

Help My Unbelief

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[0 : 00] Welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace. And no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we turn back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and his life and his death and his resurrection. And when we were in the first half of the Gospel, chapters 1 through 8, I would tell you over and over that we had two questions.

Who is Jesus and how do we respond to him? And those questions are still relevant, but as we make our way into the second half of Mark, the question really is, what does it actually look like to follow Jesus?

We saw before in chapter 8 that Peter had one idea of what it meant for Jesus to be the Christ, and reality was actually quite different. We're continuing that theme this morning as we're in Mark 9, looking at verses 14 through 29, as we are continuing to ask this question of what does it look like to have faith?

[1 : 16] What does it look like day to day as we follow after Jesus? In this passage, we're going to see two different pictures of unbelief. So two negative examples that are going to help us understand positive application for what it means to walk after Jesus in this world.

And I'll tell you at the beginning what those are. So there's two types of unbelief. First of all, the disciples have too much faith in themselves. The disciples have way too much faith in themselves. The second type of unbelief we see in the father of this boy, which is too little faith in God. Too much faith in ourselves, too little faith in God.

It's with that that I'm going to invite you to turn with me to Mark 9, starting at verse 14. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn in your worship guide.

No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. And God tells us that his Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and that it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb, which is why we read now starting at verse 14.

[2 : 26] 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 him, 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.

Verse 19. 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.

[3 : 28] 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.

[4 : 39] I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you again that you speak to us.

We ask that you would do that this morning by your word, that you would show us our need for your grace. You'd show us how you meet and supply that need.

And most of all, that you would show us Jesus Christ with more beauty and clarity than we've seen before. That you would grow our love and our affection for him and our reverence and our awe for him.

And we ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. If you remember last week from the beginning of chapter 9, we had the transfiguration where Peter and James and John had this vision of what Jesus truly was in all his divine glory.

He had this light that was shining from inside of him that glowed all the way through his clothes. And so after they'd heard Jesus telling them about the suffering of the Christian life, they also were able to see how great and glorious it would be as well.

[5 : 52] That it would not just be following Jesus in suffering, but also following him in victory. It's after that story that we enter into this one, verse 14, and when they came to the disciples.

In other words, they have come down from this glorious vision of Jesus, understanding who he is in all of his splendor. And immediately they experience this whiplash.

Because on the one hand, they have seen Jesus alone on the top of the mountain. On the other hand, they walk right back into a problematic situation. They saw a great crowd around them and the scribes arguing with them.

And so they go from this glorious vision into a headache-inducing situation. Peter, James, and John are probably wondering where their Tylenol is as they come off the mountain.

Okay. Jesus has come, though, in the midst of this argument, and there appears to be a new distraction. Verse 15, all the crowd, when they see Jesus, they pull away from whatever this great argument was, and they're amazed just that Jesus is there with them.

[7 : 03] Of course, Jesus, as always, is a question asker. Verse 16, and he wants to know, what is this that all of them have been quarreling about while he has been up on the mountain?

They don't get a direct answer, but we find out in verse 17, it must have something to do with the fact that the disciples have been trying to heal this boy, this son, and they've not been able to.

And it's the father, unsurprisingly, that speaks up. Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. Verse 18, so I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.

Now, if you're familiar with the gospel of Mark, if you've been with us, this should be very surprising. We should be confused as we hear that the disciples are unable to perform this healing, because we saw Mark chapter three.

Jesus chose them for two reasons, that they would preach, and they would heal and cast out demons. This is what they've been called to do. Not only that, Mark chapter three proceeds into Mark chapter six, where Jesus sends them out two by two to do that very thing, to preach and to heal.

[8 : 20] And remember, they come back so excited to tell Jesus the stories of what happened while they were out. So the obvious question for us is what has happened?

Why is it that the disciples who are trying to fulfill the mission that Jesus gave them, who have been able to succeed so well in the past, fail at this point?

