

Mark 9:14-29

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[0 : 0 0] I was going to the gospel according to Mark. Mark chapter 9. Mark chapter 9. Our text this morning will be verses 14 through 29. Mark chapter 9 verses 14 through 29 as we just continue to make our way through the gospel of Mark. The shortest gospel that we have. We know that we have four gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Of those four there are three synoptics Matthew, Mark, and Luke. That is they share so much in common.

About 90 to 95 percent of what is found in the gospel of Mark can be found in either Matthew or Luke or in both of those. So we know that Mark is not unique. John is the gospel that we have that is so unique and different than any other gospel account.

We know that Mark's favorite word is straightway or immediately or right away depending upon the translation that you read. And he tends to move fast. But it is seeming that it is taking us a little bit of time to go through this brief gospel account.

I think that I have probably spent as much time on Mark as I have any other book. And I am amazed at our study of it when we come to things that Mark is very detailed in, very pointed in.

And he gives a little bit more insight even than some of the other gospel writers. The account before us is one such event. For the fact that Mark speeds up in so much of what he's writing.

[1 : 2 5] There are no great discourses of Christ found in the gospel of Mark. There are no great times of teaching. He is showing the wonders of who he is. The son of man who has come to serve. Not to be served. But to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mark chapter 10 verses 45 and following. But we understand also that Mark, while he's not caught up in great discourses for his intended audience, there are some matters that he gives more details in.

And so we pay a little bit of attention. The one that we have before us is one such manner. It is one that can be found in all three of the synoptics and it is found in the same place. That is immediately following the transfiguration.

When Christ is up on the mountain and he has the three with him up there and he makes his way down on the next day. He encounters what we are going to read in just a moment.

All three synoptic gospels include that. They all three have the kind of main theme, if you will. But Mark alone gives us a little bit more insight and detail as to what's going on.

[2 : 3 2] So hopefully we will be able to see that. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together this morning. And we read the gospel of Mark chapter 9 starting in verse 14.

We will read down to verse 29 and then we will pray. 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 him? And one of the crowd answered him, teacher, I brought you my son possessed with a spirit which makes him mute.

And whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told your disciples to cast it out and they could not do it.

And he answered them and said, oh unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me.

[3 : 32] They brought the boy to him and 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. And he asked his father, how long has this been happening to him?

And he said, from childhood, it has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us. And Jesus said to him, if you can.

All things are possible to him who believes. And immediately the boy's father cried out and said, I do believe, help my unbelief. When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, 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 a terrible convulsion, 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.

And when he came into the house, his disciples began questioning him privately. Why could we not drive it out? And he said to them, this kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.

[4 : 39] Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the glories of our gathering together. And we praise you that we have the opportunity to fellowship and to celebrate and to rejoice in all that you're doing among us.

Father, we praise you that we can come now and read your word and hear your word. And we ask that you would give us eyes to see it. Minds to understand it. Hearts to accept it. And lives to live it out for your glory and yours alone.

We ask that the truth of scripture would be revealed to us by the spirit that dwells among us. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

What an account we have before us. I will say this in the beginning because I'm sure that some of you are reading from other translations. I read from the New American Standard.

There are many great translations out there. Sometime, probably after the first year, we're going to go into some teaching things during the Sunday school hour. And one of the things we'll cover, just kind of a, I guess, an unashamed plug.

[5 : 43] One of the things that we'll cover during Sunday school hour, we're going to start doing maybe short, multi-week teaching sessions. And one of them will be the Bible and why we can trust and how we got it. Okay? So that will be times where I give that kind of information of why I use the New American Standard and things like that.

But there's some great translations out there. And I'm sure that when I read that last verse, some of you said I left a word off because it says prayer and fasting in your translations. I don't want to bend you out of shape.

So don't throw anything at me quite yet. There's nothing wrong with fasting. But the earliest manuscripts do not contain the word fasting. So most Bible scholars are in agreement that the word fasting was added when it was translated into the English language because the church promoted fasting in such a fashion, in such a manner at that time in history.

So fasting was not necessarily the mandate, though there is nothing wrong in the world with combining fasting with prayer. As a matter of fact, Christ says when you fast, not if you fast.

