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**Sermon- Children's Sunday**  
**June 18, 2017**

"If you have faith, you have everything." Those are the words written on the wall of our youth group room... and also the words of one of the most important and influential people in the development of my faith as a Methodist and as a Christian- Pastor Jean. I have questioned that quote, but it has stuck with me throughout my entire journey of faith. I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you my experience with Christianity so far, how it has evolved as I have matured, and how I see myself in the future as a result.

**My experience with Christianity:**

My family and I are originally from a state in Southern India called Kerala. We practice Christianity. But just like here in the West, there are different denominations of Christianity in India. Our family belongs to a denomination called Marthoma. As Marthomites, we claim to have been evangelized directly by Thomas the Apostle when he traveled to India after being sent out by Jesus. When my paternal grandparents immigrated to the U.S. in the 60s, they found that Methodism captured the same spirit of the fundamental parts of Marthoma- such as the open table, focus on the Bible, and service to others. As a result, we became Methodists. As I grew up and learned about both Marthoma at home and Methodist Christianity at our church, I found a lot of parallels.

All throughout Sunday School I learned all about the Bible and its many stories. Teachers like Ms. Joyce, Mr Lamar, Mrs. Panini, Mr. and Mrs. Maziarz, Mr. and Mrs. Genannt, and Nancy made the Bible come to life. Likewise, sermons from Pastor Jean, Pastor Flug, and most recently Pastor Beverly showed how I could apply those stories and their lessons to my life. That was the first phase of my faith journey. Knowing the content. Knowing the Bible, and knowing that the core of Christianity was the fact that Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our salvation, and rose from the Dead on the third day. But truly believing in that content was an entirely different matter.

**How it has evolved:**

"If you have faith, you have everything." I loved that quote the first time I heard it, but as I grew older I questioned it. As a child believing seemed easy. But as a teenager, I found myself questioning the very fundamentals of my knowledge of the Gospels. Jesus being born of a Virgin? Turning water to wine? Healing the sick? Casting demons out? Rising from the dead? How could things like that

happen when we don't have any proof except the accounts of people who lived thousands of years ago? I suppose they could happen, but how could I know for sure?

It bothered me to say the least. Everything I thought I knew... about Christianity, or about life in general... became a big question mark. I mulled over it for a long time... I figured if I thought long enough, I would just figure it out.

But as I matured in this incredible church community, my school community, and my family, I learned something groundbreaking. It was a conviction not attained by critical thought, but with observation, experience, and an innate sense within me. It was the result DOING not THINKING. It was the result of doing the 30 hour famine, taking on service projects, laughing with our youth group, having Sunday school, and living life in this community.

I realized... that faith cannot be approached only with the mind. My 7 or 8 year old self insisted everything could be solved with thought alone. By my teenage-self realized that faith was different. It must be approached with the spirit and with the heart. It cannot be explained by words.

To see proof of God and Jesus, I needed to just look up at the world around me. God and Jesus are in the acts of kindness we experience every day, the beauty of life and nature, and loving relationships. There always is the intellectual part of me that doubts, but I think that's part of being human. But to have faith is to acknowledge the possibility that we may not know the answer simply because it's something beyond what we're capable of understanding with our minds. Faith is to have the humility to say "I don't know" with one's mind, but the courage to say "I do know" with one's heart.

That is something that can't be taught, but rather must be realized. And I have this community to thank for letting me come to that realization. Thank you to our Youth Group, our teachers, our pastors both past and present, and our congregation for making me laugh until my stomach hurt, for being close mentors, and for deepening my understanding of what it means to have faith.

In the future, I see myself using my faith as a foundation in whatever I do. I see myself grounded in my faith as a Christian, yet being open-minded, appreciative, and accepting of our brothers and sisters of other faiths, cultures, and ways of life. Faith is a lifelong journey. And whenever in doubt, as I am sure it will happen, I will always remember that "if you have faith, you have everything." Amen.