



**"Only Through Prayer"
Mark 9:14-29 (NRSVUE)
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¹⁴ When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them and some scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him. ¹⁶ He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?"

¹⁷ Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak, ¹⁸ and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid, and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." ¹⁹ He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me."

²⁰ And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²² It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, help us! Have compassion on us!" ²³ Jesus said to him, "If you are able! All things

can be done for the one who believes.”²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!”

²⁶ 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 was able to stand.

²⁸ When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”²⁹ He said to them, “This kind can come out only through prayer.”

We are approaching the commencement of the holiest season in the Christian year. The Lenten season represents the fulfillment of divine providence in the suffering, rejection, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ of God. All of Scripture points to this holiest of seasons. The Old Testament prophecies point to the coming of a messiah, a Christ, an anointed one who would redeem and reconcile humankind to God. The gospels tell us about the life, ministry and mission of Christ, and the apostles look back, and proclaim that they preach Christ and him crucified. All of the scriptures merge in the passion, or suffering of Jesus, as he journeys to the cross of Calvary. We are at a pivotal point in our text as it further prepares us for this journey as Jesus reminds us of his resurrection.

Jesus invites three of his closest disciples to go with him to a mountain to pray. Jesus had many disciples but chose three of those in his inner circle, whom he had provided special revelation of the kingdom of heaven. Peter, the rock, upon whose faith Jesus said he would build his church, and the two sons of thunder, of Zebedee, James and John, journey with Jesus to an elevated place, physically and *spiritually* to pray. Here they are in this mountain top experience with the savior, and all of a sudden, they look at him and see him physically change. He is transfigured before them. This transfiguration foreshadows the transfiguration of the righteous at the end of time. "And he was transfigured before them and his clothes became dazzling bright, such as no one on earth could brighten them."

Our text today is a familiar story of miraculous deliverance from something that controls and dictates a life. Within the context of this healing story, there is a lesson for the disciples and for us. Jesus was on that Mount of Transfiguration and Peter, James and John had journeyed with him and remarked about what they had been blessed to see, "Lord, it was good for us to have been here."

Peter, James and John wanted to build three tents and stay on the mountain. How many times do we experience an ethereal event and want to stay and bask in the feeling but reality sets in and we realize that we can't stay there but have to go down to the valley and face the challenges of living in the valley, even the valley of the shadow of death.

While the disciples were on the mountain, the struggle between good and evil; between possession and liberation; between brokenness and wholeness was taking place in the valley. Scribes, the Jewish record keepers and Pharisees, Jewish leaders and interpreters of the Torah and Law of Moses,

were arguing and debating with Jesus' disciples and Jesus sees this and asks why are you arguing?

A man said, teacher my son has been possessed with an unclean spirit and it won't even allow him to talk. He falls down; grinds his teeth. Modern day physicians would say it's an epileptic seizure, but all that the father knew was that something on the inside of his son was causing pain and confusion on the outside of him. The father said that I asked your disciples, your students, your followers to heal him and they could not. They didn't have the power to heal him. Jesus rebuked and chastised his disciples by saying Oh, you faithless generation. Rather than arguing, you should have been prayerful about the situation.

Did you know that a part of our discipleship and responsibility as followers of Jesus is to confront unclean, unrighteous spirits so that the spirit of Christ, which is one of healing, liberation, love, peace, and wholeness can abide? But if we're not careful, there will be those who will come to us like this father did and say I came to your disciples, I came to your church and brought my brokenness; brought my sickness and dis-eased self; brought my desperate and despondent condition; and those of you who profess Jesus as Lord and Savior could not do anything because you lacked spiritual power.

Now, let's understand and be clear that there is a difference between worldly power and spiritual power. Did you know that? Power that comes from people, from money and political position cannot compare and is inferior to spiritual power that comes from God through the Holy Spirit.

Oftentimes when the disciples were alone with Jesus, away from the crowd, they would ask Jesus to interpret or explain a parable to them. They would

seek greater understanding of the principles of the kingdom of heaven. When they were alone with Jesus after he cast out the unclean spirit and made the child whole, they asked him, why couldn't we cast the spirit out? Jesus' reply was this kind can only come out through prayer.

I simply want to say to you today that there are situations in life when we find ourselves powerless and the only solution is through prayer. And we have to ask ourselves, have we prayed about it? Have we trusted God enough to ask God about it and then trust God with the outcome? We can have all of the influence in the world. We can have all of the money in the world. We can have all of the education in the world. We can have all of the social and political connections in the world. But things will confront and challenge us where none of those things will matter and we'll have to God about it and for the answer. Have you prayed about it?

Only through prayer; only through asking God; only through trusting God with the outcome and saying not my will but your will be done, will we be able to be made whole. Only through prayer can we be healed and restored from a broken relationship. Only through prayer can we endure the pain and weakening of our body because of some disease. Only through prayer can we be comforted from the loss of a loved one. Only through prayer can we exercise patience with a child who is trying to find their way in life. Only through prayer can we practice forgiveness when someone has mistreated us.

1. Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered, or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

2. Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

3. Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

4. Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters rest with prayer.

5. The saints in prayer appear as one,
In word, and deed, and mind;
While with the Father and the Son
Sweet fellowship they find.

6. O Thou, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod—
Lord, teach us how to pray.

“Only Through Prayer”

Let the Church say, “Amen.”