

Sermon Series: Book of Mark
Sermon: A faith that prays.
Scripture: Mark 9:14-29
Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church
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Let's pray.

There's no doubt that all of us face, from time to time, impossible situations.

A difficult marriage.

Needing a job to pay the bills.

A friend or family member that doesn't believe in Jesus.

A husband who refuses to go to church.

.....And on and on the list goes.

Have you ever found yourself thinking,
"I don't need to pray about this"?

Maybe it's because we don't want to bother God with things. "He'll just say, 'No' anyway."

Maybe it's because we've been through something before and we think we can handle it easily.

“I’ll be fine”, we say...and we settle for being fine.

Maybe we just don’t believe, because we’ve prayed about it before and it didn’t work.

Well, what do we do?

Turn in your Bible to **Mark 9:14-29**

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.”

Maybe you're familiar with this story.

A mountain top experience at the Transfiguration—and a return to the real world..down in the valley.

3 disciples see Jesus in his glory and 9 are confronted by a demon possessed boy and are being heckled by the Scribes.

3 disciples have the most awesome camp experience with Jesus up on the mountain—-and the other 9 experience their greatest defeat.

Back in **Mark 6**, Jesus had sent out the disciples to preach and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. And they'd been successful.

They cast out many demons...no problem at all.

Now, for some reason they've run into some trouble.

They've obviously tried to help this man's son...it isn't like they didn't try.

They've attempted to help and they expected to be successful.

Verse 18 says, "I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able."

So, they tried.

After all, they've done this before...but, It doesn't work!

How embarrassing!

Talking about losing face!

And to make matters worse, the Scribes of the Law show up and start 'arguing' with them....and it seems to be over the fact that the disciples have failed.

Have you ever failed miserably?

Ever stepped out by faith to do the impossible and yet.....it didn't work out.

It hurts doesn't it.

Why did they fail?

That's the big question isn't it.

Remember that one thing you can do when studying the Bible is look for patterns or common words.

Look at how many times the word 'believe' or 'faith' shows up.

verse 19, "O **faithless** generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?"

verse 23, "All things are possible for one who **believes.**"

verse 24, "I **believe**, help my **unbelief.**"

verses 28 and 29 are crucial, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but **prayer.**"

Well...wait a minute here...is it faith or prayer here that is the issue?

There are 2 different things going on here in this story. One is the issue with the man and his son and the other is the issue with the disciples. But they're connected.

Let's take them one at a time.

I. The man and his son.

The boy's issue isn't clear. It looks a lot like Epilepsy but the scriptures say he is demon possessed. Don't take that too far and start saying that every illness is demon possession. It could simply be that the boy's Epilepsy was only worsened by the possession of an unclean spirit, since his whole self (mental, emotional, physical) was under the control of this spirit.

The father asked Jesus a simple question.

“If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

This statement is not a clear, “I know you can heal” but tinged with doubt....**IF** you can.....**IF**.

So, Jesus' reply is, “IF you can....” meaning....

“Whether I can is not the issue....that's easy. The question is whether you believe that I can.”

Because Jesus says, **“All things are possible for one who believes.”**

And it's **never** an issue of whether God **can** do it....

Many will take this verse today and take it to mean....

“God will do anything you ask him to do as long as you believe.”

But that's not what it says....it says... “All things are possible.”

What does possible mean?

The dictionary defines **POSSIBLE** as: *able to be done; within the power or capacity of someone or something.*

It's possible....not inevitable.

God sometimes says, "No."

God sometimes says, "Not right now."

God sometimes heals here and now and permanently heals in the Resurrection.

But there is one sure way of getting nothing....of getting no answer and that is to not believe and not ask.

Notice the boy's father's cry... **"I believe; help my unbelief."**

What a beautiful statement.

A humble statement.

"God there's something in me that believes but I know that I struggle and have doubts....take that part and make it believe more."

So, here we have a father who is desperate and facing an impossible situation.

He does the right thing...

What does he do?

He comes to Jesus to take care of it, even though his faith may be like a little mustard seed.

II. Then we have the disciples.

They also faced a difficult and impossible situation. They've been asked to cure a boy who has a demon living in him and often times has tried to kill the kid.

And the man brings the boy to THEM!
What a challenge.
They try and fail.

Why?

Jesus says 2 things to them.

1. They are **faithless**. (Matthew's gospel says that the reason is their 'little faith'.
2. They should have **prayed**.
- 3.

Here's the problem:

They tried to do it on their own- without praying. Somehow, they had tried to do it in their own strength. They expected yesterday's strength and yesterday's success to carry over to the next day. They got cocky....and they got humbled.

Jesus is not saying, "one kind of demon you can cast out by telling them to go and other kinds of demons— have to be 'prayed' out.

He's saying... **"You don't have the power in and of yourself to handle this. You have no authority. I have all authority. You must be dependent on me."**

What about us?

You have any difficulties in your life?

You facing impossible circumstances?

What are you doing about it?

Are you exercising faith? How do you know if you are?

Faith expresses itself in prayer.

To stop praying is to stop believing.

Where there's no prayer...there's no faith.

Prayer is the outward expression of faith.

Don't rely on yesterday's prayers to get you through today.

“No amount of praying done today will suffice for tomorrow's praying.” E.M. Bounds

The message to us from this passage is this:

**Don't try to do it on your own—
express faith BY praying.**

And maybe you're so tired and so weak that all you can pray is:

“Lord I believe. Help my unbelief.”

Imagine what God could do if you'd just keep asking in faith.

Imagine what God could do in your marriage, your workplace, your own heart, our city, HKUST....if we'd keep asking in faith.

*Here's what we are going to do today.

**Who in your life does not believe in Jesus?
What other difficult situation are you facing in life?**

Get in a group right with some people around you and pray RIGHT NOW for these things!

**Don't try to do it on your own—
express faith BY praying.**

Faith....Prays!