

Mark 9:14-29
Vanquisher of Demons

Introduction:

The gospel of Mark is known as the Gospel which is hard-hitting and fast. It breezes through one important event in Jesus' ministry to another, building more and more evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the promised Messiah, the King of the kingdom of God, the Deliverer and Savior of God's people.

Last week we saw him on the Mountain of Transfiguration. Jesus took his three closest disciples, Peter, James and John and they went up and there the three disciples saw Jesus' appearance changed so that the glory of God shone through his humanity and two of the most prominent figures in the OT appeared and spoke to Jesus of his own coming "exodus," that is, his departure at Jerusalem – they were referring to the coming cross-event where Jesus would hang and bear the sins of his people from all ages and all nations and suffer the white-hot wrath of God in his own body as he offered himself as the victim on the altar, the true lamb of God, who would take their place in the fires of hell so that their sins would be paid for and God's justice would be satisfied. The end result would be justified, forgiven sinners who would be welcomed into the presence of God, dressed in the very righteousness of Christ.

As Jesus and his three disciples came down the mountain Jesus told them to keep to themselves what they had seen on the mountain until after he was raised from the dead. At that time they didn't really comprehend what he meant by being raised from the dead. And so we resume the account at Mark 9:14. Listen to the word of the Lord:

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^[a] 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.”

May God add his blessing to the reading and opening up of his Word today. Let us pray: Almighty Father, creator of heaven and earth, and Sender of the Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, open up your Word to our understanding this day. Make it come alive with all its truth and power, and do its special work of equipping us for service and for spiritual combat against the forces of evil. Arm us with the Word of God that we might extinguish all the fiery darts of the Enemy, we pray in Jesus’ mighty and all-conquering name. Amen.

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.

v. 14 -The “they” here is Jesus and his three disciples who had been with him on the mountain: Peter, James and John. There was a big commotion going on – the rest of Jesus’ disciples – the other 9 – were in some kind of argument with the scribes – those Jewish religious men who were experts in writing and copying the scriptures. But when Jesus came up they recognized him and ran up and greeted him. And he wanted to know what was going on? What were they all fussing about.

One man stepped forward, his name is never given, and he tell Jesus about his son. He son, he says, ‘has a spirit that has cause him to be mute’ – that is, the boy could not talk. And if that were not bad enough, the spirit would at times seize the boy, throw him to the ground, and cause him to foam at the mouth, and then his body would become rigid and stiff. Oh, what terrible torment this spirit had been putting this boy through!

In Lu. 9:40, one of the parallel accounts of this whole incident, we read that the father added there, “ ...it shatters him, and will hardly leave him.” So this spirit, and it was not a good spirit, but an evil spirit that was doing this to this boy, this spirit would shatter the boy - maybe you’ve seen these Greek movies where they will shatter a plate on the floor – well the demon spirit would do this to the boy – throw him violently to the ground and this wouldn’t just happen occasionally, like once a year or so, but it was constantly tormenting him in these ways. Oh, what a miserable existence! How he had survived as long as he had, is a wonder.

What was going on here? Why had this evil spirit, this demon, been tormenting this boy like this for so long? We don’t know why he had singled out this boy to make his existence miserable and even his life tenuous – that is, questionable whether he would

survive another day or not, but we do know something about demons and what they are up to.

Jesus described the devil and his demons like this in John 10:10: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.* Jesus contrasts these evil “thieves” with himself. He says in that same verse, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

In other words, the devil, the great enemy of God, and his servants, his soldiers in all his wicked schemes, work among humans to steal their lives, kill them, and destroy them.