So just understand that. Don't really throw anything at me yet. We're just trying to be as true to the original language as we can have it because prayer is the focus there, not the activity of our fasting.

[6 : 50] But anyway, now let's get back to the message and we got that plug out of the way. I want you to see this morning from our text what it looks like to overcome unbelief. Overcoming unbelief.

And we see it here for us very clearly in the passage. Let's jump right into it. First, we see the problem that must be addressed. The problem that must be addressed.

When we read passages such as this, it is our natural tendency, and it is not a wrong tendency, to focus on one primary issue. And too often what we focus on is not necessarily the main theme of the text before us.

Now, you need to understand this. Any passage of Scripture, no matter what anyone tells you, no matter what anyone may try to convince you of, every passage of Scripture has but one great truth.

There is but one great truth to every passage of Scripture. That way, you cannot read a passage of Scripture and say, well, here's the truth that I have found. And someone else read the same passage of Scripture and say, well, I see this truth.

[7 : 49] There is but one great truth in every passage of Scripture. Now, that truth can have myriads and myriads of applications. That is, how we live that out. There are some great truths found within the passage of Scripture, and applications could resound as to how we live out that truth.

So, we are seeking to know the applications of the truth because that's how we live. But our mango ought to know what is the truth of the passage. There are a number of things that are true in this passage.

There are a number of things that are absolutely real. We know that it's true in this passage that the disciples that remained at the bottom of the mountain were in an argument with the scribes. We know that there was a man who brought his son who was demon-possessed, and he often foamed and convulsed at the mouth and had done a lot of other things.

We know that as soon as that boy saw Christ, things changed. We know that the Father brought him to the right person at the right time. But is that the main problem that has to be addressed in the passage we have before us?

Because too often when we read passages like this, our focus is on the demonic. And the reason our focus is on the demonic, if we just want to be frank, is because it's not something that we're very familiar with, and it's something that kind of catches us off guard.

[8 : 59] And it's something that we would maybe find not necessarily a fascination with, but an unfamiliarity which causes us to focus on it more than we ought to. And we look at this and say, well, there was a demonic boy, and Christ cast out the demon.

And that is true. That is an absolute truth. But the reality is, is that demonic activity in the passage, while it is given attention by Christ, it has not made the focus of Christ.

He acknowledges its presence in the reality and says, yes, get out of him. But he doesn't focus on it as the main heading. He doesn't focus on it as the reasoning for being there.

Matter of fact, if the demonic activity was the focus of the passage, then we would expect that as soon as Christ came down the mountain, then that would have been brought to the forefront, and that would have been the very first thing that he would have addressed.

But throughout the passage, we don't see that. It tells us that when he came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and the scribes were arguing with them.

[9 : 59] So there's an argument that's going on, and things are happening around them. And Jesus asked, what are you discussing? What are we talking about? And then we find the man shows up and says, I brought my boy. And we understand the account.

But notice what Jesus says. Notice the rebuke that he gives, and it helps us to understand the main problem. And his answer is, oh, unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you?

Oh, unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? Now, in context, the man has just told Jesus, I have a son that is possessed by a wicked spirit.

But the first people that Christ addresses is not the son or the father. The first thing he addresses are the unbelieving generation, which most people understand, and I believe so, that he is addressing the disciples and those among them.

He's not just talking about the world out there, but rather he's talking rather pointedly to his disciples. And why would he be speaking so pointedly to his disciples? Well, because the argument going on with the scribes is because, we find out later, the lack of faith that existed in the disciples.

[11 : 19] We find in the Gospel of Matthew that when they ask the question, why couldn't we cast them out? He says, because you had little faith. Right? You had little faith. And if you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, be cast into the sea.

And it would be. It would obey you. And so we see the smallness of the faith of the disciples, those who had traveled with Christ, those who had walked with Christ, those who had lived with Christ, those who had been empowered by Christ.

By this time, he had already commissioned them and sent them out to do what? Cast out demons and to heal the sick and do everything that he had been doing. They had already done this in the days past.

Now, Peter's already made the great confession of who Jesus is. But now at this moment, this critical moment, they are failing to do the very thing that they were sure they could do. And Christ rebukes them for their lack of faith.