Thankfully, Jesus doesn't leave us to wonder. He gives us our first answer in verse 19. And he answered them, Oh, faithless generation, how long am I to be with you?

Now, Jesus uses the word generation here, which means that he's most likely speaking of more than just the disciples, but certainly not less than them, because it's their unbelief, their faithlessness, which has led to this situation where they're trying to heal, and they find themselves completely incompetent.

Of course, that would make us to ask, well, what is it that the disciples are doing differently this time? Why is it that they were able to have faith last time, but not this time? Jesus gives us the final answer in verse 29, when the disciples want to know, why could we not cast it out?

[9 : 37] And he said to them, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer. Why is it that the disciples were unable to heal in this situation?

The answer is very simple. They forgot to pray. In other words, the disciples thought that they were really hot stuff.

And they had decided that they were great enough and powerful enough that they would be able to do this on their own. They had forgotten that Jesus was the source of their power.

They had forgotten how dependent they actually were on him. They forgot that they needed God's help. The point, brothers and sisters, is this.

There are blessings and power from God that we do not have because we have not prayed. There are blessings and power from God that we do not have because we have not prayed.

[10 : 48] You could put it in the opposite. There are blessings and power from God we will not have until or when we pray for them.

James chapter four says the same thing. You do not have because you do not ask. Now this raises a question, which is why has God set up the world so that it works in this way?

Why wouldn't he just set it up so that we would know that we belong to him and we could go out at that point and have all the power and the blessings that we would need without having to return back over and over again to answer him in prayer?

Well, the answer part is that not that God is punishing us, but that he is protecting us. It is not that God is punishing us. It's not that he's angry and upset that people won't pray or he's trying to be withholding until people come and beg him like some vindictive God.

No, he wants to protect his people from what is most dangerous to them. And what is it that is most dangerous? It's the idea that we don't need God.

[12 : 00] Look with me on verse seven of your worship guide. Tim Keller spells this out for us in his book on prayer when he tells us, God often waits to give a blessing until you have prayed for it.

Why? Good things that we do not ask for will usually be interpreted by our hearts as the fruit of our own wisdom and diligence. God wants to rescue us from the self-sufficiency that leads to overconfidence and sets us up for failure.

In other words, we are in deep trouble if we believe that our gifts and abilities operate without God's help. In another place in that book, Keller says that it's prayer that actually makes God's blessings and his power safe for us.

They no longer present a danger. Now you might be wondering why and how could blessings from God present a danger to us? Well, I want you to think about it this way.

Let's say we had an amazing revival here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and within a certain matter of weeks, our attendance doubled and we were having two or three baptisms a Sunday of soldiers from Court Carson and people from our community who were coming to know Jesus Christ and we had never prayed to God for revival.

[13 : 23] What would be the danger? We'd be tempted to go around telling other churches about how we had figured out the secret and if they could just copy us in the way that our building looked and the way that we ran marketing and the times that our Google reviews were great, then they too could be like Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

In other words, we would praise ourselves rather than God and that would be a great danger to us. Imagine how dangerous it would be if you saw all of your dreams come true for your children and they experienced no obstacles in this life but instead went from strength to strength and received blessing after blessing and you had never prayed.

What would the danger be? That you would congratulate yourself on how smart and wise and gifted you are as a parent and if other parents could just be as great and wonderful as you, then they also could have success.

It would praise yourself rather than God. Imagine how dangerous it would be if you had victory over sin and temptation and suddenly your life was free of so many of the things that tied you down and you had never prayed.

What would the danger be if only other people could be as great as me? God loves you too much to allow you to live a life filled with smug success disconnected from him.

[15 : 13] God loves you too much to allow you to live a smug life of success disconnected from him.

What could be worse than to be incredibly successful and powerful and far away from God? God loves you too much. God loves you too much. God loves you too much. God loves you too much. God loves you too much. God loves you too much. God loves you too much. What does it gain a man to have the whole world and forfeit his soul? And so what do we do as Christians in 2022 at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church?

