

Review

In our last two studies, we saw Jesus take Peter, James, and John up to the Mount of Transfiguration. There they saw Jesus transformed into an image of his glory, majesty, and deity. Moses and Elijah also appeared in glory.

The next morning, on the way down the mountain, Jesus told them not to tell anyone else about the vision until after He'd risen from the dead. Between that statement, and the sight of Elijah on the mountaintop, they were prompted to ask Jesus about the prophecies concerning Elijah and the Messiah. Jesus gave them the scoop on that, as well as once again telling them that he was going to be rejected and ultimately killed.

But, as they come to the bottom of the mountain, they encounter a strange scene.

Mark 9:14-16 **When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?"**

The remaining nine disciples are in the middle of a conflict. A large crowd surrounds them, and some scribes are arguing with them. "What's going on here," Jesus asks...

17:14-15 A Lunatic Son

Before the disciples can answer Jesus, the man at the center of the conflict speaks up. He explains that his son has grievous problems, and he came to the disciples for help.

What sort of problems? This boy acted like a lunatic (Matt. 17:15), because he was possessed with a spirit (Mark 9:17). This demon prevented him from speaking (Mark 9:17), and at times would make him scream (Luke 9:39). It would seize him (Mark 9:18), put him into stiff convulsions, making him foam at the mouth (Luke 9:39), and grinding his teeth (Mark 9:18). This spirit would throw his body into fire or water (Matt. 17:15), and would hurt him terribly before the episode would be

over (Luke 9:39).

It was a terrible thing for a father to watch his boy go through. Imagine his pain, knowing that he was utterly helpless to do anything. In desperation, he had come to Jesus' disciples.

17:16 They Could Not Cure Him

The man had begged the nine disciples to cast the demon out, but they couldn't (Luke 9:40). Our response might be, "Well, of course they couldn't. Who could?" But wait a minute! They had done this very thing before! Remember that back in chapter ten,

Matt. 10:1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

He sent them out in pairs, and they had in fact cast demons out of people. But why aren't they doing this now? What is the problem?

Jesus knew what the problem was, and it discouraged and disappointed Him.

17:17 How Long Shall I Put Up With You?

In expressing His frustration, Jesus shows us exactly what the problem was with the disciples' inability to cast out this demon out. It centered around two things: unbelief and perversion.

Unbelief is a failure to have faith and to trust in God. Oh, the disciples tried to cast out the demon, but they couldn't, because they were doing it in their own power, trusting in themselves.

And the perversity did not have to do with sexual perversion. This perversion is a distortion, a corruption. It is a deviation from the truth. Jesus had given them authority over unclean spirits, but they had twisted that into the idea that they themselves possessed the power.

Jesus knows that He isn't going to be around much longer, and they are still so far from understanding even the most basic fundamentals of the faith.

Once again, Jesus knows that if He doesn't do it, it's not going to

get done, and says to bring the boy to Him.

17:18 Jesus Casts Out The Demon

As they were bringing the boy to Jesus, the demon slammed him to the ground. Mark gives us a graphic depiction of what happened:

Mark 9:20 They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth.

Mark 9:25-27 ...He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.

17:19-21 Faith The Size Of A Mustard Seed

When the disciples were able to get Jesus alone, they asked Him why they hadn't been able to cast out the demon. He told them that the reason was unbelief, because of the littleness of their faith.

He told them that if they had even the slightest, smallest amount of faith, they could have done it. Notice that this reference to a mustard seed is not a parable, it is simply a figure of speech. Jesus is equating the smallness of a mustard seed to a tiny amount of faith. "If you guys had faith, you'd be able to do the impossible."

We could almost do a flashback montage over this statement: People worrying about whether they will have clothes or food, and Jesus telling them,

Matt. 6:30-31 "...You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'

Then the scene of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee in the midst of the storm, crying out that they're going to die.

Matt. 8:26 He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

Then, a clip of Simon Peter becoming afraid and sinking into the sea, as Jesus grabs his hand and tells him,

Matt. 14:31 ...“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

And finally, the scene where the disciples are worried that they forgot to bring bread, and Jesus telling them,

Matt. 16:8 ...“You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?”

It had everything to do with faith. With their reliance upon - and trust in - God. Until they learned to start praying and fasting, they would not learn that the power to do the impossible was not in themselves.

17:22-23 They Were Deeply Grieved

Time is running out. Jesus is rapidly advancing to the cross, and they're not getting it. In spite of all they've seen, and all they've been taught, they're not grasping the most basic concepts of faith in God and His plan of the suffering Messiah.

And so once again, He tells them clearly what the plan is: rejection, accusation, crucifixion, resurrection. But they didn't understand it (Mark 9:32), they were upset by it (Matt. 17:23), and they were afraid to ask about it (Luke 9:45).