

The Able Christ
Mark 9:14-29
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¹⁴ And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. ¹⁶ And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" ¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ 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." 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." ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²² 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." ²³ And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ 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." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹ And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Have you ever found yourself in an utterly helpless and hopeless situation? Therapists and psychologists say the way to deal with such a situation is to recognize or focus on the things you can control and see if there is anything you can do. That can be somewhat helpful but what if the situation feels hopeless and you cannot do anything? Like the father in this passage who recognizes that he is absolutely helpless with the condition of his son. He brings his son to the disciples of Jesus who to struggle to help him. And the scribes or Jewish scholars of the law - they can't do anything either.

And all of a sudden you see Christ. A lifelong struggle is cured with just one visit with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It doesn't matter how grave the situation is but when a man comes to Christ, Jesus changes everything.

Why? Because Jesus is able. Jesus is able and powerful more than you could ever

imagine.

Last Sunday we looked at the Transfigured Christ. This morning, we are going to look at the Able Christ.

I have divided this passage into *four* parts or implications:

- Christ is Amazing. Run to Him.
- When embarrassed, Trust Christ.
- When struggling with doubt, Confess to Christ.
- When helpless, Pray to Christ.

Implication# 1

- Christ is Amazing. Run to Him.

Verses 14 and 15.

¹⁴ And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him.

Peter, James and John were with Jesus on the mountain. They are now back, meeting the rest of the nine disciples. And what do they see? They see a crowd and the scribes arguing with the disciples. Imagine the plight of the man whose son is in need of help. He came to the disciples asking for help for his son. But they just could not cast out the spirit. And the scribes were always looking to find fault or accuse our Lord or his disciples. They were troublemakers. So, they begin arguing with the disciples. Maybe the scribes tried some Jewish remedy too. Apparently, nothing worked. Instead of the boy being healed, there is confusion and contention.

However, the moment they all see Jesus, everything changes.

What do they do? They were greatly *amazed*. And they *ran* up to Jesus and *greeted* Jesus.

Why were they so amazed when they saw Jesus? Evidently, they saw Jesus glowing from his transfiguration. Apparently, the effects from his glorious transformation were still visible in his person. The word used for *amazing* is in the superlative. A sense of amazement or astonishment seized them. Back in the Old Testament, when Moses came back after meeting God with the tablets of stone, the people of Israel were afraid to meet him. Why? Because, Moses was transfigured. (Exodus 34). Jesus is both man and God and makes himself accessible to them.

So what does the crowd and disciples do when see Jesus? They drop everything and they all *ran* to Jesus and *greeted* him.

We should ask ourselves, when you feel stuck in this world's pettiness, triviality, unnecessary arguments and debates and confusion results. But Jesus comes to mind, when Jesus' name is mentioned, when you think about who Jesus is and what he had done for you, do you drop everything and run to him?

This whole crowd ran to Jesus because they were amazed. Do you find Jesus wonderful and amazing? Then run to him.

And what does our Lord ask the crowd?

Verse 16 through 18.

¹⁶ And he asked them, "*What are you arguing about with them?*" ¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, "*Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute.*" ¹⁸ *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.*"

Implication# 2

- When embarrassed, Trust Christ.

Jesus, obviously knows about what was going here. This is sort of a provocative question. He asks what they were arguing about. The father of the son, really frustrated by now speaks up. He describes to Jesus the dire condition of his son.

Whenever the unclean spirit takes over, it makes the boy mute, resulting in *spasms*, *foaming*, *grinding* of teeth and becoming *stiff*. No doubt these are signs of demonic oppression. You could draw a close parallel to how sin corrupts your soul resulting in the same *outcome* as we see in this boy. First, comes the desire to sin, then the giving into the desire, which is sin and the sin fully practiced results in death.

Sometimes, it hard to distinguish between the work of the devil and the work of flesh.

Either way, nothing good comes out of sinful practices or demonic oppression.

Paul writes in Galatians 5:19-21 – "*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these*".

Back to our text, the man's son is possessed by a spirit. And he tells Jesus that his disciples were powerless to cast out. Verse 18.

