

Greetings friends,

I ask that as we begin our spiritual journey together we begin to take some time daily (if you are not already) to read the Scripture and pray. I thought it would be beneficial for us to focus on the same passage of Scripture for the week. This week, we will focus on Sunday's texts (See below). If you were not present in worship on Sunday and have not yet watched it, I encourage you to do so. The Scripture used on Sunday was **Matthew 17:1-9, 14-21**. The verses in between, vv.10-13, feel free to read as part of this as well, but I will not be covering those in the Faith Focus this week. Those verses were simply cut for time and because it wasn't pertaining to the direction that the service was going. Sunday was Transfiguration Sunday, the day when the church remembers and celebrates the transfiguration of Jesus. The paraments are white, the color for purity and completeness. White is also used on Christmas and its twelve days including Epiphany, Baptism of the Lord Sunday, and Easter. FYI- purple is used during Lent and Advent, Red for Pentecost, and Green for "ordinary time."

The story of Jesus' transfiguration, followed by the healing of the demonized boy is not only told in Matthew 17, but also beginning in Mark 9:2 and Luke 9:28. I encourage you to read all three versions and note what the different authors included that was the same and different. It paints a fuller picture of the story. Depending on what version of the Bible you are using, it may or may not contain Matt.17:21. The NIV does not, so for Sunday it was added in, using the NKJV- "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting". The reason some Bibles do not contain this verse is because some of the earlier manuscripts found do not include it. Mark's version contains something similar, "This kind can come out only by prayer" and some manuscripts also contain "and fasting." Fasting is a biblical principle, encouraged throughout, and even Jesus fasted 40 days in the desert (Mark 1:13, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13), so I felt comfortable including that version in our text.

The author of our text for this week is Matthew, who was one of the disciples. He would've not only been an eye-witness to the events with the boy, but would have been one of the ones powerless to help, as only Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus on the mountaintop. Matthew used to be a tax collector, working for the Roman government, a position that would have made him disrespected by other Jews. But, when Jesus called him, he went- leaving behind that position and the money that accompanied it.

Format-this is a repeat from every week, and will be consistently present for anyone new and as a reminder for all. It is listed at the bottom for review and for anyone who is new to this exercise. Please remember that it is a suggestion. There is no pressure to do it in the format suggested, to do everything on the days that are listed, or to even to answer all the questions. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. If one question takes up the time because you are moved in your spirit, then stay with it. The idea of this is to spend some intentional time with the Scriptures, in the presence of God, and in prayer and reflection- in whatever way that works for you!

Scripture: Matthew 17:1—9, 14-21 (NIV)

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴ Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” ⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

¹⁴ When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

¹⁷ “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” ¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁰ He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” ^[21] ^[a]

Other Scriptures referenced:

1 John 5:19- The whole world is under the control of the evil one.

1 Peter 5:8b-9a- Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith

Ephesians 6:10-13- ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Mark 9:22b-24 But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” ²³ “If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” ²⁴ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

1 Thessalonians 5:16a- pray without ceasing

James 4:7-10- ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** ⁸ **Come near to God and he will come near to you.** Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**

DAILY QUIET TIME WITH GOD:

Monday: v.1 “After six days”- in Luke it says “about eight days after.” Scholars believe Luke’s version is based on a Greek form of speech meaning “about a week later.” For Matthew, two points are being made- that it is after something, and therefore connected, and the symbolism of the sixth and seventh day. Looking back in Matthew, this story immediately follows Jesus explaining how he must go to Jerusalem, suffer, die, and on the third day be raised to life. Jesus even rebuked Peter, who was vehemently against this idea, saying “Get behind me Satan!...” (Mt. 16:21-23). Jesus taught that his disciples need to “deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me” (16:24). I encourage you to take a moment and read Matt. 16:21-28, because Matthew’s note about “after six days” connects our passage to the last, and Jesus’ words had been on the minds and hearts of the disciples. They had been mulling the words over and over, and a week later, the next experience takes place. Keep that in mind as we read further.

“After six days” also draws on the story from Exodus 24:15-18, where Moses was up on Mount Sinai, the cloud of God covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled upon it for six days. On the seventh day (7 is a holy number, the number of completeness) the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud. “After six days” indicates that this event of the Transfiguration occurred on the seventh day. What does Jesus’ teaching of disciples denying themselves, his impending death and resurrection, and that it occurred on the seventh day, say to you? What do you believe are some points that Matthew was trying to convey? Take a moment and reflect upon it. What does this say to you personally?

“Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James”- this was an inner circle of disciples. “Jesus took with him... and led them up a high mountain by themselves”- this wasn’t something where the disciples just happened to be there, Jesus intentionally, purposefully, took them with him so they could witness and experience this event. “Jesus... led them...” Jesus was leading, showing the way, and the disciples were doing as disciples should- following. They had no idea why they were being brought to the mountaintop, yet Jesus chose them and they determined to follow, without even knowing or understanding what was going to happen. There are times when God does the same with us. God calls us to come, to follow, and we need to make a choice to do that. Imagine that Jesus asked those disciples to follow him, and before them is an enormous mountain that he begins to climb! Jesus says “follow me”- and where he is leading, just like the mountain, sometimes looks daunting, strenuous, difficult... we don’t know where we are going, or why... Consider, has Jesus ever called you to climb a mountain in your life, following him? You see it towering in front of you, it looms before you, but you know God is

asking you to climb? What do you think were the thoughts, beliefs, and emotions that compelled the disciples to climb? What does that say about discipleship? What does that say to you about your own walk with God? Pray about it- about any climbing that you were ever called to, or ever experienced, or are even facing now. Pray about your own willingness/unwillingness to follow, and all the inner workings that inform those thoughts and feelings. Work through it slowly with God, and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you in response. Give thanks to God for choosing you, loving you, calling you, leading you, guiding you, and being with you always!

Tuesday: v.2 “There he [Jesus] was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.” The word translated “transfigured” here is *metamorphoó* in the original Greek. It comes from *metá*, “change after being with” and *morphóō*, “changing form in keeping with inner reality” – properly, transformed *after* being with; *transfigured*. *Metamorphóō* is the root of the English terms “metamorphosis” and “metamorphism.” (biblehub.com) Jesus, the Christ, is fully God and fully human- a mystery referred to as the *hypostatic union*. In the Transfiguration, he chose for his humanity to be shown diminished, and his divinity to shine forth. The imagery described “shone like the sun,” “white as the light,” speaks to what is going on inside of us when we become believers. Jesus often taught about himself being the light, and about the light within us (John 8:12; Matt. 4:16; 5:14-16; 6:22-23, etc.). Also, Matthew is again drawing a parallel to Moses, whose “face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord” on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:29). Take a moment in prayer, opening yourself to the Holy Spirit. Pray for and envision the light of Christ enveloping and filling you. See it, feel it, thank God for it. Pray about the light within you shining out- being seen on your face, experienced from your presence. Pray about any circumstances in your life, and about the light of Christ within you, within those circumstances. Is there something blocking the light or is it shining brightly? Why? Consider why the light within us shining out is so important. What does this have to do with transfiguration, metamorphosis, transformation within you? Pray for an increase in light, and all that it means and gives.

V.3 “Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus”- Moses had lived about 1400 year before Jesus, and Elijah about 900 years. They appear in a supernatural manner, in some sort of glorified, resurrected state. It is often regarded that Moses appeared as one symbolizing the Law, as the Law came through Moses and is even referred to as the Mosaic Law. Elijah is considered one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, and instead of dying, was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:1-18). Tradition was that Elijah would return before the Messiah, and at Passover an empty seat is left for Elijah. Both Moses and Elijah met with God on a high mountain- Moses on Sinai, and Elijah on Horeb (1 Kings 19:11-13), both considered to be the same place. So not only symbolizing the Law and Prophets, but also representing those who encountered God directly and powerfully. When discussing Elijah in Matthew 11:14, Jesus said of John the Baptist, “He is the Elijah who is to come.” The message that the disciples would have received with seeing both Moses and Elijah together is fulfillment, completeness- the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament meeting with the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, and there is transfiguration, transformation. “Talking with Jesus”- we learn from Luke 9:31 that “They spoke of his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”

v.4 “Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters- one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”- Luke and Mark temper this with a comment, “He did not know what he was saying” (Luke 9:33), and in Mark 9:6, “He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.” Peter was impulsive, and reacted to what he was seeing without really thinking it through. I think we have probably all done that at times, and can understand the desire to respond but not know exactly how, and end up saying or doing something that wasn’t quite what was needed. But at least his heart was in the right place! He recognized God’s presence and wanted to build some shelters (or “booths,” like what is done for the Feast of Booths that commemorates God’s presence and protection during the forty years that Israel wandered in the wilderness), to tangibly illustrate the experience. Jesus is, however, not equal to Moses and Elijah, but divinity above and fulfillment of all that the Law and the Prophets pointed to. So, great idea, but not quite right... I am, frankly, thankful that Peter is written in such a way that can be identified with by so many (including me and you!); that despite how Peter sometimes reacts he is still loved and called.

