**Everything Is Possible for One Who Believes**

July 26, 2020

Mark 9:14-29

Key Verse 9:23 “‘If you can?’ said Jesus. ‘Everything is possible for one who believes.”

This verse is very easy to misunderstand. Some think that it means that we can win the million-dollar lottery; we can get a dream job at Google; we can win the Nobel prize. But Jesus is not telling the father that belief would enable the father to do whatever he wanted to do, that there would be no limits. Instead, Jesus is telling this man that Jesus is able to do anything for the one who believes. With belief, nothing that God calls us to do will be impossible. So, trust in the one who can do all things.

Peter, James and John saw the glory of the transfiguration on the mountain, but they were not permitted to stay there. They had to go down the mountain where the troubles, pain and the demonic disruptions of life were waiting. We see sharp contrasts: In the transfiguration; there is glory, down below there is suffering. In the transfiguration, God dominates the scene; down below, Satan dominates the scene. In the transfiguration, the Father is pleased; down below, the earthly father is tortured. In the transfiguration, there is a perfect Son; down below, there is a perverse son. Because we live down below, there are so many troubles, pain and demonic disruptions of life. We suffer from powerlessness and despair. Then we begin to doubt God’s power and God’s care and blame one another. Satan takes great pleasure in them. When the disciples could not drive out demons, one could blame the disciples for their failure in driving out demons. One could blame the father for his poor parenting skills. One could blame the boy for his sinful behavior which led to demon-possession. However, Jesus lamented over the unbelief of the entire generation. Jesus wanted everyone to repent instead of blaming each other. Many people suffer from troubles and pain in this world. It is easy to feel powerless and despair, and blame others. Then Satan rejoices over our blame game. Instead, Jesus wants us to pray. Jesus wants to plant faith in our hearts, saying, “Everything is possible for one who believes.” We are not learning here how to cast out demons. We are not learning here how to draw God’s power by manipulating him. We learn here that in Jesus, everything is possible if we believe.

Look at verse 14. “When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.” How did this happen? We can imagine that the nine disciples were unhappy to be left behind by Jesus when he went up the mountain. One by one, they might have thought, “Why only Peter, James and John? Why not me?” Each one wanted to do something great to gain Jesus’ recognition. Then a golden chance came. A father brought his son to Jesus to be healed of demon possession. Each of the nine wanted to be the one to solve the problem. Philip took a pose, and said, “Demon, come out!” But the boy looked at him pointlessly. Matthew began to laugh, and said, “Step aside, Phil; I will show you how it is done.” Like Bruce Lee making a Chinese kung-fu motion, he showed several hand gestures and shouted, “You evil spirit! Come out!” The boy did not respond at all. Bartholomew came forward, thinking, “These guys have despised me because I don’t say much. Now I will show them.” Bartholomew danced around and said, “Demon, come out!” This time the boy yawned. The disciples realized that they had failed miserably. They felt powerless. The teachers of the law confronted them, brandishing their diplomas and glittering garments, saying: “You labor-class men cannot drive out demons. You have no education. You are nothing.” This made the disciples angry. They retorted, “You teachers of the law are nothing but phony. You have no spiritual power.” The argument was turning into a boxing match.

Then Jesus appeared. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him (15). Jesus likely carried the afterglow of transfiguration glory. Jesus looked holy, peaceful, loving, powerful. One glance at Jesus filled people with divine wonder. All thoughts of demons and arguments were gone; they were filled with joy and awe. They ran to Jesus, saying, “Wonderful Jesus. Our good shepherd Jesus. Teach us, heal us and restore us.” But Jesus did not turn his attention to the crowd. Jesus was concerned about his disciples, who looked depressed and defeated. Jesus asked, “What are you arguing with them about?” However, the disciples were too ashamed and dispirited to answer. For a few moments there was silence. Then the boy’s father spoke up, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not” (17-18).

This father had suffered much because of his son’s spiritual condition. The impure spirit robbed the boy of speech and closed his ears (25), cutting off his communication. The boy neither listened to, nor spoke to, his father. To any father, the joy of life is to raise his son in noble humanity and in the knowledge of God. Sons who listen to godly fathers blossom into blessed men. This father might have dreamed to raise his son as a great spiritual leader. But the impure spirit cut their relationship. The father could not train his son at all. He could not even bond with his son. Perhaps the demon had said to the boy, “Your father is a foolish old man. He is irrelevant and out of date. But you are cool and stylish. Ignore him and do what you want to do.” However, the boy did not become cool and stylish. He completely lost control and became self-destructive. As the father watched the boy rolling in pain on the ground, he felt deep pain. He would do anything to help his son. Yet he had no power to fight the impure spirit. Can you imagine the humiliation of the whispers as the family walked down the streets? “That’s the Jones family. Have you heard about their son?” The stares, the snickers, the off-color comments. You can imagine there were many days when this father wanted to just give up. Can you feel the father’s pain? How desperately he must have felt every time the child threw himself into the water or the fire. “Why, Son? Why do you do these things? I don’t understand,” he must have asked. But he did not give up. He brought the boy to Jesus, but Jesus’ disciples failed miserably.