I would say that in this passage before us, the main problem to be addressed is the unbelief that exists too often, not only among the people of the world, but among the people of God.

[12 : 24] It is the unbelief that is prevalent. Though Christ had lived his life with them, though he had walked with them, he had commissioned them, he had empowered them, he had ordained them to be his messengers, and yet they were still living with a manner of unbelief.

Charles Spurgeon once said, Jesus never once said, O sick and lame and hurting world, how long shall I be with you? He never once rebuked those who came to him in their problems and their sickness and in their fallacies and all the problems that were going on.

He never once rebuked anyone. He didn't rebuke Mary and Martha when Lazarus was sick and dead. He didn't get on to them. He didn't say anything to the widow whose son and name was being carried by the coffins.

He never once complained that he was dwelling among a people, but his sole rebuke is given to the unbelieving generation. And the one thing that we find in Scripture that limits his work, or that he chooses to allow to limit his work, is that when we find when he goes into Nazareth, his hometown, he did nothing there for their lack of faith, their unbelief.

When we go into the book of Revelations and we find all these atrocious sins, these things that we expect would condemn people to the lake of fire and the everlasting departure from the presence of God, and we see all these things that are just hideous and the manslayers and the whoremongers and all these other things, these idolaters and these fornicators, and then we find that word at the end of that passage that says, and the unbelieving, and the unbelieving.

[14 : 03] And what really is the problem here is that even those who have walked closest to Christ are still struggling with unbelief.

And he's seeking to address that problem in their life and in the lives of those around them. Why?

Because their unbelief has now given an opportunity to the scribes to condemn them and to argue their profession. Why were the scribes arguing?

Because I promise, if they had been walking in faith, and if when the father shows up with the son, by the way, I'm not really sure that it would have happened this way anyway because we see this as kind of a name it and claim it.

I told them to cast him out, and so that seems kind of misled, misguided anyway, but in the omniscience of God, we can understand that. But if they had been walking in faith, then the scribes would have had no argument to bring before them.

[15 : 04] If by the power and presence of Christ who had dwelt among them and the anointing that had rested upon them. But yet it is the unbelief. We should not be amazed when we find unbelief in the world.

But what is amazing is when we find unbelief among the people of God. And we see doubts and fears and those things which capture them. As we've said before, we're not surprised when sinners act like sinners, but we ought to be amazed when saints do such.

And here the problem to be addressed is not the demonic activity that is existing among them because, my friends, I am of the persuasion that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities that they are in the spiritual forces of darkness.

And there is a spiritual realm around us that is equally real as the physical in which we dwell in. That is not to get too spiritual about it. That is not to get caught up in it because the one thing that we need to do to strengthen ourselves against it is to help our unbelief.

Our unbelief. It is the problem to be addressed. Secondly, we see the presence that is desperately needed. As the disciples were there and arguing with the scribes, it says, And Jesus walked up to them and immediately, it tells us, When the entire crowd saw him, they were amazed.

[16 : 25] Again, we pay attention to because they were amazed by him. This is the same crowd, by the way, that has ridiculed and mocked him in the past. And now, because probably of the glory that is still radiating from him when he comes down from the mount, much like when Moses came out of the presence of the Lord God Almighty and the kind of glory shone upon his face and the Israelites were amazed, when Christ comes down from the mountain revealing who he is, his deity to humanity, the presence of Christ amazes them.

They are amazed. And they began running up and greeting him or, as the King James says, saluting him and coming up before him and talking and discussing with him. And it is the presence of Christ that transforms everything because before Christ gets there, we have doubt and argument.

When Christ arises, we have amazement and faith. And it is the very presence of Christ that makes all the difference in the world. And when Christ shows up, he asks the question and the man steps forward and proclaims the reality of what's going on.

And Jesus says, bring him to me. And it is the very presence of Christ that is going to change any manner of things, which, by the way, we understand that. It is Christ in us that is present to do the work that he desires to do among the people around us.

It is not we ourselves. It is not that anyone could come up to Billy Joe and say, Billy Joe, do this. But rather, it is the presence of Christ who dwells within us that overcomes the world. And it is he that is in us that is greater than he that is in the world.

