

Sermon 9-16-2018 Overcoming Doubts Mark 9:14-32

Dear Faithful in the Lord:

Have you ever had an experience where you felt very excited and happy for several hours or for several days? Maybe it was a...

- Special trip you took on a vacation
- Wedding or graduation you attended or were a part of
- Special promotion or an accomplishment you experienced

A mountain top experience is a time in our lives that is not ordinary but extraordinary. It is a time you wish it would not end. But these special times do end. We can't stay on the mountain top forever. We must return to normal life, responsibilities, annoyances and tasks.

Jesus and his disciples had a mountain top experience literally. Jesus and three of his disciples, Peter, James and John went up on a high mountain where Jesus was clothed in the glory of his heavenly kingdom. It was the transfiguration where the disciples saw Jesus "transfigured" and "His clothes became dazzling white..."

It was a mountain top experience because the disciples saw Jesus in all his power and glory. It was like they had visited the edge of heaven.

From that mountain top experience, Jesus and his three disciples came down from that mountain to the drudgery of everyday life on earth. From the glory of Jesus transfiguration they came back down to earth...

- To face the suffering of a little boy
- To face the scribes arguing with Jesus other disciples
- To face life with all its doubts and dangers

They descended to the realities of life with all its sin and sorrow.

Life has its stark contrasts.

- We go from the beauty of worship here to find the ugliness on the outside
- We go from the glory of mountain top experiences to the boring routine of daily life
- We go from the rest and relaxation of summer to the daily grind of our fall schedules

In life we deal with our doubts as we deal with our sin, the sin of others and the temptations of the devil.

I. The doubts of disputing scribes vv14-19

A. The Argument vv14-15

Jesus and his three disciples come down from the mountain to see the other disciples in a dispute with the Jewish religious leaders. When the people saw Jesus they were “overwhelmed with wonder” meaning they were “thrown into amazement” and ran to meet Jesus. The people were overjoyed to see Jesus for they knew he could solve the dispute that was presently boiling over.

Jesus discovered what the dispute between his disciples and the teachers of the law was all about. A man brought his demon possessed son to his disciples for healing. But the disciples could not drive out the demon from the man’s son.

To be filled with chortling malicious glee

B. The teachers of the law were “arguing” with the disciples. The word means “to be filled with chortling malicious glee.” It means that the scribes of the Jewish faith were winning the argument. They had the upper hand in the dispute. The disciples were losing the dispute and the teachers of the law were enjoying the moment. The scribes were happy over the failure of Jesus’ disciples.

Unbelievers today like to see us fail.

- They like to see the Church fall
- They like to see believers fall flat on our faces
- They like to point out our sins and mistakes

As a result we often are put on the defense because of our faith.

A man in the crowd speaks up and explains what was happening with his son. Luke 9:38

- He had brought his son to be healed of a demon who had possessed him
- Since Jesus was up on the mountain top the other disciples were asked to drive out the demon
- The remaining 9 disciples could not drive out the demon who had been causing the boy to have seizures, convulsions, foaming at the mouth and teeth grinding v18

C. The Response v19

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

Jesus expresses his disappointment and pain over unbelief.

- It “hurts” God to see unbelief
- Jesus expresses his dissatisfaction over the lack of faith...
 - On the part of the nation of Israel
 - On the part of the Jewish scribes
 - On the part of the doubts of this father
 - On the part of the weaknesses of his disciples even though Jesus was in his 3rd year of teaching them.

It was annoying and distressing for Jesus to see this unbelief.

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:30

- II. The doubts of an uncertain father vv20-27
 - A. The dilemma vv20-22

This little boy’s suffering was not an ordinary form of epilepsy. The boy is brought to Jesus and the demon inside the boy sees Jesus and begins to “act out.”

- The demon threw the boy into a convulsion
- The boy fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth

Jesus asks the boy’s father: “How long has he been like this?” v21 The father describes that his son has been like this “from childhood...and that the demon has often thrown his son into fire or water to kill him.” Imagine what pain and turmoil this family had gone through. The father was desperate and tired.

