

Faith - a costly self-denial

Mark 9:14-29

The disciples are trying to continue ministry, but without Jesus. Often when the disciples are separated from Jesus they fall into crises.

- The crowd runs to Jesus.
- His appearance is unexpected.
- They are expectant of how he will engage with the Scribes.
- They have been underwhelmed by the disciples interactions and ability to engage with the Scribes.

My son is not simply ill, but he is assaulted.

vs. 18, 20, 22, 26

Matthew 17:15, labels what is taking place as seizures (it may even have a medical explanation, epilepsy).

The point -> the disciples are powerless concerning the situation.

When all human hopes are exhausted, hope can be expected from Jesus.

It is important to understand that inability is a limitation, not a fault. And yes often we can grow through our inabilities.

Question: How do you deal with the things and areas of which you do not have the ability? Are you gracious or harsh with yourself? Do you feel the need to have an opinion about all things or are you quick to admit, "I don't know"? Do you often try and make your way through life without the awareness of Jesus' presence?

vs. 18, they (the disciples) were not able.

Jesus' response

He addresses the crowd, "O faithless generation,"

His posture is similar to that of the OT prophets who address unbelieving Israel.

Isaiah 65:2 I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices;

Notice: Faith becomes a focal point of this interaction.

vs. 20, when the spirit saw Jesus

The reaction was violent and chaotic.

Was this boy an epileptic? It is very possible, but this child's epilepsy was being used as a vehicle for evil by a malicious force.

- The mission of Jesus included confronting and defeating the powers of evil.
- Jesus has and will overcome.
- Satan himself tried to distract Jesus from his mission and at the end of that forty days, Jesus is the one who is more powerful.

Mark 3:27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

1 John 3:8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Jesus read from Isaiah, **Luke 4:18-19, 21** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." **21** And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Initially Jesus' presence and his authority is a disruption.

- At first, peace is not present but conflict
- Suffering takes place before the resurrection.
- The presence of God often produces a storm before restoration.

The focus of this narrative is not the miraculous, it is the person of Jesus. It is faith.

Faith -> trust and belief in the person of Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Son of God) who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Question: Is it possible that the circumstances of your life are actually becoming more turbulent because God is at work? Are you willing to keep your eyes on Jesus through the storm? Are you willing to wait for the restoration after the storm?

Last Week

Faith - those who act decisively on the basis of conviction that God's help is to be found with Jesus and gratefully receive God's action through him.

Faith is acting not simply knowing. Faith -> active trust that **Jesus is sufficient** for our deepest and most heart felt needs.

The father's request for his son

vs. 22, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

vs. 23, If you can!

The source of hope is the compassion of Jesus.

The compassion of Jesus is always front and center.

Mark 1:41 (CSB) Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. "I am willing," he told him. "Be made clean."

Disbelief and the absence of faith are greater obstacles than any demonic force, including Satan himself.

When Jesus repeats, "if you can" he is clearly stating the problem is not divine unwillingness or inability.

The core issue is human disbelief.

Our flesh battles against faith.

Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

"The sole bridge between frail humanity and the all-sufficiency of God is *faith*." ~ James R. Edwards, The Gospel according to Mark, The Pillar New Testament Commentary

vs. 24, I believe; help my unbelief!

"True faith is always aware how small and inadequate it is. The father becomes a believer not when he amasses a sufficient quantum of faith but when he risks everything on what little faith he has, when he yields his insufficiency to the true sufficiency of Jesus, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!' The risk of faith is more costly to the father than bringing his son to Jesus, for he can talk about his son but he must 'cry out' (for faith. True faith takes no confidence in itself, nor does it judge Jesus by the weakness of his followers. It looks to the More Powerful One who stands in the place of God, whose authoritative word restores life from chaos. True faith is unconditional openness to God, a decision in the face of all to the contrary that *Jesus is able*." ~ James R. Edwards

vs. 26, He is dead.

Faith can appear as if it has left things in a worse place.

But Jesus...

Peter, James, and John has just heard Jesus say don't speak about these things until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They were questioning what this rising from the dead might mean (Mark 9:9-10).

Now...Right Now -> Life is breathed into this boy.
Jesus has the power over life and death.
Jesus is the great redeemer, restorer, reconciler.

Ochlos / Oikos

vs. 28-29, Prayer - faith turned to God / faith in action with specific requests.

We can't produce spiritual power.

- Only God has the power and authority.
- Jesus has displayed God's power and authority.
- The Holy Spirit has been given to witness God's power and authority.

Faith is tied to waiting and trusting in God's promise to save (his power and authority).

To serve Jesus and to serve God's family (the church) is to recognize how inadequate we are as the servant. The only credit that can be given is not in self, but in Jesus!

As followers of Jesus we are inadequate. WE can't! This inability is not present to move us to shame.

I must try harder.

I must punish myself.

I must give up.

NO! Our inability to rely on self and the essential nature of total dependence on Jesus is to move us to prayer and to a deeper, stronger, and more reliant faith!

Prayer is fellowship with Jesus. As we enter into the controversy and chaos of life, faith is the pre-requisite for unleashing the power of the kingdom of God.

Question: Are you trusting Jesus to help you in your unbelief? Are you allowing shame to cripple you? How are the circumstances of life giving you the opportunity to grow in faith? Are you learning to rely more on Jesus and less on self? Is your "service" for your own glory or is it for the building up of God's family (the church)?