

Luke 9:37-45

Majesty

If you remember the passage from last week, Jesus had taken Peter, James, and John up on a mountain to pray. And there, Jesus was transfigured in front of them. His face changed, he glowed sparkling white, and Moses and Elijah showed up to talk about the Exodus that Jesus would accomplish at Jerusalem.

Peter wanted to capture that glory and keep it with them, so he suggested they build three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. But he didn't know what he was talking about, and a voice came from heaven saying, "This is my son, hear him." They were enveloped in a cloud, and then it stopped.

Now they head down from the mountain.

And when they come down, this is what they meet:

**Luke 9:37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.**

They come down and they run into a great crowd. Mark's gospel also tells this story<sup>1</sup> and he says the crowd is arguing. The scribes, some of the religious leaders, are arguing with the crowd.

(If you remember the Exodus story, Moses went up on the mountain and met with God in a cloud and fire, then came down to a crowd behaving badly. Jesus, as the true and better Moses, went up on that mountain, He was the light up in the cloud, but like Moses, also returns to a crowd behaving badly.)

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 9:14

**Luke 9:38 And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. 40 And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.”**

So a man cries out from the crowd. Here’s what the argument was about. The disciples of Jesus, who was claiming to have authority from God, are powerless against a demon. And somehow this is the cause for an argument.

And the scribes are probably saying, “It’s because Jesus isn’t legitimate!,” and the crowds are arguing.

And it was all kicked off by a man who wasn’t looking for an argument, wasn’t trying to cause trouble, but just wanted healing for his son.

His son has a demon, that does all the things that the movies associate with demon possession: it throws him down, it “shatters” him, which was a term used in the arena where people would fight with one another. This thing knocks him out like a boxer. Mark’s gospel says it throws him into the fire and into the water, trying to destroy him.

So while this has some of the symptoms of epilepsy, it isn’t just epilepsy, there’s an evil demon behind it. (Luke is not making the case that all diseases are caused by demons or that all epilepsy is caused by demons.) But this time it is. And there has been no relief.

So this father is struggling. They have had a hard life, because this demon will hardly leave his son alone. He is being harassed by this thing that wants to destroy him. This is every day.

In Mark’s gospel, Jesus asks the man how long this has been going on, and his response is “since childhood.” So this is probably a teenage boy, and since he was a child, there has been a demon trying to kill him.

And this man has heard the disciples are casting out demons, so hoping against hope for a cure he brings his son to them, and they can’t do it.

And the crowds and religious people turn this into a religious argument.

At least show some sympathy. At least say, “I’m so sorry, we can’t help you.” But instead, it seems, it becomes a gotcha moment for the religious leaders to take their shots at Jesus and his disciples. There’s no love for this man or his son, only another argument.

And we know how tired we get of everything getting turned into a political argument. In their day, everything was turned into a religious argument.

Imagine the deep sigh of these tired parents whose only son is tormented, their total exhaustion and frustration and hopelessness. And they bring him for some help which doesn’t come and the people just want to bicker.

So that’s what Jesus, Peter, James, and John step in to after a night on the mountain where the glory of God was shining, where there was fellowship with Moses and Elijah, and where the voice of God spoke. So there’s a real contrast between life up on the mountain in the presence of God and life in the valley where there’s evil, and demons, and bickering, and a lack of compassion.

But they step into it because this is what Jesus does. The whole incarnation was Jesus leaving his glory in heaven, taking on flesh, to step into a bickering cruel world that would eventually kill Him. He doesn’t need this. But He willingly steps into this for the good of His people.

And I’m sure Peter, James, and John get to taste a little bit of what it is like to be Jesus. They were on the mountain, seeing the work of God. That was what they were made for, to be in His presence and hear his voice. They didn’t want it all to end. But it ended so they could step down into the world of sorrow, and sickness, and evil, and bickering, and fear.

And Jesus, maybe with a sigh, says

**41 Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.”**

We’re not sure who Jesus is addressing here: the disciples who didn’t have enough faith, the scribes who also couldn’t cast this demon out, the crowds that are bickering. The text doesn’t say - though Jesus does, in Mark tell the disciples that this kind comes out only by prayer and fasting, so there’s something aimed at them.

But it seems that it's just a general statement: this world is so twisted and broken. The contrast couldn't be more clear - the glory of God on the mountain and the messed up world below.

