



# CANYON HILLS

## COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

September 18, 2017

### **Bring It to Me**

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In just a minute, we're going to open our Bibles together. First, we're going to receive our worship in giving. It looks like the ushers are ready to come begin receiving our offering, so why don't you guys do that? Come forward now and start passing that around.

I want to just have a quick commercial for you. You might have heard it when you got here at the beginning. In a couple of Sundays, there's an event for those of you in the room today who have been coming to Canyon Hills for a little while now, maybe a few months, or maybe this last six months to a year. You're ready now to take that next step of connecting with your church beyond Sunday morning.

That's really the hardest step. "What do I do now where this becomes my church home, my church family? How do I start making friends and relationships in this place I call my church family?" Well, this event, this open house, is for you. It's September 24 and it's in your bulletin. I don't want you to miss this.

We're going to help you learn what it means and how to take that next step in getting plugged into a Life Group where this church becomes much more personal to you now. So, I hope you'll take a look at that. Don't let it slip on the backseat of the car this week. Get it on your calendar. I think you might have to register or sign up, so take care of that and do that quickly.

Let's get our Bibles open, even while we're giving of our offerings, to Mark, chapter 9, just for a little context. In case you've been traveling the last few weeks, last Sunday, right before the scene we're about to enter, we found Jesus going up on the mountainside with three of his twelve disciples: Peter, James, and John.

Before their eyes, Jesus was transfigured. We looked at that famous event in the life of Christ called the transfiguration. The Gospels tell us his face shone like the sun and his clothes were as bright and white as light. We saw Moses and Elijah alive, walking and talking with Jesus.

Then, the pinnacle of that moment was God speaking from the cloud, loud and perfectly audible and understandable, where he said to the three disciples, **"This is my beloved Son; listen to him."** It was a terrifying and magnificent, majestic display of the true glory of who Jesus Christ really is. It would ultimately lead all of the apostles to an unshakeable faith and, really, a world-changing gospel ministry.

Now, today, we're going to read... Jesus and the three disciples are going to be coming down off this mountain and they're going to find a huge crowd that has gathered around the nine disciples who didn't go up on the mountain with them. They came there to find Jesus, but since he wasn't there, they waited and hung out until he came back from wherever he was.

When Jesus comes back, we're going to see, quickly here, that this huge crowd just surges over to Jesus, trying to get as close to him as possible. Out of the crowd, a father yells something to Jesus that I think a lot of us need to hear today. With that said, let's just go ahead and jump right in. Let's stand for the reading of God's Word. We're going to pick it up in Mark 9, verse 14.

**"And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw [Jesus], were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, 'What are you arguing about with them?'**

**And someone from the crowd answered him, 'Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.'**

**And he answered them, 'O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.' And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.**

**And Jesus asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' And Jesus said to him, "'If you can'"! All things are possible for one who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!'**

**And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.' And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, 'He is dead.'**

**But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' And he said to**

**them, 'This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.' They went on from there and passed through Galilee."**

Father, I just pray that you would help us understand what this means. Just as importantly, God, I pray that you will help us believe what it means. Open our eyes and hearts, God, to a greater view of Jesus, a greater understanding of your love and compassion. Today, God, we just pray that we would be different because we came into touch with your Word again. In Christ's name, amen.

I want to first confess to you that I saw this passage coming weeks ago and I really was not looking forward to it. I knew it was coming. I wasn't sure how in the world to take this first-century reality and bring it into our twenty-first-century experience, so, as I think many of my pastor-preacher brothers do, on Monday morning, I was pleading with God.

"God, please tell me, show me what this means for us." I think God really likes that prayer of the preacher because now he gets us right where he needs us. By the time I was done with this passage, I felt like I couldn't wait to come bring this to you.

Now, a few comments here before we jump all the way in. Those of you who struggle with the idea that evil really does exist today... Those of you who struggle with the sense that the presence of evil is very real and all around us, you will tend to struggle with passages like this because you're going to surmise, as you read this, that it looks pretty obvious that this boy has symptoms of a medical issue. These are seizures. Maybe this is epilepsy or something. Yet I want to make sure you saw that the father is very quick in this passage to identify this as a spiritual issue, not a medical issue. More importantly, Jesus does not disagree with him.

Now, on the other side of this coin, I guess, is that a lot of really bad sermons come from passages like this. I've heard them, and maybe you've heard them as well, those who try to link all kinds of sickness and disease to demon activity. I just want to say the truth is sometimes the two are occasionally linked, but I would rather you hear me say today that the Scripture never forces us to assume that every medical issue is somehow connected to evil spirits. Rarely, yes, but usually very distinct from each other.