[17 : 53] And it is his presence that is absolutely needed because his presence changes everything. And it is the manifest presence of Christ among the people of Christ that is really needed in the world that is so ransacked by sin and desperation.

Others may fail us. When the Father brought the Son to the disciples and told them to cast him out, they could not. But Jesus never will because his purposes and plans will be carried on.

And we see that it is the presence of Christ that changes everything. My friend, as we seek to be present in the world, may it be the presence of Christ among us that really transforms the society that we are in.

Third, we move quickly through the passage and we see the pain that was allowed. This is almost something that we wish wouldn't happen, but it is the pain that was allowed. What does it tell us? Jesus says, bring him to me.

So when they brought the boy to Jesus, it says, and when they brought the boy to him, in verse 20, when he saw him, that is when the boy saw him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth.

[19 : 10] Now, we have already learned from our passage that this is a result of demonic activity. And that oftentimes, this demon, we'll find out in just a moment, will throw him into the fire, into the water.

But this is the problem, right? Or we would think this is the main problem and it has been brought to Christ. And as soon as it comes into the presence of Christ, this demonic activity takes place again and the boy goes into a seizure.

And it's horrendous. And our natural response would be, well, the compassionate Savior, at the moment that he sees it would take care of the problem. But what is astounding from our passage is that while this is going on, Jesus interviews the Father.

That while this is taking place, rather than stopping it, why? Because Jesus understands in his sovereignty that the pain has a purpose in the Father's life and in the lives of the apostles.

And it has a purpose in the lives of those around. But he also understands that the pain will not result in death for the giver of life is there. But he doesn't instantly, immediately remove the pain.

[20 : 21] As a matter of fact, he lets it get to a critical position. When he asks the Father how long has this been going on, he says, from childhood. And he tells him, and he says, but if you can do anything. And that's showing a little bit of faith.

And Jesus returns the question and says, if you can. You notice what he's doing. Now think about it. It's just the way I think. Maybe my mind's a little bit different, but this is how I think, okay? You have the boy who's sitting over here in this horrendous seizure.

He's foaming at the mouth and he's twirling around and the demon's having all of his work. Jesus even acknowledges this as demonic activity. But the whole time, Christ is focused on the Father. Why?

Because he knows the greatest problem is not the release of this boy, but the faith in that Father. He says, if you can. Anything is possible to those who believe.

And he allows this pain to get to a point of desperation. Why? Because the Father came the first time when his boy was walking beside him and said, my boy has a problem.

- [21 : 24] And he tells the disciples, he said, I told your disciples to cast it out. Jesus let that boy's problem come to fruition in his presence. And he let the pain become so real that the Father cried out with what little bit of similar faith he might have had.

Which kind of this, I think you can or if you can. And then he used that pain and that moment of desperation when the Father was identifying if you can help us. Right? If you can help us.

And he identifies with the problem that's going on here. And the pain is so real because he has the love of a father towards his son. And the pain becomes real to him. And now he's crying out in desperation.

And Jesus says, now I've got you where I need you. Now this pain has brought us to a place where maybe we can use this to deal with the main issue that's going on.

It's not that I don't have the ability to do this. It's that you don't believe I can do this. He says, I do believe.

- [22 : 25] Help my unbelief. Then Christ speaks. I love this, by the way, just a complete side note. But I love this. Do you notice how Jesus addresses the demon that's in the boy?

And Jesus spoke to him and said, you deaf and mute spirit. Do you see that? Now if you're talking to a deaf and mute individual, they don't hear you.

And the spirit that Jesus is speaking to, he himself declares is deaf and mute, but he speaks to it anyway. Why? Because it has nothing to do with the spirit. It has everything to do with those who can hear, those who are present.

He's helping the unbelief of those around him. He could have just looked at the boy. He could have cast the spirit out. He didn't have to say anything. Why?

Because even those that third of the host of heaven that rebelled against the holy God and were cast out and Jesus said, I saw them falling like stars from the sky. Even those are subject to Christ.

- [23 : 33] He reigns over them. He didn't have to speak to a deaf and mute spirit who couldn't hear him, but yet it responded to him and he did it for the sake of those who were hearing. Much like on the mountaintop when God, the father said, this is my beloved son, listen to him.