And he calls their generation faithless and twisted.

And the word "twisted" there is sometimes translated "perverted." Which for us is usually describing someone who is sexually deviant - a pervy guy has one main issue that we're concerned with. But this term is broader, it just means warped, or bent.

When I was a home inspector, I'd often see weird cracks in the drywall, and in the same room the doors wouldn't close right, the windows wouldn't slide open and closed, there would be nail pops in the dry wall all on one wall. And even if this stuff was occurring on the second floor, we were supposed to look for the cause in the basement.

Often, the cause of all of these other issues was a broken foundation wall or the house not resting on the foundation. Something foundational was off, and as a result everything was twisted, everything was broken, and nothing worked. And even if you patched the cracks and fixed the nail-pops, if the house is off its foundation, the cracks will come back and more nails will pop. You'd just be playing whack-a-mole with cosmetic issues.

Jesus, who had just descended from the presence of His Father, addresses this crowd that bears all the marks of being off the foundation:

They don't love a sick kid, there's no compassion, there's no prayer, there's bickering and anger and posturing, trying to be the best, willingness to use this family's misery to win political points. Everything is broken, it is all twisted.

The whole generation is off its foundation.

What is the foundation? What is it that makes a generation not twisted, but healthy and strong?

**Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."**

Proverbs repeats this sentiment over and over again. The foundation of all wisdom, all knowledge, all insight is the fear of the Lord. The foundation of a healthy society is the

fear of the Lord, faith that acknowledges that He is there, but also acts like He's there and trembles before him. It's a desire to live life and shape society to glorify the Lord.

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And when people believe in Him and are guided by that north star, a healthy generation can be built. Without it, with some other foundation, everything we build and do will be twisted.

Our perversion is not just our sexual sins. They are definitely some of the cracks in the walls upstairs, but they are a result of being off of the foundation of faith and fear of the Lord.

Our big problem is not just our broken government. That's another nail pop.

Even the murderous racism that we saw on full-display this week with Ahmaud Arbery and the injustice that followed all comes from not fearing the Lord, not really believing in the image of God in a person, not believing that God cares that the civil magistrates carry out justice without bias or favoritism.

There are symptoms all over the house that this thing has slipped off the foundation.

Faithlessness twists the whole thing.

But remember, Jesus isn't sighing about the twistedness of irreligious people here. It's religious people - scribes, disciples. The fact that you're religious doesn't mean that the glory of God is your highest pursuit or that you trust in God at all.

And when we hear this, we should look first at the cracks and nail pops in our house. Our sins, in church, are symptoms of unbelief. Sometimes we treat ours differently - I sin in the same ways as everybody else, but it's somehow OK because I believe in Jesus.

No, all sins are evidence that, at least in the moment, we don't fear the Lord and don't trust Jesus like we should. And the fact that we claim to actually makes it worse by compounding it with hypocrisy.

Faithlessness, especially among the religious, is rampant, it's evident in our sins, and Jesus sighs over it all.

**Luke 9:42 While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.**

Here's something to notice on Mother's day:

Here's a parent, who is concerned about his son. We learn from Mark's gospel that father was struggling to believe - he's the one who said to Jesus, "I do believe, help my unbelief!"

But with his weak faith and desperation, he brought his son to Jesus, and Jesus responded.

I know we have a number of moms (and dads) at our church who are deeply concerned for their children. Not just because of sickness and all of the normal concerns, but they're worried that the kids have slipped off of the foundation. The children have strayed, and aren't trusting the Lord, and it is breaking your heart.

JC Ryle wrote this about this passage:

*"There are many Christian fathers and mothers at this day who are just as miserable about their children as the man of whom we are reading. The son who was once the desire of their eyes and in whom their lives were bound up turns into a spendthrift or a prodigal or profligate and a companion of sinners, and the daughter who was once the flower of the family and of whom they said, 'This girl shall be our comfort in old age' becomes self willed and worldly minded and a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God and their hearts are very well near broken.*

*An iron seems to enter into their souls and the devil appears to triumph over them and rob them of their choicest jewels and they are ready to cry, 'I'll go to my grave sorrowing. What good shall my life do to me now?'*

*Now what should a father or mother do in a case like this? They should do as the man before us did. They should go to Jesus in prayer and cry to Him about their child. They should spread before that merciful Savior the tale of their sorrows and entreat Him to help them. Great is the power of prayer and intercession.*

*The child of many prayers shall seldom be cast away. God's time of conversion may not be ours. He may think fit to prove our faith by keeping us long waiting, but so long as a child lives and a parent prays, we have no right to finally despair about that child's soul."*

Mothers and fathers alike, bring your kids to Jesus.