v.5 “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” The Shekinah Glory of God’s presence (Ex. 19:9, 24:16-25), manifesting as the cloud and the light, enveloped them, and is now filled with the voice of God, echoing the words spoken by God at Jesus’ baptism (Matt. 3:17). The words are a two-part quotation from the Old Testament- from Psalm 2:7, which refers to the dominion and authority of “David’s son,” the Messiah, and his crowning and victory, and Isaiah 42:1 that refers to the Messiah being the Suffering Servant who, in the power of the Spirit of the Lord, brings justice to the nations. God’s words about Jesus ends with “Listen to him!” Consider how much the world, and we ourselves, struggle with listening to Jesus, in spite of us knowing who he is, what he had done for us and the world, and the expectation of our faithful response. We have a sin nature, which comes from original sin, and although when we accept Christ we experience Justifying Grace and become righteous before God, we still have a sinful nature. Sanctifying Grace goes through our entire walk with Jesus- the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that convicts, leads, and guides us toward holiness. We have to continually make the choice to listen- not to just hear, but to obey, aligning our life with what God wants. Consider what teachings of Jesus difficult listening to- in the past, or even now. As things come to mind, consider why that teaching is difficult for you. What does that struggle say about you, your view of God, yourself, and your relationship with the world? Take time with it in prayer, asking God for revelation, a deepening awareness of the spiritual root of any struggles you may have. With a softened and repentant heart, ask for forgiveness, and empowerment to listen to Jesus, and follow Jesus, even in the areas where you have struggled in the past. Thank God for his mercy, grace, abundant love, and power!

Wednesday: v.6 “When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified”- and here terrified means just that- terrified! They “fell facedown to the ground”- humbled before Almighty God, Ruler of the Universe! Reverent fear. Fear, fear. A common phrase in Scripture is “The fear of the Lord,” which carries the idea of reverence and awe, but (I believe) a healthy dose of actual fear in the face of the Creator of the Universe is warranted as well- it goes together. Too often, when considering Jesus being a friend- which is great and true- we tend to diminish the reality of God’s power and might. Think of all that God can do! As Annie

Dillard speaking of worship wrote, “Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke?...we should all be wearing crash helmets”! It’s both/and- reverent awe and trembling fear, lest we lose the understanding of God’s power and majesty. Especially in our Western culture, we are more prone to diminish divinity- which never actually diminishes God, but does diminish our full understanding and full experience of God. Part of the reason for the disciples to witness and experience everything with the transfiguration is to continue to reinforce for them that Jesus is divine. Yes, Jesus identifies with them (and us) in humanity, but he is God incarnate- God “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Through Jesus, we absolutely can “come boldly before the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16) acknowledging that God Almighty, King of the Universe, is on the throne. But even boldly, we still come in humility, reverent awe, fear and trembling in God’s presence- not because we are afraid of punishment, but by just knowing who God is and of his mighty power, lest instead of boldness we come in arrogance.

V.7-8 “But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus”- immediately the song, “He Touched Me” came to mind. Jesus’ touch heals not only physically, but in every other way, including reassurance and comfort for our spirits. “Don’t be afraid” is a common statement throughout Scripture, which means that the reassurance came because it began with fear. Remember the context is that they just saw Jesus transfigured- literally glowing. They heard again about how Jesus was to suffer, die, and rise again. They had just experienced the Shekinah Glory of God and heard God’s voice audibly. “When they looked up, they saw only Jesus”- now their focus was completely shifted to Jesus, with new revelation, heightened reverence, and as Jesus lifted them up, their spirits were reassured and comforted. “When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus” is a phrase in all three Synoptic Gospels, indicating its importance. Moses represented the Law (guilt, condemnation), and Elijah represented the Prophets (alarm, judgment)- they are gone, and Jesus remains. Sometimes Christians can get caught up in what Moses and Elijah represented. For example, experiencing guilt and condemnation, and yet it says in Romans 8:1, “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Some experience fear of judgement, assuming that for whatever reason God will judge them and stop loving them- but it says in Romans 8:35-39 says, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” NOTHING will separate you from the love of God. Nothing. The disciples saw only Jesus. I invite you too, to see only Jesus. Take a moment and pray, confessing and repenting, releasing any form of condemnation, or angst about God’s judgement, or any belief you may have that God doesn’t fully know you AND love you. There are many who feel this way, who struggle greatly- pray for them too. Be filled with God’s presence, his peace, protection, and unending, abounding love, given without merit- amazing grace!

