. They are people like you and me. The big difference is they walked with Jesus, and had a chance to spend a moment with Him.

The Faith of the Centurion

7 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.”

We see a powerful man.

We know him as the Centurion. He was not Jewish, but the elders of Capernaum respected him and brought him to Jesus.

Centurions were soldiers who commanded hundred-men groups of a hundred men. He was a powerful leader-
He understood and believed in authority.

The Centurion asks the Jewish elders to speak to Jesus.

He was a very important man, who humbled himself and asked for Jesus to heal his servant. The Jewish people knew he was a God fearing man, a Gentile who believed and respected the God of Israel.

The elders respected him enough that they humbled themselves and went to Jesus. And they were begging Jesus to help this man. Did you see why? **5** because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.”

Verse five says that he loves the nation of Israel. He built the synagogue in Capernaum.

One of the first messages I ever preached, I learned an important lesson. There’s only one temple-it is in Jerusalem.

Synagogues were local. And this man who had power given to him by Rome, used his resources to build a synagogue for the Jewish people of Capernaum.

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 myself 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.

The Centurion was confident because he understood authority in a way I do not. I imagine if you have been a member of the military you understand this idea better than I do. He trusts and has faith in the authority that Jesus has over sickness and death.

His faith was in something bigger than Authority-

He believed Jesus could heal...his faith was that there was authority that Jesus had as Lord of the Universe.

He calls Jesus Lord.

And Jesus is Lord of - all things in heaven and earth. That is why we can be confident in what we do not see.

The Centurion knew that Jesus had the authority to heal.

His faith was seen by Jesus- **I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."**

I love that verse 9 says Jesus was Amazed...I can picture his smiling Face--- like when your child does something you never thought they would do...it might be simple- like saying Thank you...but it never seemed possible. WOW... Such Faith...

This is faith in the power that Jesus had over sickness- The Centurion knew the authority of Jesus was true even if the servant was far away! The servant is not there, and Jesus heals him. It is this faith that Jesus was amazed by.

Skipping a few chapters, we meet another outsider, another Gentile-but this one could not be more different from the powerful centurion.

She was a woman, from outside of Israel- In the book of Matthew we see that she is a Canaanite woman. Matt 15:

21 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. **22** A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

Sounds a little harsh-right?

Why does Jesus say that he was sent to the lost sheep of Israel? In all honesty, it is such a tough scripture, I wanted to skip this verse.

But-I have a friend named Stuart. He sees scripture in a different way than I do. He never skips over hard parts like I do. He asks "why do you think it says that?"

All. The. Time... For more than 15 years, when I have looked at scripture in our small group, Stuart asks...what does this mean? Why does it say that.

When we read the story, we see a woman who is suffering because her daughter was suffering- I want to skip the hard part....but let's answer the question ...what is Jesus saying?

We see this mother fall at the feet of Jesus begging and crying "have mercy on me". I am a mom. If something was wrong with my child, and Jesus was nearby- I would do the same thing.

There is nothing that would keep me from begging for healing if any of my girls were hurting.

But when we look at the scripture with careful eyes, it appears that Jesus says something that seems hurtful and wrong.

I know that is not who Jesus is.

He is not callous, He is compassionate.

SO why would he say

"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

What came to my mind, was a time almost 18 years ago when my daughter Katie was born. Her older sister Elizabeth was almost 3, and a friend told me that whenever Katie needed something and Elizabeth needed something at the same time... I should help Elizabeth and say out loud to Katie.. who did not understand words yet, since she was a newborn baby... I'll be right with you Katie-but first I have to help your sister. I would talk to Katie so Elizabeth would hear me.

It affirmed my love for Elizabeth, since she could hear me and she would know what I was saying.

I think Jesus is doing this.

He is speaking to the disciples when he says "I came for the lost sheep of Israel." God promised Israel a shepherd would come- and Jesus is telling them that He is here!! The messiah they have been waiting for!

Jesus is telling the disciples that He is the shepherd Israel has waited for. He has not only come for only Israel.

I am on the other side of history.

Jesus also heals her daughter...because John 3:17 is true.

John 3:16 is a verse many of us know by heart-we know that God loves us so much that Jesus was sent for us... whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:17 transformed the way I see life-it says God did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. Jesus came for the world. He loves this woman and her daughter.

His disciples can't comprehend this- they believe God only cares for them.

He says He came for Israel AND healed her daughter.

25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

27 "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

What did Jesus say? And when you read that as an American living in 2016, the word "dogs" stand out as harsh doesn't it? Are you thinking- did Jesus insult a mom who is begging Jesus to heal her little girl?

The words sound harsh. I think part of the problem is our interpretation of words that were spoken when we were not there to hear them. Is there anything we don't understand since we were not there?

So the question is- did Jesus call her a dog?

But it seems unkind call someone a dog. As I looked into the term, I learned it was not insult. We know that Jesus is kind and loving. We have no issue when it is said in Scripture that we are like sheep. Even though books have been written on how dumb sheep are. But since they look cute- and we know Jesus is our Shepherd, and most of us don't know anyone who is a Shepherd it seems kind of sweet to be called sheep.