The disciples set a negative example for us to flip it to the positive. We cry out to God in prayer knowing that he has set up the world in such a way that that is how we access his blessings and his power.

And when we see him answer, those blessings do not lead to pride. They lead to praise. When God answers, his blessings for us lead to praise, not to pride.

[16 : 29] Because when we prayed, we made it safe. We said, look, we know that if and when this happens, it is not because we are great and glorious and powerful, but because God is.

That is why God has set up the world that his blessings come through our prayers. Success without prayer leads to pride.

Success with prayer leads to praise. God wants us to trust him and praise him more than anything else.

That is why the disciples were unable to heal. What do you need done that you thought you could do on your own?

What blessings and power from God did you think you can generate by yourself, but instead you need to pray about?

[17 : 39] God invites his people to come to him and bring their requests. And he delights to pour out his blessings. We're going back to the 101 of the Gospel of Mark.

Remember I told you so many times, neediness is the price of admission. And the way God's people show their need is by coming to him in prayer.

We've seen the disciples here, they trust too much in themselves. But our main character in this passage is actually this father of this son, this boy who has too little trust in Jesus.

If you look with me at verse 22, you notice he is low on confidence. We've heard about how traumatic it is for this child and the things that he's experienced.

And this father says to Jesus, but if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Now the word, problematic word for him there is if.

[18 : 48] He stands in contrast to the Syrophenician woman we saw in Mark chapter six. Remember, Jesus tells people that she is a woman of great faith.

Why was her faith so great? Because she believed that Jesus could. That's why she said, even the dogs get to eat the crumbs from under the table, right? She keeps pushing because she knows the character of Jesus' power.

One aspect of faith is our level of confidence in God's power. One aspect of faith is whether we really truly believe that God can do what he says he can do.

This man fails to meet that mark. He says, if. If you can do this, maybe have some compassion on us. And so perhaps he believes more in Jesus' compassion than his power.

That helps us understand Jesus' statement here in verse 23. Jesus is understandably upset. He repeats these words, if you can, all things are possible for one who believes.

[19 : 58] In other words, what's standing between you and this healing has nothing to do with the limits of my power because they have none. What is standing between you and this healing is whether you believe that I am the king of the world because everything is possible for one who believes.

Now we have to talk for a minute about this promise. We could potentially put this under the category of hard sayings of Jesus and it could be easily used or abused, I should say, to shame people.

We might say, well, Jesus makes this promise that if you have enough faith, anything's possible. So clearly, X has not happened in your life and so your faith is failing. Problem is, that actually changes some words in this verse.

Verse 23 doesn't say God will do everything. He says that he can. Okay? All things are possible. The point is not that your wildest dreams will come true if you believe hard enough.

The point is that nothing is too great for God. The point is not that your wildest dreams will come true if your faith is great enough.

[21 : 19] The point is that nothing is too great for God. There is a difference between a can't and a won't. Jesus is telling this man, if your son is not healed, it's not because I can't.

Don't use that word if. It would only be because I won't. There is nothing too great for my power. It does say all things are possible. It does not say all things will happen. walk away from this verse knowing that God is powerful enough, not that your faith controls the universe.

Be comforted by the fact that if God says no to your request, it's because he's decided it's not best, not because he's not powerful enough.

all things are possible for the one who believes. In fact, James chapter 4 also talks about this. I quoted it earlier.

[22 : 29] He says, you do not have because you do not ask. And then he goes on to say, you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

God doesn't answer every prayer just because you have enough faith. faith and faith through prayer is the way we access God's blessings and his power. So this passage raises a question for us.

What if we are like this father? What if we're like the disciples? And maybe we have too much confidence in ourselves or not enough in God.

What do we do with our prayerlessness? How do we walk away from our lack of faith? Well, thankfully, this father, as much as he's a negative model, is also a positive one.

When he understands what Jesus is saying, that his doubt is getting in the way, he immediately repents. Verse 24, immediately the father of the child cried out and said, I believe, help my unbelief.

