

#61
Mark 9: 14-29
February 17, 2019

Good News: Faith+Prayer= Healing

¹⁴ When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵ As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶ “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

¹⁹ “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹ Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. ²² “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

²³ ““If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁹ He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting”

We are so glad to have the Scouts with us this Sunday. I am grateful they are here with us to worship and help lead. We all are proud of you.

Last Sunday we had a beautiful celebration of love, love of Christ and love in marriages. Because of our snow days and because of Valentine's Day I skipped the entire chapter 9 of Mark. I feel it is unfair and I would like to at least give chapter 9 one Sunday to hear and grow as disciples.

I hate to admit it, but I think my father-in-law is right. I need at least two years for going through this Gospel. As much as I desire to be faithful to the whole Bible, I am forced to pick and choose which verses I will use with the time we have. Just a warning, my next series might have to be much longer.

Chapter 9 starts with the transfiguration when Jesus was changed and was visiting with Moses and Elijah. A voice booms down from Heaven: "This is my Son. Listen to Him." It is recorded by all three synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is literally a mountain top experience. It is so good that Peter wants to stay on the top for the rest of his life.

That is not God's plan. We are expected to go and meet all kinds of people and live with them through their frustrations and challenges. There is a time to climb the mountain and linger with God having our strength renewed.

It is like a basketball game when the coach calls for a time out so the players can receive instructions and encouragement. Then it is time to get back into the game.

We are invited to take time out and see the glory of God as revealed in Jesus Christ – full of grace and truth as John says – and then it is time to roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty as we re-enter the fray of life.

All three of these gospels record Jesus coming down from the mountain to meet the crowds and face demons.

"When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶ "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked.

When was the last time you were overwhelmed with wonder? You know something is going to happen and you know it is not going to be a small thing. Something wonderful and big... What will it be? Let's start with the same attitude today as we approach to meet Jesus through His words.

Jesus sees that they have been arguing. He wants to know what is the reason. The father of the boy, answers the question. "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." His son has been pos-

sessed with an evil spirit. What does the evil spirit do? It robs you of life. It lies. It leads you to destruction.

The father first came to the disciples hoping they will be able to help. As we know from chapter 6 they have been given authority over evil spirits and had successfully cast out many demons before this incident. Why the failure now?

Mark 9:15-27 Amplified Bible, Classic Edition (AMPC)

19 And He answered them, O unbelieving generation [without any faith]! How long shall I [have to do] with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to Me.

“You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

Jesus looks at the disciples and at the crowd and tells them they have no faith. They were with Jesus all this time. Their eyes witnessed all the miracles and all the power and yet, on the time of need, they lacked faith. How humiliating it probably was for the disciples. Just think, you have done it before and it worked. Suddenly in front of all the people you cannot bring a healing.

It reminds me if you suddenly see your relative, close one, very close... like your grandchild and you cannot think of his or her name... Or you suddenly cannot remember your spouse name... By beloved... hmm, my honey... my Lithuanian friend.

Just one more funny memory. It was an Easter Sunday. Andrew agreed to start and do the opening for the worship. So he stands in front the congregation and I can see from his face that he forgot all the Lithuanian words... for few seconds he keeps trying and trying... and you know what comes from his lips: Greeting in Russian... Knowing the political relationship with Lithuania and Russia, it was not funny at all... So I just jumped from my chair and tried to make something out of it...

Disciples are already embarrassed. Like this would not be enough, Jesus tells them they have no faith. Jesus asks: “How long shall I be with you?” I want to scream back: “All the time!”. When Jesus is with me, all is good. However, Jesus is not going to always be with his disciples and today we are not seeing the historical Jesus performing miracles and hearing him preach and teach.

Does that mean we cannot heal and be Jesus to the hurting world? Didn't Jesus himself say: "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12). So what is happening?

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. ²² "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

Jesus is insulted. He repeats the phrase he just heard: "If You can." The man is talking to the creator who flung the galaxies into place, who raised the dead and eventually would rise from the dead himself. "If you can."

Jesus does not like the word "if". Let me challenge you today. I also struggle with "if". Why do you choose to believe in God? Is it just in case, in the end, we find out that everything we have heard and learned about God and Jesus is true?

Some people call this "fire insurance" to keep you out of the fires of hell.

You can look at this like a lottery ticket. It does not cost you much to believe. So if there is no God you are not out anything. It all might be true, in which case you then are a big winner.

This is not the faith Jesus is talking about. Faith in Jesus requires no "ifs".

I do not play and even watch poker. If the gambler thinks he has the best cards, he will go "all in".

The faith with "if" for me looks like a bold man with one hair. Our faith is just in case. We really not changing much in the way we live, speak and act. But we do a little bit, just in case...what if...

In the parable of the pearl of great price and the parable of the treasure in the field the person sells ALL that he had. There is no opportunity for "if".

There is no middle ground. You cannot be a little bit pregnant...Either you are a member of the Scout Troup or you are not. Either you are a disciple learning the ways of Jesus or you are not.

Are you ready to give all? Are you ready to lose all? Taking up your cross to follow Jesus to death means you gladly sacrifice everything for the reward of being with Jesus today and in the future.

How do you pray? How do you give if your faith is just "ifs"? Jesus gave His life, so we will believe. Faith demands that we live lives that look crazy to the world. We

love others so much that we can't help but care for them more than we do for ourselves...Crazy love.

We do not make time to worship God, our lives become as worshipping God.



³“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

I identify with this desperate father. I love his honesty. “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”



May it be our prayer as well. May we believe so Jesus is able to live in us and do miracles through us.

“You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

How can a deaf person hear you?

All things are possible. Jesus spoke to a deaf spirit.

²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

Evil brings death: Jesus brings life. Faith changes our lives. It radically alters what we think, speak and do.

The boy is free from the evil spirit. He looked like he was dead. Jesus took him by the hand and he was given a new life through Jesus.

This could have been the end of the story, but the disciples were troubled. So they later asked Jesus privately: “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” After all, they were able to cast out demons before and now they could not.

²⁹ He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting”. Some ancient manuscripts have only prayer, but it actually helps when in some of them we find “prayer and fasting.”

Let’s make it clear, they could not heal the boy because first, they had no faith. Second, they had little prayer. Maybe the problems the disciples faced was they were pretty successful in what they were doing so they had developed faith in themselves more than in the One who heals? Maybe they were not as dependent on the Jesus, but rather feeling pretty good how they can heal when Jesus is not even around.

Jesus said: “This kind of demon can only come out by prayer. It is hard to imagine that the disciples did not pray before. They prayed every Sabbath in the synagogue. Notice, it does not say you need to pray louder, need to say a longer prayer, be more passionate, be theologically correct.

So when some manuscripts add fasting it helps us to think what Jesus meant by prayer. Can you fast on the spot? What if prayer is more than just saying few words before a meal or saying a little prayer before bed. What if prayer becomes the way you live – Like fasting. You have to skip a meal or few to be able to say I am fasting.

The Scout motto is “Be prepared”

Prayer is how you prepare for what God will bring your way at any time.

Yes, little prayers are good. I say them. I have noticed sometimes they are not effective and sometimes I do not have time to pray when I need to respond and act on my faith.



I invite you to enter into a life of prayer. Make three reminders per day to pray. Have a verse of Scripture to help you to pray. Look for the difference of things Jesus will do through you and your faith, fasting and prayer.

I have two crosses I want to give to two people as a reminder to pray for our church, for our ministries and for me and for our church leaders. One our membership vows is that we will support the church with our prayers.

When you come next week we will ask you during our prayer time to give that cross to another person. Let's see what God will do when we truly have faith and we give ourselves in prayer.