

## Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon

**Objective:** We will learn what faith is and what Jesus means when He says “*all things are possible for one who believes*”.

### Introduction

We heard how Peter, John and James witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus, “*His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.*” Elijah and Moses had appeared, talking with Jesus about “*his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*” (Luke 9:31).

Afterwards, “*as they were coming down the mountain*”, Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen. The three apostles began puzzling over what Jesus had previously said about His resurrection: “*questioning what this rising from the dead might mean*”. They connect this to the appearance of Elijah that they had just witnessed and ask Him “*Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?*”.

Jesus’ reply in verses 12-13 tells them 3 things:

1. That they are correct, Elijah does come first.
2. In the form of a question, He tells them that when Elijah, the preparer of the way, the forerunner of the Messiah, has come then the Son of Man will suffer many things.
3. That Elijah (John the Baptist) has already come.

Jesus points them to what Scripture says, and that the prophecies concerning Elijah had been fulfilled in John the Baptist, and those about the Messiah would be fulfilled in Him. They now return to where they had left the other nine apostles.

### Add

#### Our Study Text:

#### Read Mark 9:14-29

<sup>14</sup>And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. <sup>15</sup>And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. <sup>16</sup>And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” <sup>17</sup>And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. <sup>18</sup>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.”

<sup>19</sup>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.” <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. <sup>22</sup>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.”

<sup>23</sup>And Jesus said to him, “‘If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.” <sup>24</sup>Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” <sup>25</sup>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.” <sup>26</sup>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.” <sup>27</sup>But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. <sup>28</sup>And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” <sup>29</sup>And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

In Luke's account, he tells us these events happened the day after the Transfiguration.

**Read Luke 9:37**

*On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.*

By now it's likely mid-morning. The remaining nine disciples have got into a dispute with some scribes, probably from the local synagogue, and a crowd have gathered to watch. Verse 14:

*<sup>14</sup>And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them.*

Peter, John and James had, the previous evening, been on a mountaintop. Seeing and hearing incredible things, but now they return to earth, into a dark valley of human squabbling and conflict.

Jesus asks what they are arguing about. A man steps forward and says, in verses 17-18:

*"Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. <sup>18</sup>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."*

**Question:**

- When the crowd saw Jesus, according to verse 15, they "*were greatly amazed and ran up to him*", why did the crowd react like this?
  - What the father says in verse 18b may help: "*So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.*"

The scribes, never passing up an opportunity to slander Jesus and His disciples, will have ridiculed the disciples for their inability to do what Jesus had often done, and what they had previously been able to do. "Your Master has abandoned you. He's a fraud and he's never coming back. Where has your 'power' gone, off with your liar of a Master?"

Remember what the disciples had been able to do just a few months before:

**Read Mark 6:7,12-13**

*<sup>7</sup>And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.*

*<sup>12</sup>So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. <sup>13</sup>And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.*

**Question:**

- What has changed? What might the disciples have been doing differently that meant they were unable to cast the demon out of the boy?
  - What Jesus says in verse 19 may provide a clue:

*<sup>19</sup>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."*

Jesus' rebuke is addressed to the whole crowd, including His disciples. They should have been able to help this poor man but had lost faith in Jesus' promise that they could cast out demons.

This warning is relevant today, and is for those who give up on Jesus. Jesus is lost where His Word is lost because people don't believe it or lose trust in His promises that are in it. That usually happens over time as one part of the Word is given up and then another, and another.

Despite His rebuke and expression of His frustration, Jesus does not give up on them and tells the father to bring his son to Him. "*Bring him to me*"

The description, in verse 20, of the boy's affliction appears to be epilepsy:

<sup>20</sup> *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.*

**Question:**

- What tells us that this is more than epilepsy?

As soon as the spirit sees Jesus it gives a demonstration of its hatred of Jesus and God's creation.