[23 : 36] Which is a way of saying, I want to want it. I want to believe this. And I know I can't change myself.

Remember, I've told you before that one way to summarize the gospel is this. I know that I need to change on the one hand. And I also know on the other hand that I am incapable, I am powerless of changing myself.

And so what is the answer in the midst of that? It's the one that this man gives that resolves that tension. I need God to come with his supernatural work to soften and change my heart.

I cannot stir up enough faith in my own life. I cannot melt my own heart and make it change from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

No, the only hope for me is that a power from the outside would come and help. And so the point is this, faith is a supernatural gift and work.

[24 : 39] Faith is something that God must work within us. And so the solution fits the problem. We become dependent on God by becoming dependent on God.

We become dependent on God by saying how helpless we are. We do not become dependent on God by becoming more disciplined and self-controlled.

We do not become dependent on God by becoming more rigorous in the way that we live our lives.

No, what this passage is telling us is that we will never have enough power to do that.

We become dependent by admitting that we need God to make us dependent. We receive help by asking for help. And so this man for us reveals one of the greatest spiritual secrets of the Christian life.

do you find yourself prayerless with no desire to talk to God? Pray that you would want to pray.

[25 : 46] Pray to God that you would want to pray. That's not to say that all sorts of other methods or journals or systems are unhelpful. that's to say that they are a handmaiden to the main thing that must happen which is that God is at work changing your heart and your life.

Do you find yourself not wanting to obey? Pray that you would want to obey. Recognize you have no hope outside of God and his work.

do you find yourself struggling with Christianity as you think about it if you're completely honest you have doubts and questions and objections. Pray that God would lead you to the answers you need.

Pray that God would help you in the midst of your doubt. There's a fundamental recognition that we cannot change our own hearts and God can.

Do you not have enough faith? All you have to do is ask God to give you more faith. Are you too independent like the disciples?

[27 : 07] All you have to do is ask God to make you more dependent. Do you lack faith like this father? All you have to do is ask God to give you new faith.

The good news of the gospel is this, that great faith does not come from more self-discipline. Faith comes to those who ask God for help.

People of great faith are needy people. People of great faith are people who like this man who say, I can't change and I need God to change me.

No matter what you face in this life, you are in desperate need of God's help. And he's waiting for you to ask.

He's waiting for you to ask for his power. Finally, this passage tells us the exact type of power that we're believing in. In verses 26 and 27, Jesus honors this man's small, mustard seed size faith and heals his son.

[28 : 23] And we're told, verse 26, the boy was like a corpse so that most of them said, he is dead. Verse 27, Jesus took him by the hand, lifted him up, and he arose.

There's a picture here, a foreshadowing of resurrection power. The kind of power that we're hoping in and looking towards and praying for is a raise the dead kind of power.

It is Ephesians 1 kind of power which tells us that the very same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the power that is work in us. That is what gives us hope and confidence as we ask God for his help.

Now there's another discussion in the Gospel of Mark about prayers and what is possible for God. This one shows up in Mark chapter 14 as Jesus is facing his death and he decides that he is going to pray to God.

This is verse 35, and going a little farther he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from him.

[29 : 38] and he said, Abba Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.

Jesus, like a great teacher, remembers the things that he has taught. He knows all things are possible. And yet, how does he end it?

Not your will, not my will, but your will be done. That word possible, by the way, is the exact same Greek word that is here in chapter nine. Jesus does not forget this exchange, but instead he draws back on it as he faces the cross and is reminded that ultimately it is God and his will that prevails in the midst of his power.

And so we can cry out to God in prayer with confidence and hope because God says yes to our prayers because he said no to Jesus' prayer.

God can say yes to our prayers because he said no to Jesus' prayer. Jesus trusted the will of the Father and went to death.

[30 : 51] We cry out to God knowing that we will live. in his book Just Mercy the lawyer Brian Stevenson tells the story of a man named Walter McMillan who in 1988 was wrongly convicted of a murder in Alabama from 1986.