It's not like the disciples had never cast out demons before. In Mark 6, we saw Jesus had given his twelve disciples authority to cast out demons. And they did. They went out two-

two into villages calling people to repent and casting out demons. (Mark 6:13). And yet they were helpless in this situation.

We'll get to the answer as to why they were powerless but hear the words of the father in verse 18.

"So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." The word "not able" is also translated "they did not have the strength".

How embarrassing it must have been the disciples.

And what does our Lord say about the faith of his disciples? Verse 19.

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."

Matthew and Luke's Gospel say "O *faithless* and *twisted* generation, how long am I to be with you?" Matthew 17:17, Luke 9:41

The word is *twisted* can be translated as *perverted* or *crooked*.

Peter is not new to being rebuked. Peter got rebuked twice. And now Jesus rebukes all the disciples, perhaps even the crowd.

You see Jesus takes *faith* seriously. That is why he calls out his disciples and rebukes them for their lack of faith. When Jesus went to his hometown of Nazareth, he marveled at their lack of faith.

Do you know rebuke does more good to a man than flattery or niceness? Some people want to be so nice that they can't even tell the truth.

- "*A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.*" Proverbs 17:10
- "*Better is open rebuke than hidden love.*" Proverbs 27:5
- "*Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.*" Proverbs 28:23

Some people don't like to be corrected but preaching ministry involves correction or rebuke. Paul knew that. So, he wrote to the young pastor Timothy "*Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching*" 2 Timothy 4:2.

So, Jesus rebukes his disciples for not having enough. They are embarrassed but are still learning this walk of faith under his instruction.

Now, Jesus has to attend to the need of the boy.

Verses 20 through 23.

²⁰ 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. ²¹ And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. ²² 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.” ²³ And Jesus said to him, ““If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.”

Jesus hadn’t even said anything to the boy yet but just on seeing Christ, he convulses, falls and foams at the mouth. The father tells Jesus he also falls into fire and water. Very destructive spirit. This must have been so traumatic for the father because the father had been seeing this since his son was a child.

The father knows something about Jesus. So, he begs Jesus to help and have compassion on them. This is the right posture with Jesus. Jesus is known as The Compassionate One. *But does this man have the right belief?*

Verse 22 gives us a clue. The father says, “*If you are able*”.

You this man doubts Jesus can save. That is why, he says, “If you are able”.

Jesus is always able. This man should have said, “I know you are able, help”.

So Jesus corrects and tells him in verse 23, ““If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.” If you believe that I am to heal your son, then this will be done.

How does the man respond?

Implication#3:

- When struggling with doubt, Confess to Christ.

Verses 24 through 27.

²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” ²⁵ 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.*” ²⁶ 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.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

The man’s son needs help for sure. But this father needs help too. He needs to confess and believe in the Christ. So, he confesses and acknowledges his heart condition before Jesus.

And our Lord commands the spirit to leave and never come back. How wonderful! Jesus wants to make us whole.

The boy undergoes a physical reaction. The crowd thinks he is dead. Our Lord picks him up by his hand. How personal and intimate our Lord. Jesus commands evil to leave. Jesus

lifts up to give new life. Nothing more is written because both the father and son are joyful.

The passage closes with addressing the disciple's awkward situation.

Implication#4:

- When helpless, Pray to Christ.

Verse 28 and 29.

²⁸ And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹ And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Jesus was a man of prayer. He modeled prayer to his disciples. The disciples were still learning the walk of faith and prayer. Hopeless and helpless situations will come your way but prayer is the fuel that grows your faith.

Jesus is amazing. Run to him for your needs. There may be embarrassments that come your way. Keep trusting him. You may struggle with doubt and unbelief. Confess and acknowledge your need to Christ. Lastly, pray when you feel helpless.

Why? Because Christ is Able. Jesus is Strong and is mighty to save.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: The Able Christ. Mark 9:14-29

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. Why were the disciples not able to cast out the unclean spirit? What were they lacking or needed to grow in?
2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.
 - What does the father's confession to Jesus reveal about his heart condition?
 - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

3. HEART For personal reflection: What will you do to grow in faith and prayer?