What are demons? They are evil spirits who are under the command and direction of Satan, that is the devil. Who is the devil? He is the one who sometime in the past rebelled against God, evidently wanting to dethrone God and put himself on the throne of the universe. We don't know all the details about the devil's origin, but we know he is opposed to God and God's people – in fact, he is against all people – Christian or not. Jesus also describes him in John 8:44:

[the devil] was murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Jesus said of himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life...” So the devil and all his demons are exactly opposite of God and his holy angels. God and his holy angels are good and holy and pure and give life and mercy and compassion and grace and are faithful and true, but he devil and all his demons are rebellious against God's righteous rule and they are evil and wicked and impure and unclean and unholy and do all they can to deceive humanity and enslave them to evil thinking and actions. 2 Cor. 4:4 says,

the god of this world (the devil or Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing ^(L)the light of ^(M)the gospel of the glory of Christ, ^(N)who is the image of God.

The devil and his angels want to keep people away from Jesus and prevent them from believing the Gospel so that they can be saved and escape his power over them. What could be more evil than trying to prevent someone from believing in Jesus, from coming into a relationship with him?

To put it plainly: the devil and all his demons have one mission in life, one job description, and that is to oppose God and oppose the people of God, and do all they can to disrupt and destroy the kingdom of God. They want to keep people away from God and keep them in their own captivity so they can deceive them and torment them and destroy them. But their evil intentions will not stand for someone came into human history who is mightier than they: Acts 10: 38 say that

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit are no match for the devil and his demons.

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.”

So Jesus is displaying here what I might call “holy impatience.” He is chastising these people for their lack of faith. The boy was being tormented by this demon and they didn’t have enough faith in God that he would deliver this boy and set him free. So what we see here and this is the first point I want to make, is that...

I. Human power alone is insufficient to combat evil powers.

For years this poor boy had been suffering from the torments of this demon and no one could set him free. His father was desperate and had no doubt spent much time in sorrow and worry and weeping over the pitiful state of his son. In another Gospel we read that he was his only son.

And here was a great crowd of people, and part of that crowd were 9 disciples of Jesus – and nobody could set this boy free from this demon. The demon was in control, the demon was laughing at the powerlessness of all the people – no one could stop him from his gleeful torment, his torture, of this helpless boy.

The father and the disciples and the people had met their match – they could not stop this demon from vanquishing this boy. What does the word “vanquish” mean? It means

to overcome in battle : subdue completely. : to defeat in a conflict or contest. 3. : to gain mastery over

The demon had gained mastery over this boy, he was vanquishing this boy, and nobody could do anything about it.

The devil and his demons are real and powerful and destructive and dangerous and we need to recognize that – we need to know the reality about our enemy – and realize that in our own human strength we are lacking all the power and skill to combat and defeat them decisively. We need outside help for complete victory; we need a power greater than theirs.

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.

So, when we look at this boy, we see an example of the fact that....

II. Satan and his demons can do great harm to humans. v.20-22

I think one of the clearest examples of how the devil works in deceiving people and destroying people is in the pro-abortion movement in Western culture. Otherwise intelligent people claim that a woman has “rights” over her own body which include having an abortion if she wants. They do not see, or want to see, that this is not just rights over her body, but it is destroying the rights of the unborn child in her womb. So the devil had manipulated people’s thinking so that millions of fetuses are being killed. They will never give birth; they will never see the glory of God revealed in all creation all around us, they will never have the opportunity to hear and believe the Gospel and be saved. Satan has arranged to have them cut off from all this. This is the work of Satan and people are stupid enough to believe his lies.

Let’s return to our story. Look at the desperate father. He says to Jesus in verse 22:

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^[a] and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

III. Humble, weak faith is honored by God. v. 22-24

Here’s a man in a desperate situation. He’s about to lose his son to the powers of evil. But what does he do? He goes to the right place, that is, the right person, he goes to the Lord Jesus Christ.

My friends, he is on the right track. Who do you go to in your desperate situation? If you go to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are on the right track. You are going to the one who has power over the devil, who had power over all creation because he created all things and sustains all things and governs all things. He, in fact, is your only real hope.

You can do to the doctor, but if Jesus doesn’t heal you by his invisible, gracious power, you won’t be healed. All healing, whether through medicine or miracle, is the work of our good God who reverses the destructive evil of Satan.

