

# Focus

2019, Elder Gary Dieckman  
<http://www.pvillepresby.org>

In this sermon, Elder Gary Dieckman reminds us that a life of faith requires work and focus, but that if we put in the work, Jesus will be right there, ready to heal us. "And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease." --Mark 5:24-29 (Originally Preached on Sunday, August 4, 2019 at Pleasantville Presbyterian Church)

## Scripture: Psalm 11

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=431948124>

[0:01] From Psalm 11 in the Lord I take refuge.  
How can you say to me Flee like a bird to the mountains for look the wicked bend the bow.  
They have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart.  
If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?  
The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven.  
His eyes behold his gaze examines humankind.  
The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked. And his soul hates the lover of violence.

[0:46] On the wicked, he will reign coals of fire and sulfur.  
A scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup for the Lord is righteous.  
He loves righteous deeds.  
The upright shall be Hold his face, the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

## Sermon: "Focus"

[1:20] Let me tell you a short story this morning about Christian faith about my own Christian faith, actually which in the early months of this year, was struggling.  
I think the theological term for that is being in a funk,  
Yeah. The thing is, though I am witness to the healing and transformative power of Christ Jesus, I have seen it in others and I know it too. Personal experience.  
At the lowest point of my life about two decades ago, it was he who led me to this church.  
And through the love and friendship of this congregation, he gave me the strength to seek the

help that I needed.

It was actually his amazing grace that did, in fact, save a wretch like me for I was blind. But the thing is, I still do not always see, my faith, I think, can be like the ocean down deep, calm and filled with life but on the surface, often tossed by wind and wave.

And that's when the gospel stories I love so much tend to fade to lose their strength to lose their wonder. All those people with so much unwavering faith How can that be?

[2:41] The Gospels tell of a fellow blind from birth. Yet his enormous faith leads Jesus to give him sight.

If you guys literally break through the roof of a house to, lower their crippled friend down to be healed by Jesus what extraordinary faith.

But there was my funk, and I just wasn't feeling it.

And then one Sunday in March, this was about a week or two after my mom passed and other difficulties were pressing upon me. I sat down in church in the back, and I saw one of my favorite banners hanging over the piano where you see it now.

[3:24] A few simple pieces of fabric heralding yet another story of rock solid faith from the fifth chapter of Mark's Gospel and a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

## Scripture: Mark 5:24-29

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=431948095>

[3:37] Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for 12 years. She had endured much under many physicians and had spent all that she had, and she was no better.

But in fact she was getting worse.

She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak for she said, If I but touch the hem of his garment, I will be made well immediately.

Her hemorrhage stopped, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

Now endless sermons have been preached about how the woman's faith tapped into the healing power of Jesus. But I found myself at that time relating to something else in the story, touching the hem of his garment.

[4:27] The notion of merely brushing against Jesus seemed at the time, a fitting metaphor for where I was a glancing stroke of his robe as he walks by, barely touching the hem of his garment fairly touching Jesus.

So I'm sitting there during worship, pondering the banner and thinking about the story and other things when Skylar Mosenthal, called the youngsters up forward for the children's time.

And wouldn't you know what Skylar is asking them about their faith, how they relate to Jesus?

And it was Samantha **Gortsema** nine year old Samantha **Gortsema** who not only provided Skylar with an answer, but provided me with a wake up call.

You have to work hard, she said. You have to be really focused.

[5:21] That was it. I was not working hard.

I was feeling sorry for myself. I had lost my focus, like losing your focus through the telescope.

Distinct features of our celestial neighbor look like nothing more than a fuzzy tennis ball.

And, you know, for those of us who are not biblical figures of rock, solid faith but mere 20th century,

creatures of flesh and blood, blown hither and yon by churning seas while we carry the grief and despair that so often that cost our humanity,

the answer is not touching the hem of his garment, the answer is grabbing hold of the hem of Jesus garment grabbing hold of Jesus.

It's all the strength you can muster and look up, look him in the eye and say, Jesus, it's me,

You know me.

You know I need your help. Help me, Jesus!

[6:23] And the answer he will answer. In fact, he's already answered. It's the last line in the gospel of Matthew.

And remember, I will be with you until the end of the age. Essentially, I will be with you through eternity.

Think about that. The living Christ in all of human history is the only person who can make that state, and it's 2000 years.

It's been 2000 years, and he is still with us, and I don't think he's gonna be abandoning us anytime soon.

[6:59] But there is a reciprocal to this, and the challenge of that reciprocal is what to me makes Christianity.

So were the so powerful and so really.

[7:16] Yes, he will stand with us onto the end of the age.

But he never promised us a Rose garden if he promised us any garden. It's the garden at Gethsemene where on the night he was betrayed, he poured out to his heavenly father, his grief and his despair and asked,

if he could be spared the cup of pain and humiliation which he was about to drink from.

[7:44] Jesus did not take the easy way out. He focused on his mission.

He took personal responsibility for his faith. And if we are the label ourselves as Christians, we need to do the same.

He expects of us nothing less for Jesus said, knock and the door will be open onto you.

He didn't say I'm gonna open my door and stand on my porch and wait for you to walk by.

He said, seek and you will find he didn't say, Hang out of Memorial Plaza and maybe you and I will run into one another,

knock with conviction, seek with diligence, take personal responsibility for your faith and feel the glowing ember of divinity, of the living Christ within your heart.

That's what he led me to some 20 ideas ago and the uphill journey continues yet I still need to work hard.

I still need to stay focused. And thank you, Samantha. Gortsema.

In the name of our savior Jesus Christ, Amen.