It was a murder of a college student named Rhonda Morrison and it happened in Monroeville Alabama and what had happened is that the police had brought forth false testimony to frame Walter and so he was eventually convicted of capital murder but what Brian was able to do was uncover new evidence that revealed that the witnesses in this situation had outright lied especially the key witness who he convinced to appear in court and confessed that his testimony the first time around was incorrect.

Now much of this was because racism was alive and well in the 1980s in Birmingham Alabama and so as the second hearing came around the place where they were going to present new evidence there were members of the African American community who wanted to come and support Walter to show that they stood with him as they tried to overturn this conviction.

Now the second day of the hearing something mysterious happened the black supporters were not able to get seated until many of the white supporters had already sat down and so there were not many seats left for them and so they had to start picking who among us is going to be chosen to go sit in this balcony and support Walter.

One woman who was picked was Mrs. Williams and she was an old revered member of the community and so she began to enter the courtroom except one thing had changed between day one and day two.

[32 : 42] Day one of the court hearing it was just a normal courtroom nothing to notice. Day two they'd installed this metal detector and they'd brought in a German shepherd to sniff everyone as they entered the room.

Well as she looked at this German shepherd Mrs. Williams was reminded of her time in 1965 when she walked in Selma for voting rights and it brought back her memories of dogs being set on them German shepherds specifically and so she froze in that moment was not able to make her way into the courtroom and so she went back she was filled with shame and disappointment in herself and her family tells the story of that night she went back to her house and she stayed up all night praying.

The next morning she returned with her family in the car and on the whole drive back she just kept repeating this prayer Lord I can't be afraid of no dog.

Lord I can't be afraid of no dog. That was her prayer over and over during the night and in the morning and so then that next day she walks into the courtroom and she just says over and over to herself I can't be afraid of no dog.

I can't be afraid of no dog. And so she walks past this German shepherd to sit in this area so that she can support Walter as they try to overturn this unjust sentence.

[34 : 05] And then when she makes it out she yells so that everyone can hear I am here. She models for us the life of faith because she is shaking with fear on the one hand and she's filled with faith on the other.

And how does she close that gap? She closes it by crying out for God's help and his mercy. She knows that by herself she has no hope of entering that courtroom.

She has no hope of standing for justice and yet she knows that God will meet her in that moment. Here's what I know to be true and yet I'm tripped up by my human weakness and frailty.

I am afraid. Help my fear. And it's with that that she's able to walk in and declare to everyone that she is present. Brothers and sisters the same is true for us.

We rely on God's power in prayer not our own. Lord I believe. Help my unbelief. Let's pray.

[35 : 16] Our Father in heaven we thank you that you don't ask us to jump through higher hoops to make better test scores on our faith but you tell us the truth that we're helpless and needy and you delight to answer our request for that help.

We ask this morning that you would give us both humility and confidence. We'd be humble in knowing that we are helpless without you and we'd be confident in knowing that you hear and answer our prayers.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn. my health has found a resting place not in device or greed I trust the ever living one his wounds for me shall breathe I need no other argument I need no other plea it is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me I need enough that Jesus saved this is my fears and doubt a sinful soul I come to him he'll never cast me out I need no other arguments I need no other plea it is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me heart heart is leaning on the word the written word of God salvation by my savior's name salvation through his blood I need no other argument I need no other plea it is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me my great physician heals the sick the lost he came to save for me his precious blood he shed for me his life he gave

I need no other argument I need no other plea it is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me we end our time together with a benediction and a benediction is simply a good word from God it is a word that is true in a world filled with words that are not true and so hear now God's good word over you from Numbers chapter 6 the Lord bless you and keep you the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace now and forever so go now in the grace and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ amen for■■ up to the langdon live fall to whom to you and vive to have■ vind of

[39 : 20] Yu Cloud andede with the number and Hos at Seite P laatus Musique Christ hu Thank you.