Maybe you don't have much faith that Jesus can do anything about their state at this point. Ask Jesus for help with that too - help my unbelief! In fact, your faith may be weak in part because your children have strayed for so long or you're so tired out by it. Faith can be weakened and worn out by unrelenting challenges.

Go to Jesus to help your unbelief, and ask Him to do that miracle in your child's life.

Again and again, we see Jesus responding to a parent's concern for their children. We already saw it when Jairus sent for Jesus because his daughter was at the point of death in Luke 8. A chapter earlier he responded to the weeping of a widow and raised her son from the dead.

Again and again, Jesus responds to the cries of parents for their children. And here, Luke notes that Jesus casts out the demon, and gives the boy back to his father. Jesus loves to restore broken people and broken families and make them whole again.

So keep bringing your kids to Jesus by prayer for salvation, for direction, for faith that honors God. You can't, as a mom, accomplish all you want to accomplish in the lives of your children - too many efforts to control or manipulate will only drive them away - but Jesus can do the miracle that you're powerless to do.

So Jesus shows here his concern for children.

And He shows his quickness to move toward desperation, toward half-hearted faith, toward brokenness. He sighs at the arrogance and faithlessness of the generation, but moves toward the broken and desperate one who at least has weak faith.

Verse 43 describes the reaction of the crowd to this healing:

**Luke 9:43 And all were astonished at the majesty of God.**

This is interesting. Jesus steps down into the mess of the world, into a disputatious crowd, moves toward a half-faithed man with a son that is knocked out by a demon and

thrown into a fire and into the water. And Jesus walks into the grime and sorrow of the world and heals.

And they're amazed at the majesty of God.

Which is interesting, because the same word - majesty - is the word that Peter used to describe what happened up on the mountain.

**2 Peter 1 16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.**

Peter saw the majesty of Jesus up on the mountain, in the presence of God, in the cloud, in the light, with Moses and Elijah. And Luke noted the majesty down on the ground in the midst of peoples broken lives.

So there was majesty on the mountain and majesty in the mess. Jesus exhibits his majesty - his glory, his power, his authority - in both places.

Jesus is majestic on the mountain, away from it all, and majestic in the grime and sorrow of life as he draws near to the broken.

We tend to divide into camps on this.

There are Christians who believe the majesty of Jesus is best displayed when Christians gather together for worship, when his word is taught (we bring out the words of Moses and Elijah and the apostles), we see Jesus with the eyes of faith as we worship together with Bibles open, with people singing the same confessions we're singing, away from it all.

And there are Christians who can see all of that as almost unnecessary, our calling is to move toward the poor, the broken, the sick, the struggling, and to get close to the messes - because Jesus is best made known when we move toward the sorrows of the world and bring presence and help.



The first group looks at the second group and assumes they're compromised, thinking too little of the word, and believing that it is our works, not the works of Jesus that are most important.

The second group looks at the first group and thinks, "What a waste - church services and music and buildings and thoughts and prayers and preaching when there's so much need."

But Jesus reveals his glory on the mountain and Jesus reveals his glory in the mess.

We don't have to choose between those two, there's no need to reconcile friends.

There's the majesty on the mountain and the majesty in the mess. And Christians should want to follow Jesus - when he goes to the mountain and we gather to worship and see Him in his word and the bread and the wine, and hear him sung about by his people, and press pause on all the work there is to do out there. That's important - and we can't wait to gather again for those times.

And Christians should want to follow Him toward the broken and the messes and the needs.

Christians worship Him and get away to the mountain to pray. And Christians descend from the mountain to serve. And the majesty of Jesus is displayed in both places. It isn't either or, it's both and.

And it must be - without knowing Him better from His word, without seeing his face on the pages of scripture, without relational closeness with him and his people we will lose the motivation to serve him down in the valley.