So, here's what we know. The son, the boy, cannot respond. When the demon spirits attack him, they hold the son completely captive. He can't hear anything. He can't speak. The parents are helpless to comfort their suffering son. This is really what this situation is about. This is a tragic, scary, heart-wrenching scene, and the depth of heartache is really only what a parent or a grandparent can possibly understand.

The depth of fear and sorrow in this dad (and I'm assuming the mom as well) is so deep that if you don't have a child or a grandchild you may not really feel the pain in this passage. I think just that alone leads us to something we need a reminder of today. It's very simple but very important.

1. *Evil's only objective is to destroy us.* Jesus said, in John 10, that the Devil comes to kill. He continually comes. He's always coming at us to kill, steal, and destroy. That's what Jesus says. Since we human beings are God's greatest proof of his existence and of his glory, it's important for you to know that evil is never on our side. It is always against us, always bent toward our destruction.

Now, evil manifests itself in different ways. It's not always just demon possession. Evil in our world, in our culture, more commonly manifests itself through violence, murder, rape, and drug and alcohol abuse and addiction. It comes to us through illicit sex, greed, crime, and injustice of every kind.

Evil loves to raise its ugliness and its wickedness through things like sex trafficking, prostitution, pornography, abortion, and even the distortion of human sexuality. Every ounce of evil in our world is all based in a hatred for God and a hatred for human life. So, if the Devil can get us to destroy ourselves and each other, he is fulfilled.

In this passage, the dad is watching evil destroy his son in real time, and so he brings him looking for Jesus. Jesus is up on the mountain still, and so he asks the nine disciples in this passage if they could cast the demon out. The disciples can't do it, and the dad is devastated. I'm sure the disciples, these nine disciples, are confused, because after all, they had already done this before.

If you remember back when we were in Mark, chapter 6, Jesus sends the Twelve out two by two to go out and announce that the kingdom of God has arrived, to declare that the Messiah is here. Their long-awaited King is now on the earth. Yet he also gave them authority over demonic spirits. It says when the Twelve came back, they reported to Jesus how even the demons obeyed them and they were able to exorcise evil spirits out of many people.

Here they are now with the little boy, and it doesn't work. Jesus responds to this in verse 19 with frustration, if you look. He says, "**O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?**" I believe that frustration is directed at the Nine, not just the crowd randomly. He doesn't give his disciples a pass in this situation, and so he turns to the dad and he says four words that will change everything at the end of verse 19.

Look what he says. "**Bring him to me.**" The one who weeps over death and suffering of every kind asks for the boy. Now, put yourself in this position. Can you imagine the instantaneous hope that just explodes into the heart of this dad who has been watching his son suffer? Jesus says, "Bring him to me."

As I was studying this week, this is where God first got my attention. I was wondering how many would be sitting here today who need to hear Jesus say that to you. You need to hear Jesus say, "Bring it to me." What are you grieving over? What are you frightened over right now? Is it possible you're sitting here because Jesus wants you to hear him say that to you? "Bring it to me."

2. *Jesus is still inviting us today to bring it to him.* "Bring it to me." I was just blown away as I stared at this passage. I bet I've read it a hundred times and never really stopped in that sentence. In verse 20, you'll notice they bring the boy to him, and the reaction of evil in the presence of Jesus is violent. Don't forget; Satan hates Jesus and he hates everybody who loves him and wants to trust in him.

So, they bring the boy to Jesus and the boy just goes into incredible convulsions. I think the point there is that evil doesn't let go very easily. It's not going to give up in our world very easily. Whatever the manifestation of it is in our culture today, the Devil isn't just going to walk away because we love Jesus. In fact, he's going to magnify his wickedness in any way he can.

In verse 21, Jesus asks the dad, "How long has your son been going through this?" The father says, "From childhood." We don't know exactly how old the son is right here, and I'm not sure it matters, really. We know he's past childhood, but he could be 15 or he could be 25; we don't know. I don't think it matters, because suffering is suffering. It doesn't matter how old you are. It all hurts. It all breaks our heart when we see our children or our grandchildren suffering and struggling, whether they're 1 or 60.

God has this amazing sense of timing when the preacher is in a passage that maybe, like I myself was wondering, "What in the world does this mean for us today?" It just happened to be that last week, I was at the hospital visiting one of our members who's struggling and suffering with stage four cancer, I think, for her third or fourth bout. She's heroically battling it.

When I showed up in the room this week, her parents were there. I had never seen her parents. They don't live in this state. I had never met them before. I could tell you this. I was in the room one minute and I could see and feel the pain in their eyes. I could see it. I could sense it. I could taste it as they sat at the end of that bed, helpless to comfort their suffering daughter. She's 48 years old, and it didn't matter and wouldn't have mattered if she was 4 months or 48 years. That's the scene we're dropped into right here.