The father is at the end of hope and asks Jesus: **“But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”** V22 The father’s faith had nose-dived because of the disciples failure to drive out the demon.

“If you can do anything...” in the Greek implies doubt. In our language of today this Father would say “Jesus, this one is probably out of your league, but if you can...”

We at times may be like this Father in our faith as we come to the Lord...

- More meek than might
- More timid than towering
- More like a crippled lamb coming to a shepherd than a proud lion roaring in the jungle

Lord, please run to our cries for help

If this Father's prayer sounds like ours then don't be discouraged for that's where prayer begins....as we contend with our weak frail faith at times.

- "take pity" means to "to run to the cry of"
- Lord, please run to our cries for help...
- Lord, help our distressed out family...

We, too, cry out with the same request of the Lord: "Take pity on us and help us."

Even the majestic Son of God sympathizes with our most desperate cries.

The disciples were helpless in driving out this demon.

Because of our sinfulness we, too, are often helpless in the issues and situations we face.

- We wonder about the suffering we see around us
- Instead of seeing the presence of God in human suffering, we instead focus on what we perceive is God's absence.

What is or has been your most desperate prayer to the Lord?

Though this family's situation was very grievous, it was not hopeless.

B. The hope vv23-24

Jesus responds to the father's question with his own question: "If you can?" v23

The issue is not Jesus' lack of power but the Father's lack of faith.

- Jesus is asking this father: "Do you trust me?"
- Do we trust the Lord to...
 - Help us in our time of need
 - Hear our cries for help

Jesus tells this grieving father: "Everything is possible for him who believes." V23 These are words of encouragement from Jesus.

- Faith always bows to the will of Jesus
- Faith never asks Jesus for anything outside his will

The father replies to Jesus: **"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief?"** v24

Listen to this prayer. Does it sound courageous? Confident? Strong? Hardly!

The father is asking Jesus to relieve him of his weakness of inadequate faith.

- Sometimes we come to God in desperation
- Sometimes we grapple with the weakness of our faith
- Sometimes we struggle with this old sinful nature in us. Romans 7:25

“The sea of faith ebbs and flows. Sometimes it seems easy to believe, and other times much easier to doubt.”

- We say one thing in the safety of the sanctuary but another on the street of daily life
- We may stand up and confess “I believe...” but the next day say I wonder “How do I deal with my times of weak faith?”
- “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret...” Psalm 37:7
- “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?...Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?...I say to God my Rock, Why have you forgotten me?” Psalm 42

In our weak moments of faith we have the same questions in our spirit.

The father’s response: “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief” is a prayer of faith for help. This was a confession Jesus honored.

Lord, help us in our moments of weakness and lack of trust. He comes to meet us where we are.

C. The miracle vv25-27

Jesus doesn’t want to put on a show! He heals the boy before the crowd arrives on the scene. V25 See Jesus’ power over demons as v26 describes the demon leaving the boy. “The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, ‘He’s dead.’”

The boy was not dead. V27 He was alive. Jesus has power over the natural and supernatural.

III. The doubts of the puzzled disciples vv28-32

A. The question v28 Jesus disciples want to know from Jesus why they failed: “Why couldn’t we drive the demon out?” Luke 17:20

B. The answer v29 Jesus responds: “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

The disciples failed because they put their faith in their authority rather than Jesus. Some believe Jesus is referring to different levels of demons with the words "This kind..." Matthew 12:45

Prayer is total dependence on Jesus' power. The power of prayer is in the One who hears it.

Only by complete dependence upon the mighty power of God can we take our stand against the devil.

Ephesians 6:11ff "**Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the...powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

For the disciples it would be their faith in Jesus and not their position which would make it possible to do the Lord's work.

Only the cross of Christ defeats the devil and his demons.

C. The instruction vv30-32

Jesus makes this clear. He begins to teach his disciples why he came into this world and the only way the devil can be defeated for the salvation of the world.

Hebrews 2:14-15 "...so that by Jesus' death he might destroy him who holds the power of death --- that is, the devil ---and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

Jesus resurrection is our assurance that our sins are actually paid for.

The next time we doubt or feel the weakness of our faith remember this verse:

"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deuteronomy 31:8