

Pray First: Learning to Turn to God Before All Else

Austin Keller / General Adult

Prayer / Mark 9:14–29

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus regroups with his disciples and encounters a boy with an unclean spirit. The boy's father pleads to Jesus for divine healing because his disciples could not cast out the spirit. In compassion, Jesus casts out the spirit, and the boy is made well. The disciple later inquires about their failure, and he states that faith and prayer are necessary to initiate life transformation.

Please open your bibles to the gospel of Mark. We will be reading from chapter nine, starting in verse fourteen about the story when Jesus heals a boy with a unclean spirit.

In this section of Scripture, Christ and his closest disciples — Peter, James and John are descending from a mountain following Jesus' transfiguration. What was a glorious sight not long ago — Christ's appearance — quickly shifts to a frightening scene a demon-possessed child.

Now, let's read together of time when Christ casts out the unclean spirit from the boy in [Mark 9:14-29](#).

Lord God, we give you praise for you are never too far away from those who are helpless and needy. We, O God, are the children of man, who are sick and need cleansing from sin. Come, now, Holy Spirit, and bless us with Christ and his healing ministry. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

[The Waiting Room](#)

Last week, my wife Sarah traveled to Cass City to take Lewis to his annual wellness visit. Upon arriving at the clinic, Sarah was handed a stack of paperwork to fill out, all the while Lewis is wandering unhappily in the waiting room.

Aren't we all like my four-year-old child who strongly dislikes waiting. We often say to ourselves, "What's the point of being here?" All we want is to be seen by the doctor and so we can move with life.

But if you really think about it — isn't everyday an experience of being in a waiting room? We are waiting for something bigger, and better to come in our lives. In the meantime, we are chugging on through until we get to said place, promotion, or peace.

What if I told you, that there is something to do in the middle while we wait.

That's where Mark's gospel will draw us into today. When we are sitting in the mundane waiting room of life, your actions determine an outcome before you see the Great Physician.

The Spiritual Sickness

Looking at the Mark's gospel account, we are introduced to the main characters — Jesus, the other disciples, crowds, scribes, and a weary father with his sick boy.

Seeking medical attention for the son, the father sought the help of the nine disciples because of their previous ministry work of casting out demons. They knew they could perform the miracle, but they utterly fail to do so.

Then the father begs Jesus to show him mercy. What stands out is in verse 23 and 24.

English Standard Version Chapter 9

23 And Jesus said to him, " 'If you can'! All things are possible for one who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

Even with the father's mustered faith, Christ honors his requests and drives out the unclean spirit from his son. Whom the son sets free, he is free indeed!

But what is the spiritual sickness in the text? Is it the unclean spirit? Yes, but there's much more. The universal sickness we all share is what the disciples and the boy's father shared too. It's the illness of unbelief and a prayerlessness life.

The disciples' confidences of casting out the unclean spirit was not in God, but in them! They trusted their past experiences over the power of God. For the father, even while he slightly believed, he had trouble believing in the power of God because of all the years of terror he had to watch his son was abused by this evil spirit.

What did Jesus say? "All things are possible for one who believes"

He explaining to us is that we should never trust our former experiences (disciples) and passing time (the boy's father) to determine the future outcome of God's plans. He is able to do all things. Our sickness of doubt and prayerlessness are curable by his grace.

The Healing Medicine

What the Great Physician will prescribe to healing our sin is a healthy dose of prayer and a booster shot of faith. That's what we all need!

Especially in the seasons of setbacks and anxiety we are to look to Jesus and pray for his divine assistance.

If you live long enough you will have troubles. The right response is to not look inward, but rather to Jesus and pray to the Father for his Spirit to move you so that Christ will richly dwell within you. Then the power of God will be at work within your midst.

When Sarah took Lewis in for the check-up, the doctor found he had an ear infection. What happened next was that he was prescribed antibiotics to heal his body.

If God has told you how to heal you, then wisdom would call for actively taking your medicine.

What must we do — have faith in God and pray. It's the healing medicine to our souls. It does us no good if we remain in a state of unbelief and prayerlessness. That's why we must cry out. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

The Treatment Plan

When it comes to faith in God. I can always trust him more. When it comes to prayer I can pray more.

What I want you and I to think is that we are always in the waiting room of life. What else do you have to do there? Nothing. Other than the important stuff.

When you are ready to move on to bigger and better things, remember you are in God's waiting room. When you're there. Believe in his power and pray for everything that comes to your mind.

Prayer should be an ongoing conversation that has ebbs and flows naturally like a conversation with your family and friends.

We should be praying as the day goes by — in the car, on the phone, while we're walking etc. The more you pray, the more you'll trust God in everything. It's a holy cycle that goes upward and out to the world.

Because the biggest transformation happens when we believe and pray. That's what Jesus says, and I believe him.

Great Physician

Jesus, is the Great Physician who can heal our soul. Make us new, and cleanse us from all evil. The good news is that God sent Jesus to give us hope and the Holy Spirit, paving the way for us to have faith in God and continue in steadfast prayer throughout the week.

If you haven't already started being a disciple, my invitation is to come and believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior and express your faith by repenting and being baptized.

I will be praying for you and let's request the biggest things from God this week.

All things are possible for those who believe.

Amen!