Jesus affirms the cruciality of faith. We must believe God, believe in God, look to him in faith for his mercy. This man, like us, had faith, but not total faith. He needed more faith, stronger faith. He acknowledged both his faith and the weakness of his faith. But, again, he went to the right Person, he asked Jesus to help him in his unbelief.

This is what, we, too, must do. Go to him with the faith that we have, and ask him to strengthen and increase our faith. As Heb. 11:6 says, ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him...”

But look at what God does, he honors this man’s weak, humble faith. Jesus delivers and heals his son.

IV. Mark 9:25-27 - Jesus Christ has absolute power and authority over Satan and his demons.

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.”

Here we see that Jesus discerned the boy was oppressed by not just a mute spirit, but a spirit that made him both mute and deaf.

Luke. 9:42 - Jesus ^(E)rebuked the unclean spirit ...

What does Jesus do? He issues a command to the demon to come out, and to protect the boy from further oppression, he commands it never to enter the boy again.

Jesus knew the operations of demons, he knew they did not give up their territory easily or would try to reclaim it. So he guarded the boy against that.

We see that in our country today. Roe vs. Wade was struck down by the supreme court, but the forces of evil keep trying to preserve and promote abortion in any way they can. We are up against a wicked, unrelenting foe.

Eph. 6:12 - For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the **authorities**, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

But Jesus has the victory over these evil powers:

Gen. 3:15 - I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring^[a] and ^(A)her offspring;
^(B)he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”

John 12:31 - ³¹ ^(A)Now is the judgment of this world; now will ^(B)the ruler of this world ^(C)be cast out.

Romans 16:20 – ²⁰ ^(A)The God of peace ^(B)will soon crush Satan under your feet. ^(C)The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Col. 1:13-14 - ¹³ He ^(AF)has delivered us from ^(AG)the domain of darkness and transferred us to ^(AH)the kingdom of ^(AI)his beloved Son, ¹⁴ ^(AJ)in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Heb. 2:14 - ¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise ^(A)partook of the same things, that ^(B)through death he might ^(C)destroy ^(D)the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

James 4:7 - ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you

Rev. 12:10 - ¹⁰ and the devil ^(A)who had deceived them was ^(B)thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where ^(C)the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

c.G.Berkhouwer: "In the Bk of Revel the dark appearance of the dragon on the scene is set back of the foreground of the Lamb Who conquers." Ibid

There is in Christ the power to resist Satan: ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.." **1 Pet. 5:8-9**

Because of the presence of so much evil in the world "we can easily be overcome with pessimism and lose sight of the triumphant theme of the Gospel."

The Lord's prayer sets the proper perspective: it does not begin with evil, but begins with God and ends with evil.

Satan appears now as an angel of light,"he stands before the entrance of a dry desert and proclaims it as the way to paradise." P. 74

We must remember that we are responsible for our own sin

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.

V. Prayer and faith are the Christian's weapons for combating demonic powers.

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."^[B]

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁰ He said to them, ^(H)"Because of your little faith. For ^(I)truly, I say to you, ^(J)if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, ^(K)you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and ^(L)nothing will be impossible for you." Matt. 17:19-20

[it takes prayer and faith to deliver people from demon oppression]

Here's what we've looked at today:

Mark 9:14-19 - Human power alone is insufficient to combat evil powers.

Mark 9:20-22 - Satan and his demons can do great harm to humans.

Mark 9:22-24 - Humble, weak faith is honored by God.

Mark 9:25-27 - Jesus Christ has absolute power and authority over Satan and his demons.

Mark 9:28-29 - Prayer and faith are the Christian's weapons for combatting demonic powers.

Here's a final exhortation:

Eph. 6:11-13 - ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm."

Closing Prayer...

-by Jeff Gregory, pastor
Good Shepherd Community Church
Dallas, TX
Feb. 12, 2023