3. *It doesn't matter how long; Jesus still cares.* Sometimes the struggle and suffering, whether it's in our life or the life of a loved one, goes on for long enough where we start to wonder if it'll matter if we bring it to him again. Will it really matter this time? I want to remind all of us of Lamentations, chapter 3, where it says, "**...his mercies never come to an end...**" In other words, the compassion of God has no expiration date. Jesus didn't care if it was an infant or an adult. It was this man's son who was suffering and whom evil was trying to destroy.

In verse 22, we come to this honest crisis of faith. The man says to Jesus, "**But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.**" There's a part of this man that doesn't know, and I think we can relate to him. We can relate to what he just said. There's a part of us that sometimes doesn't know. We don't know.

We're not talking about God's ability maybe as much as we don't know what God's plan is. We don't know if it will matter if we bring it to him again. We don't know if we should ask. "What if God doesn't answer again? What if God won't hear my prayer again?" So, we begin to wonder,

"Has it been so long now that it doesn't matter?" These are very real thoughts that go through our minds.

I hope we can just be honest today. If you've been a believer long enough, you've prayed a prayer that has gone unanswered, that has not been answered the way you've asked God or in the timing you've asked God. This man doesn't know Jesus personally, I can assume here, and his doubt is certainly understandable.

Jesus responds to him and his response to this guy, I think, is incredible. Jesus says, "If I can?" Now, I wish we had a video for this moment. I really do, because there are a lot of preachers who like to kind of throw in their conjecture as to how that came out of the mouth of Jesus. Some preachers will say it was sarcastic. Jesus listened to the guy say, "But if you can," and Jesus went, "If I *can*?" I've heard other preachers say, "No, he wasn't sarcastic. He was offended. It was like, 'What do you mean, if I *can*? What? Do you not know who I am?'"

Others will think Jesus said that with some kind of disappointment in the man. Like, "If I can? What? Really?" Some will say, "No, Jesus was angry. 'If I *can*? Are you kidding? Have you not heard?'" I just want to say to you that I don't think any of those are true. I think what's here is just full-on divine compassion and humility on the part of Jesus. He looks back at this man and he says, "All things are possible for those who believe."

I think Jesus wanted this man to know, "This miracle you need has nothing to do with my ability; it has everything to do with your *humility*." Immediately, the dad responds, and I like how it just says, when he said all things are possible, the father cried out and said, "I believe! Please, Jesus, help my unbelief!"

Now, what I like is what he doesn't say. He doesn't say, "Oh, I believe, Jesus. I believe in anything you want me to believe. Just fix my son. You want me to believe the sun is blue? I'll believe it. Just tell me what you want me to believe. Just fix him!" He doesn't do any of that. He just says, "Jesus, I'm having a hard time believing. Please help me."

I think he's saying to Jesus, "I don't know what I believe anymore. I don't know if God even knows my name." What a beautiful, moving display of honesty and humility. Again, my eyes just filled with tears this week because I've been there. I've been there, and people I love have been there.

"Jesus, I don't know what I believe right now. I don't know. I don't even know what to pray anymore." That's exactly where this guy is. Some of you have been there and some of you sitting here this morning are in that place where you need to honestly and humbly say to Jesus, "Help me in my unbelief."

4. *Real faith requires fighting through our unbelief.* It's not easy, and it's discouraging, especially if you've been a believer for a while. Genuine, real, growing, maturing faith has to struggle and battle through those times of doubt. We get to that place where we don't even know...

"Jesus, I don't know if I can change. Jesus, I don't know if I can forgive. Jesus, I don't know if I can stop what I'm doing that's causing so much destruction. Jesus, I don't know if I could admit I'm wrong. Jesus, I just feel like this is out of control. Jesus, I don't even know any more if it's possible for you to heal my body or my mind.

I don't know if you could fix my marriage or mend my broken heart. Jesus, I don't know if you can heal, deliver, or rescue my child or my grandchild from the suffering that's going on their life. Jesus, I don't even know what's possible anymore."

In verses 25 and 26, Jesus frees the boy. The miracle we see here is so violent that the people thought the boy had died in verse 26. They thought he just fell dead. Verse 27 is the pinnacle. It's the peak of the whole passage. Put your eyes back on it. Verse 27 says, **"But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose."** All I thought this week is, "That's what Jesus does."

He picks up our kids and our grandkids, whether they're adults or little, and he raises them up out of the suffering, the disaster, the influence, and the ugliness of evil and wickedness...whatever it is. He takes lives that are decimated and distorted and he lifts them up. Some of us know that full well about ourselves.

Now, I'm not standing here proclaiming to you that it's always when and how we hope. In fact, I would say my experience is that more often than not, the way Jesus does it and when he does it is rarely the way I ask. Can I just confess that to you? Rarely, because God's ways are not my ways. God's thoughts are not our thoughts.