He didn't say it because Jesus needed the affirmation of the father. He said it because Peter was saying we need to build three tabernacles and it was to remind Peter that these people are not on the same field.

There is but one and now we find that Christ is helping the unbelief even through what he is teaching and this pain has a purpose and this pain was to bring glory in the faith that would be formed in the father and of those around him.

Fourth and finally, we see the prayer that must be because we see there is a problem to be addressed. There is a presence that was desperately needed in the presence of Christ. There is the pain that was allowed for a moment.

We see there is also prayer. The boy is not as extreme that most people believe that he does until Jesus touches him and raises him up and then they leave and we know nothing else about the boy.

- [24 : 43] We don't know his name. We don't know his father's name. We don't know anything else. Why? Because they are not the focus of the account. John tells us in his gospel that Jesus did so many miraculous deeds that the books of the world would not be able to contain them if they were all written down.

This was just an everyday occurrence. I remember reading a book by Nick Ripken. It's called *The Insanity of Obedience* and I don't know maybe I've shared this with you before but Nick Ripken was going around the world interviewing underground church members in close to the gospel places meeting with these church leaders and these pastors as they were pastoring in difficult places and he was hearing accounts of how Christ was working in their life.

These pastors would be gathered around him and they would declare these wonderful things miraculous deeds that God was doing and how he was protecting them preserving them how he was meeting their needs and Nick asked a question one time in that setting this room filled with pastors and he said what you guys are telling me is amazing.

Have you ever considered writing down all the miraculous deeds God has done for you? And he said and the room went silent and one of the pastors finally spoke to him and said Nick when you get up in the morning and you make your coffee do you look out the window and see the sunrise?

He said yes. He said in the evening do you see the sunset? He said yes. He said the sovereign work of God is such a normal thing among us that we think no more of the miraculous deeds than you do of the wonder of his sunrise and sunset.

[26 : 35] That when God is present and he is working we should not be astounded because he declares his glory among us in various ways that it's never the miraculous event that is the focus of our attention but rather it is the God who dwells among us who should be the focus of our admiration and adoration.

And Christ here doesn't disclose the names but we do find the way in which we shall live because when the disciples are gathered with him back in the room they ask a question why could we not help this man?

When the disciples came into the house it tells us the disciples began questioning him privately why could we not drive it out? And Jesus declares to them he said this kind cannot come out by anything but prayer it's not that it was just a unique kind but he was encouraging them that you're going to reach matters in your life things that will declare the glory of the Savior that will proclaim the worthiness of faith in him but in order to be prepared for them in advance you need to maintain your relationship through prayer prayer prayer is that lifeline of the believer communing with the Father continuing to encourage them in their walk it is not a magic genie but rather it is a holy environment of building faith it is there where we cry out and say

I do believe Father help my unbelief it is there where we sit silently and say I trust you for a little I want to trust you for much this is why Paul says that we ought to pray about everything that we ought to lay it before the Father and we ought to be there why because friend listen to me you never know when you'll come into contact with that kind someone you meet will need you to be walking in such belief that has been undergirded through being in the presence of the Father on a daily basis that you'll be able to help them in their moment of need not because it is your work because it is his presence that you would be walking in such fellowship with the Savior that when you're there he is there as well that the need of their moment and the need of their life will be met because you're there and there will be no argument or discussion is Christ worthy of being followed because they would have encountered one who has just spent time with him one who has just come out of the closet so to say one who has been in his presence in such a manner that they know that he has just stepped out of the glories of heaven to come meet them in the slums of this world it ought not to be our last chance but it ought to be our first commissioning because we never know when one of that kind will show up before us and we ought to be ready and we ought to cry out

Lord help us to overcome our unbelief because mark my word friends someday when your testimony resounds someone will ask you to do something that you do not have the power to do but he that is in you does and it is then that you are positioned to give all glory to the Savior because you can say I don't know how to do that but I was just talking to someone who does let me help you out I've been with him I know him how do you ask me how I know he lives well I just talked to him and he lives within my heart let's pray father we thank you for the day we thank you for the glories of your word and I pray that we would be the people of your word for the glory of the Savior we ask it all in Jesus name amen