How did Jesus respond when he heard this story? Look at verse 19. “’You unbelieving generation,’ Jesus replied, ‘how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.’” His words are harsh. “You unbelieving generation.” Clearly there was a lot of unbelief going on. The disciples were unbelieving. They took for granted the power given to them earlier and did not pray. Lack of prayer indicated their lack of faith. The teachers of the law were unbelieving. By their arguing with the disciples they revealed that they had no faith at all. The father of the demon-possessed boy was unbelieving as we will see. In holy frustration, He says, “How long shall I put up with you?” We must acknowledge that unbelief is a great sin against God. But many do not take unbelief seriously. When we catalog sin in our minds, what do we think of first? Murder? Adultery? Theft? What about unbelief! The root of man’s spiritual problem is, not believing in Jesus. Jesus laments over the sin of unbelief. Yet Jesus did not stop there. Jesus went on to plant faith in the unbelieving generation.

They brought the boy to Jesus. When the spirit saw Jesus, it threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. He seemed to get worse. This was the manipulation of the impure spirit who wanted to stop him from coming to Jesus by any means, especially by planting fear in the boy’s father. The situation seemed desperate. But Jesus did not heal the boy first. Jesus spoke to the father first. It was to plant faith in the father’s heart. To Jesus, planting faith in the father was more urgent than healing the boy. Jesus asked, “How long has he been like this?” The father said, “From childhood. It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” The father’s plea was heartbreaking, yet he revealed his unbelief. Look at verse 23. “‘If you can’? said Jesus. ‘Everything is possible for one who believes.’” Jesus took issue with the father’s words, “If you can?” That’s not a question, that’s an exclamation. Another way to say that would be, “If you can - are you kidding? How can that be in question? The very fact that you are here with a demon-possessed son would indicate that you have known about others who have been demon possessed but have been delivered. How can you be asking the question? How can you be doubting my ability, my power? Daily miracles of healing and deliverance from demons having gone on for well over a year in the area. If I can?”

But we can understand the father. When we suffer with a chronic problem, it can seem so difficult that we begin to feel that even God cannot solve it. The problem becomes bigger in our hearts than God is. Jesus takes issue with such thinking. Jesus says to us, “Everything is possible for one who believes.” Think about that statement. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” Jesus tells us that there is no limit to what God can do. Jesus did not say, “Something is possible for one who believes,” or “many things are possible.” Jesus said, “Everything is possible.” Everything is possible, but not everything is within God’s will. Even if God does not answer our prayers, we need to believe that God still loves us, and it is for our good. At the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” It is absolutely possible for Jesus not to die on the cross. Then there would be no salvation for us: heaven would be empty. When we fix our eyes on the God of the Bible as he truly is, the question is never, “If you can?” The question is always, “Do I believe?” When we suffer from our problems, Satan tempts us in two ways: Either God is powerless to solve our problems, or God does not care about us. Both are false. God is able to solve our problems and he cares about us. There is an unseen reason why God does not solve our problems according to our way.

The father realized that Jesus wanted him to have faith in God. He responded immediately, “I do believe,” confessing his faith. He believed what Jesus said, “Everything is possible for one who believes.” There’s so much emotion here. Remember, while this is going on, his son is rolling around, foaming at the mouth, and he screams. The father said, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” “I believe in you, I believe in your power, but I have a lot of doubt and I admit it. Is that enough? All things are possible to the one who believes - that is, all things within God’s will are possible, all things that are acceptable to God are possible. But how much faith do I have to have? What do you mean? All things are possible to those who believe, but to what degree do I need to believe? I do believe. Help me. Come and dispel my doubts.” Jesus never expects perfect faith. He only expects imperfect faith. Since faith is never perfect, faith and doubt are always mixed.

Look at verses 25-27. “When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. ‘You deaf and mute spirit,’ he said, ‘I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.’ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, ‘He’s dead.’ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.” The boy was completely healed. It was a miracle of Jesus’ power. We all have problems that we cannot solve. But the problem is not really the problem. How we respond is what matters. When we listen to Jesus’ words, “Everything is possible for one who believes,” we can put the problem in perspective. God can solve our problem, no matter what it is. We must confess our faith: “I do believe,” claiming the promises of Jesus. We must also repent of our unbelief and ask Jesus’ help: “Help me overcome my unbelief.” Jesus is gracious and mighty. Jesus will intervene to help us and give us victory by his power. Jesus promises us, “Everything is possible for one who believes.” May God help us never doubt the power of God, and never doubt God’s love.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” The disciples had felt very sorry about their failure to drive out the demon. But when they saw Jesus drive it out, their faith was renewed and they recovered their spirits. New admiration for Jesus began to grow in their hearts. They wanted to learn from Jesus. So they asked him why they could not drive it out. Look at verse 29. “He replied, ‘This kind can come out only by prayer.’” Jesus taught them the importance of prayer. A good example of prayer was the father of the boy who was demon-possessed. He did not seem overly impressive. He was not a spiritual giant with perfect faith. He was a fallen man, a mixture of good and evil; he had both faith and unbelief. But when he prayed to Jesus, he prayed from his heart. He listened to Jesus. He honestly confessed his sin of unbelief and asked Jesus’ help. Through this kind of humble dependence on Jesus, he could experience the miracle of God.

May God help us to hear Jesus’ words, “Everything is possible for one who believes,” and pray. God incorporates our prayers in his plan for the future. Our prayer is the expression of our faith. Everything is possible for those who pray.

Big Idea: Everything is possible for one who believes