I think when those things happen, God is wanting us to learn, remember, and have trust and faith that God is always about perfectly fulfilling his plan, he's always about perfectly magnifying his glory, and he's always about perfectly accomplishing what's best and good for us. In those moments when those prayers aren't answered perfectly the way we ask, it's not over.

Yet here's what we know for sure. God is compassionate, and we'll never be put to shame if we put our trust in him, even when our trust has to fight through our doubt. We'll never be put to shame. We know true faith is more about our humility than it is about God's ability.

In verses 28 and 29, there's a humbling lesson. The disciples ask Jesus, "Why couldn't we do this? We've done it before, Jesus. We tried to tell this demon to leave him alone and it wouldn't work." Jesus' answer is pretty simple. He basically tells the disciples, "You didn't pray." I don't know. Maybe they thought when they cast out the demons, back in Mark 6, it was more about them than it was about God.

I just know this lesson is something they needed to hear and that we need to hear as well. *God will not share his glory with anyone.* Jesus simply said, "You didn't pray." I think the translation for us today is that these impossible moments, you guys, these times when we have to bring it to him are meant to drive us to pray, but listen to me. They're meant to drive us to pray again, to keep praying, to pray again, and to keep praying.

I think the disciples thought they could fix the boy, and God said, "No, you can't. You won't defeat evil without me." I suppose there are different reasons why we stop praying. Sometimes we just give up. Sometimes we don't know. We don't think we need to. I don't know. Maybe we just feel it's too late.

Here's what I think Jesus is saying to us today in 2017. I think he's saying, "How long are you going to live in self-reliance? How long do you want to live in unbelief? Don't stay there. You need me. You can't do this without me. This is exactly how it needs to be right now. You need my grace, mercy, power, and strength every day. Every day. You can't go through this by yourself." I just believe Jesus is saying to us again, right now, "Bring it to me again. Bring it to me."

I guess until we admit we can't, we'll never do this, but Jesus patiently says, "Bring it to me. Just bring it to me." He doesn't ask us to figure it out. He doesn't ask us to try to get the words perfectly or the timing just right. He just says, "I know there are times when you're going to get to a point where you just feel like you don't even know what you believe. In that point, bring it to me."

This week, all I could think about was anyone who would be sitting in church this morning who has a child or a grandchild, young or old, baby or adult, and your heart is grieved as you watch them suffer, as you watch evil either destroy their hope, their life, or their joy, or you watch something, maybe sickness or disease, that they did nothing to bring upon themselves, and you're helpless. I just felt so strongly this week that God brought you here today to say to you, "Bring it to me."

In just a moment, I'm going to pray and I'm going to invite you to do something today that is very real. If you have a child or a grandchild you need to bring to Jesus, in just a moment, I'm going to ask you to walk up here and just come. In all of your unbelief, no matter how many times you've prayed before, just bring that child or grandchild to Jesus. Nobody is going to be here to pray with you. You're just going to come and you're going to pray and we're going to let Jesus do what he does best. Let's bow our heads.

Father in heaven, you knew a long time ago who would be sitting in this room. Father in heaven, you also knew the grief, sadness, and helplessness that parents and grandparents would be feeling right now. God, you knew the anger and the doubt that would be flooding into their minds right this very minute.

God, I pray you would give them courage and humility right now to trust that the same Jesus, your Son, in this passage, is the same Jesus who died on the cross for us. God, remind us that he's the same Jesus who invites us to bring it to him. God, we pray that you would do impossible things right now.

Church, I'm going to ask us to quietly stand together. Here's your invitation. Bring it to him. Any mom, dad, grandma, or grandpa, just come all the way up to the stage and just stand here with



me. God knows all the circumstances and the details. I'm going to ask that we spread out all the way around to the full sides of the stage. Go ahead. Just keep moving all the way over.

You know what? I can say God has incredible compassion in this moment because God has a Son that he watched suffer. He knows what it's like. He's not a distant, impersonal God who can't relate to the pain of a parent or grandparent watching a child suffer. So, this is your time right now. Bow your heads and bring that child or grandchild to him.

Church, I know there are lots of you standing out there for whom it's not a child or a grandchild you need to bring to him, but you have something you need to bring to him in your life. You have that same invitation, right where you're standing. You and God, just alone in this moment... Confess your unbelief. Be honest and humble.

God, all over this room are broken hearts. God, all over this room are helpless, fearful, confused, hurting moms, dads, and grandparents. God, we bring these children to you and we pray that you would lift them up. God, take them by the hand and lift them up out of their suffering, out of their sin, and out of their rebellion.

God, we ask that you would do what only you can do. God, we acknowledge how hard it is to keep believing. God, we haven't lost our belief in your love and your compassion. We just don't know, God, if we should keep coming and keep bringing, so today, we come again. God, help us in our unbelief.

Church, let's just worship together. Let's just stay right in this moment. Let's just worship with these words today.