

Belief

Mark 9:14-29

Setting

Transfiguration – the revelation of Jesus.

An argument between the Scribes and Disciples.

Why they didn't have the power to cast a demon out of a boy.

Jesus calls them an "Unbelieving Generation"

Why did he say that?

Was it because they couldn't cast out the demon?

Was it because they were arguing?

Why does he use the terms "unbelieving?"

Well, what does it mean to believe?

Belief in Jesus is not intellectual assent.

It is not merely hoping.

It is not going through the motions of religion.

What we are going to discuss today is the very nature of Faith.

I wonder how the father felt when the scribe and disciples argued?

How desperate was he?

Faith & Doubt

Jesus tell them to bring the boy and asks how long it's been.

It's been a lifetime.

The father is losing hope.

He says, If you are *able*, have pity and help us."

The Greek is not "can" but able – *dunasai* – have the power.

Jesus replies – "If I have the power?"

What is his tone?

Indignant? Or perhaps questioning.

Is the emphasis on the "Able" or the "I"?

Jesus replies, "Everything is *dunata* (able) for the one who believes."

The emphasis is not on his own ability.

He turns the table from the "I" to the "You"

The ability is in the one who believes.

But it is a specific belief – the Jesus is able.

The man cries out (and the text says, he is weeping)

I believe, help my unbelief!

So this is the heart of the matter.

Belief and Doubt live together. Not apart.

In fact, true belief is born of doubt.

If you never ask the hard questions you will never be able to answer.

If you do not face the darkness, you will not overcome it.

You will simply avoid it and allow it to grow in the recesses of your mind.

Or you will simply never grow in your understanding of Jesus.

Take this man.

The son he loves is being destroyed by a demon his entire life.

Do you think he sat idly by all those years?

Do you think he never questioned God?

But he was stuck.

Stuck with his pain, stuck with his doubt.

And yet in his desperation he doesn't give up.

Maybe the disciples can help.

But they can't and so he stands there with his mute son

As the disciples and scribes argue.

Do you think he cares about their argument?

How long have you suffered?

How long have you asked?

Because if you don't our world is asking.

Where is God?

Will I be alone forever?

Does anyone love me?

How long will my relationship with my parents be strained?

What about the broken relationships with family, friends, exes.

What about the disease in my body?

What about cancer and child soldiers and injustice?

Jesus, do you really have the power?

Do you have the pity to deliver me?

To deliver my son from the demons that rob him of his life and voice?

Do you know how it feels to never hear the words, "I love you father?"

Doubt rightly spoken, rightly exposed, rightly confessed lets the light in.

Let's the possibility, the *dunamai*, of faith, of life, of Jesus in.

The one who remains protected, never risking to bare their naked soul

Will never truly live.

And I dare say, will never truly believe.

Jesus has got to make this quick.

The crowds he has been avoiding are starting to arrive at the scene.

He speaks to the evil spirit and casts it out – forever.

The boy seems dead but he is not.

Jesus raises him up.

Unbelievable?

Yes.
And that is the point.
But what about you?
Are you willing to face your doubts?
Question: What do you long to believe but have trouble believing?

Faith & Prayer

When indoors (away from the crowd) Jesus is asked why the disciples could not
Cast out the demon.
Jesus gives only a seemingly cryptic reply.
“This kind can only come out by prayer.”
A better translation is “These can never come out if there is no prayer.”
Or simply, “no prayer, no redemption.”

What is faith?

I said it isn't intellectual assent.
Nor hoping
Nor religious action.

Faith is a way of living and thinking.

It isn't an idea.
It is tangible.
A person who believes in Jesus, in God lives a certain way.
We are mistaken when we say “only God knows.”
That is a lie from hell.

The world can tell if you are of God by the way you live.
By the way your treat people and talk to them.
By the wisdom you show.
By the honesty, transparency and authenticity of your life.
You forgive those who wrong you frustrate you, disappoint you.
Yes you get angry, sad, mad confused, but in the end,
You are filled with grace.

And all this.
All this belief in God.
Begins and ends in a single act.
Prayer.
The depth of your faith can be measured by how you pray.
Not by the minutes you spend or number of words.
For true prayer is simply and authentically coming to God and spilling you guts.
Like the man in our story, with tears in his eyes, pain in his heart,
A yearning, a frustration, a desperation, a passion.
Jesus, I trust you. Help me trust you more.

And that is what you are invited to: Prayer.
And it will transform everything.