Close your eyes for a moment and picture Jesus. He is smiling because He loves you – and has great plans for you. He loves her.

I imagine him saying those words the way my husband speaks when there is a dog nearby. Are any of you dog people?

My husband loves dogs, and they love him.

I'm more of a people person- the kind of person who will happily hold your baby or toddler all day long. I don't mind changing diapers. I enjoy being with people, talking and I get energy from being with people.

But my husband loves dogs. Especially our dog. He has a kind voice when he sees our dog. When he is near a dog-they'll always come up and wag their tail when he is nearby.

What does Jesus mean when he talks about the dogs and the crumbs? I think what he is doing is speaking out loud for the benefit of the disciples. They're unable to process that God's love really is for the whole world. They were the chosen people that God used to proclaim That God is Lord of all that is who he is. He told Abraham people would be blessed through this nation, but this nation would not be the only people blessed.

Jesus' love is not limited by boundaries- He came for the Jews and the Gentiles....Let's read on to see how he responds to this mom.

28 Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

He could not have come only for the people of Israel. He came for you, and me, for the centurion, and for this mother. For the servant who was healed, for the young girl... for the person that you love who seems so far from God...

Faith is being sure what we hope for-certain of what we do not see.

This woman had no reassurance that she would get what she needed. But she had faith in this man who said he had to heal Israel first. She had faith in his goodness, even went she couldn't see it in

that moment. She understood that even puppies can lick the crumbs from the children. She had faith in Jesus, and in his love, and it led to her daughters healing.

What does that mean for us? We are here today because somebody prayed for us, told us about God's love, and

Like the Centurion and this woman- we share in the promise of Jesus. Its by grace we have been saved, Through faith, It's not anything we have done... it is a gift from God.

Eph 3:4,6 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,...**6** This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

I want to end this message by looking quickly into the book of Hebrews. It spurs us on to do the good work God created in advance for us to do...help people find their way back to him. To sacrifice our time and our talent, and our resources so that people like you and me will hear of the great love of Jesus.

That's what the gospel is! We have all said and done things that separated us from God. But God loved us so much that He sent Jesus...who lived a perfect life, died a painful death on the cross-And rose again. He sent the Holy Spirit to fill us with his power.

Today, we are called they have the same kind of faith that helped the Centurion and in this mother in the moment of truth.

They did not know what would happen. Their faith Rested in the authority in compassion of Jesus.

What will your story sound like?

Hebrews 11: 1-2 The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.

This year we have walked from Garden in Genesis and seen people of Faith believe God.

4 By an act of faith, Abel brought a better sacrifice to God than Cain. It was what he *believed*, not what he *brought*, that made the difference. That's what God noticed and approved as righteous. After all these centuries, that belief continues to catch our notice.

8-10 By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home. When he left he had no idea where he was going. By an act of faith he lived in the country promised him, lived as a stranger camping in tents. Isaac and Jacob did the same, living under the same promise. Abraham did it by keeping his eye on an unseen city with real, eternal

foundations—the City designed and built by God.

13-16 Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home...they were after a far better country than that—heaven country. You can see why God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them.

As we leave today, my prayer is that we will have confidence that God is calling us to do something that we cannot do without him.

Our faith will look different than the Centurion who believed in the authority of God, and knew-that if Jesus said his servant was healed,then he was healed.

It is different then the mom begging Jesus for the healing of her daughter because she believes the love of God was extended to the whole world.

Our faith today will look different because we don't have Jesus right here, standing next to us in bodily form the wind standing here on stage.

The good news is that God can work in our lives when we have the smallest seed of faith.

When Jesus spoke of faith he pointed to a mustard seed.

Jesus said in Matthew 20:17

Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Have you seen one before? I bought some, and put them at our welcome table. If you were here for our last series, you may have taken home a cylinder filled with dangerous prayers.

I thought you might want to add a mustard seed to that. To be reminded that our part-our belief, our faith often is so small.

And that is okay.

Not much is required, faith that is a seed so small we can barely see it. But God can- and He grows our faith.

So today- you have a chance to ask God to increase your faith.

Maybe I'll ask God to give you the faith of the Century and who could trust completely in God's authority over all things. Or maybe you will ask for Faith the trust in the compassion and love of Jesus.

Maybe for the first time you will ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life. Your mustard seed face can be placed in Jesus. You can ask him to fill you with his love, and to forgive your sins.

Maybe you are ready to take the next step of faith and be baptized. Your mustard seed of faith might give you the confidence to turn in the connection card and let us know you like to be baptized. We're having a big baptism celebration on September 11, would love to have you join us.

Some of us are being asked to share our time and talents and treasure so that Harbor can be a church that helps people find their way back to God. I don't know what your next step of faith is. But I know that God's promise to all of us is this with faith- Nothing is impossible!!!
Will you pray with me?