But without going down in the valley, we're like Peter wanting to capture all the glory in a tent and keep it here, when in reality our hope is that the glory will return and stay when Jesus does, not when we stay away from the messes.

He is majestic in both places, and we follow Him to both places.

Look at what Isaiah says about the nature of God:

**Isaiah 57:15 15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a**

**contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.**

God is high and lifted up, inhabiting eternity, dwelling in glory. And near to the broken and contrite.

God is in the highest place and in the lowest place.

Isn't that what the cross is - God is holy, so all sin has to be paid for. He is perfectly just, and as a just judge can't just let our sins go or let us off easy. But God is loving and merciful, so the Son took on flesh and went to the lowest place and became obedient to death, even death on the cross, so that sin could be paid for.

And there's a lot of this back and forth in Luke. We saw in Luke 9:18 where Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the chosen one of God, and then Jesus foretells his death.

Then Jesus is transfigured, but they descend into the mess.

Then Jesus heals the boy and the crowd is marvelling. And now - while they are marvelling - this in verse 43:

**Luke 9: 43 But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." 45 But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.**

They couldn't understand that a majestic God would die.

But He now headed to Jerusalem to do the ultimate stepping into our mess.

Because the big solution for our twistedness is not for us to untwist ourselves.

All of the effects of our twistedness - we are sinners to our core and our choices have all been affected by that. We can't fix ourselves because the foundation is destroyed - we are under the wrath of God with punishment to be paid.

Now religion says, "Get it together, clean yourself up, and God will accept you."

The Gospel says, “Admit your need, admit your struggles, admit your doubts, be lowly in spirit, and he’ll revive you.”

This is good news for us today. Because if you think you’re far from God, you’re not as far as you think. If your faith is weak and you sense that, then you are precisely the kind of person that God blesses.

That’s the Gospel that we believe - that Jesus came to save sinners. That it’s not the healthy who need a doctor and receive the care of Jesus, but the sick.

And the way to Jesus is not by making ourselves well, but by going broken to Christ. Confessing our sin and our unbelief and clinging to him with whatever little faith we might have. By repenting and acknowledging what all the cracks in our lives are declaring about us, that we need Him as a whole new foundation.

This is freeing.

This means that we can, and should, admit our doubts and weakness. When we admit doubts and weakness and bring them to Jesus, that doesn’t make us less Christian, but more Christian.

There’s an old puritan prayer called the Valley of Vision that says this:

***Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory. Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision. Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine; let me find Thy light in my darkness, Thy life in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley.***

## **Majesty**

### **Luke 9:37-45**

Jesus steps down from the Mount of Transfiguration into the valley where a crowd is arguing, a demon is destroying a boy, and a father is desperate. Like Moses, Jesus steps down from the mountain and confronts a misbehaving crowd. But there in the valley of despair, the majesty (glory, authority, power) of Jesus is displayed as it was on the mountain.

#### **I. The Twisted Generation (Luke 9:37-41)**

According to Mark 9:14, this crowd is arguing. The disciples are unable to cast out the demon that is destroying the boy. And Jesus accuses the whole generation of being “twisted” or “perverted,” or “warped” and faithless.

In what ways does faithlessness warp us?

What does it mean that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom?

Is it true that our sins are expressions of faithlessness?

#### **II. The Restoration of the Family (Luke 9:42)**

Jesus heals the boy and gives him back to his father. Jesus repeatedly responds to parents who make pleas to Him on behalf of their children (see also Luke 7 and 8).

What does this tell us about God’s design for the family?

What hope does it give parents of wayward children?

#### **III. Majesty in the Mess (Luke 9:43)**

When Jesus steps into the dispute and the life of a stressed and oppressed family to bring healing, people marvel at God’s majesty. “Majesty” is the word Peter used to describe what he saw up on the mountain the day before (2 Peter 1:16-18).

How do we experience God’s majesty on the mountain and God’s majesty in the mess?

How does the cross display God's high holiness and meek lowliness?

**IV. The Deepest Valley (Luke 9:43-45)**

Jesus indicates that this valley of despair is not the lowest valley He is going to go to. Soon He will go to die. Jesus, the one and only son of God, will die to destroy evil like the evil that was destroying this father's one and only son. The Son of God will die so that many sons can live.

How is the Gospel distinct from all of humanity's attempts to get to God?