Jesus could have healed the boy immediately, instead He asks the father:

*"How long has this been happening to him?"*

We can hear the despair in the father's reply in verse 22 of how the demonic spirit tortures his son:

*"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."*

Through His question, Jesus has brought the man to recognise his own helplessness. He did not previously understand his own desperate need for faith and relief from the misery of his son's condition. The man came seeking Jesus in hope, in faith, but one that was on the brink of unbelieving despair. It had been weakened by the powerlessness of the disciples, so Jesus strikes to the heart of this man's problem:

<sup>23</sup> *And Jesus said to him, " 'If you can!' All things are possible for one who believes."*

The man responds with a heartfelt and wonderful prayer:

<sup>24</sup> *Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"*

The man's sickness of doubt has been healed, he has repented of his unbelief and God has strengthened his faith. Jesus can now heal his son. Verses 25-26:

*"You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."* <sup>26</sup> *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."*

The demon does his best to do his worst. See how the demon shouts and screams and tries to hurt the boy for one last time contrasted with Jesus' calm quiet and healing command.

Jesus could have now walked away, His work done, but we hear in verse 27 that He takes the boy by the hand and raises him up:

<sup>27</sup> *But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose*

This small detail is yet another demonstration of Jesus' compassion and gentle love.

Jesus then enters a house with His disciples, possibly the house where they are staying. They want to know why they couldn't cast out the demon.

<sup>29</sup> *And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."*

**Question:**

- Is Jesus indicating that some demons are more powerful than others?
- What is the main focus of what He is telling them?

**Apply****Regular Learning Task (5 minutes)**

Do we see any of the “5 Mark Themes” in this passage?

1. Jesus’ power.
2. Jesus came to bring the Kingdom of God to people.
3. His disciples struggle to understand who he is.
4. The religious leaders are corrupt and hypocritical and united in their hatred for Jesus.
5. A surprising cast of characters who do get who Jesus is and come to him in faith.

**Learning Task 1 – Faith****Reflect and Discuss (10 minutes)**

The man eventually recognised the contradiction raging in him. In faith he sought Jesus, but a part of him was still in fear that his faith may be unfounded. There are times in our lives when our faith for life wobbles and we do not “fear, love and trust in God above all things” (Luther’s Small Catechism – The First Commandment)

Daniel Deutschlander wrote that:

“Faith is:

1. Knowledge - that comes from God’s Word.
2. Assent\* - that the knowledge is not just a myth, but true and factual.
3. Confidence - that the knowledge applies to me.

For example: We **know** Jesus was born of the virgin Mary because the Bible says so; the Holy Spirit brings us to **assent** that this is true; we have **confidence** worked in us by the same Spirit in the Word that this is for our benefit, our salvation.” (“Your Kingdom Come”, Deutschlander 2021, pp282-283)

\*Assent = agreement or approval of an idea, plan or request.

**Questions:**

- Is this description useful? Can you see how this applies in your own life?

We may find ourselves in the anguish of the father in these verses, but the solution is not despair, it is the repentant cry of the father and a return to the words and promises of Jesus.

**Learning Task 2 – All things are possible****Read and Discuss (10 Minutes)****Read Mark 9:23b**

<sup>23</sup>And Jesus said to him, “All things are possible for one who believes.”

**Questions:**

- How are these words of Jesus often taken out of context and misused by prosperity preachers and phony faith healers?
- How can this damage a believer’s faith?

This is what the Lord says to Ananias when God calls him to go to the blinded Paul and lay his hands on him to restore his sight:

**Read Acts 9:16**

*16" For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."*

- Was Paul, one of the greatest believers in the promises of Christ, spared hardships and lived a prosperous life of comfort and luxury?

**Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-11:27**

*23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*

And remember what Jesus said a couple of studies ago:

**Read Mark 8:34-35**

*34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."*

**Question:**

- Where, in Scripture, are we promised wealth, endless good health, power and universal popularity?
- So, what are the "all things" that Jesus promises will be possible for believers?

All things that God has promised in His word to believers. The "proper objects of faith" as they are sometimes called. In the case of the man in our text, that is trust in Jesus' ability and willingness to help him and his son. Those that don't believe the promises will not receive what was promised.

**Away**

It seems impossible that God loves us, that Jesus willingly died for us, and that He has forgiven us and will take us to heaven to be with Him. We receive these "impossibles" by faith in the promises of the gospel.

Jesus doesn't say that all things that are possible for believers will happen to them.

When we pray for the things that God has promised in His Word we leave it to Him to not do every possible thing but only those things that are best for us.

**Romans 8:28**

*28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*