Thursday: v.14-15a “When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said.”- Jesus and the disciples came down from the mountaintop and into the valley. We read in Mark 9:14-15 that what they walked into wasn’t just a large crowd, but also the teachers of the law arguing with the disciples. It says that “As

soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him." Imagine the chaos- the crowd, the arguing, the desperate father, the tormented son. It's quite the juxtaposition to the mountaintop experience! Yet, isn't this how it so often feels? We have a wonderful, amazing experience of God, we are feeling lifted up and full of the Holy Spirit... and then we walk right into chaos. Chaos that threatens to undo, unravel, all that we had just received. It is so important that we continually protect ourselves, putting on spiritual armor, praying prayers for protection, and continually getting "refueled" with the fire and power of the Holy Spirit. The enemy seeks our undoing, seeks to "steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10) but as the rest of that verse states, Jesus came so that we may have life, and have it to the full, abundantly! Watch for chaos, and recognize that the enemy may very well be trying to work through it with extremely bad intent. When you recognize it- seek Jesus. Stand protected, and don't allow the schemes of the enemy to have any power in your life.

The father came to Jesus, distraught, defeated, and desperate. The disciples were powerless to deliver and heal his son, though they had done so for many before. The father knelt down before Jesus, a physical response of humility, and asks for Jesus to have mercy, or pity, on his son. We learn from Mark 9:21 that the boy has been demonized since childhood. We learn in Luke 9:38 that the boy is his only child. This is not only torture for the son, but for the father as well- to watch his son wrestle, struggle, and experience so much destruction and pain. Most of us have, unfortunately, experienced this in some way- whether we were the one being spiritually tormented, demonized, or we have helplessly watched a loved one go through it, or both. Take a moment and reflect on your experiences- the thoughts, beliefs, emotions, trials, etc. In prayer, talk to God about where Jesus was through all of it. See Jesus in the midst of it. Where is Jesus, what is he doing, and why? Is your description and understanding in alignment with who we know Jesus to be through Scripture? If not, know that the enemy is trying to push you off track and bring confusion and chaos. Go back and ask God to reveal himself fully, knowing that God loves you and is always there with you. What is God saying to you right now? How will you respond? As always, give thanks to God!

Friday: V.15 "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water"- The term in Matt. 17:15 "seizures" is *seléniazomai* in the original Greek, and comes from *selḗnē*, "moon" or "lunar," properly, moonstruck, acting like a "lunatic" (biblehub.com). In Luke 9 and Mark 9 we get more information about how the demonization of the boy is manifesting. "A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him." "spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid." "It [the spirit] has often thrown him into the fire or water to kill him." Outwardly, this mimics epilepsy and possibly mental illness. It is unfortunate that some Bible translations use the word "epilepsy," because it is not that. Epilepsy is a physical condition that causes seizures. Mental illness may produce actions that cause such harm as described. But those are physical, biological, chemical, conditions, and what the boy has been experiencing is spiritual. Demonization is absolutely real, and through deliverance ministry (casting out demons, which is a form of healing) I have witnessed these spiritual manifestations.

In Mark 9:17 it says the boy is “possessed” but the original language says “having a spirit.” In the age of modernism, enlightenment, many stopped believing in the supernatural realm, of demons and angels, etc. Yet people choosing to not believe does not make it untrue. It’s actually a very dangerous choice because it makes people exposed, vulnerable. People have tried to intellectualize the Scriptures, diminish the stories by believing that the people writing were just misinformed. Hence, the translation of “epilepsy,” a physical condition instead of what is really going on- demonization, spiritual attack by a demon. There are whole denominations that will not acknowledge this, but not Methodists! We acknowledge it even in our membership vows, that we “renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness.” If you have time, I invite you to read about some of the experiences of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, in this article written by one of my seminary professors:

<https://firebrandmag.com/articles/thunderstruck-the-deliverance-ministry-of-john-wesley?rq=thunderstruck>

One of the questions that often comes up in the discussion of demons is- can a Christian have a demon? From study of Scripture and experience, yes. Everyone experiences demonic attacks- outward attacks, usually in the form of temptation- either to do something or believe something that isn’t right. Even Jesus experienced this (Matt. 4:1-11). We put our armor on and protect ourselves with the Word and Spirit. When a believer accepts Christ, they are justified, made righteous, but there is still a sin nature stemming from original sin. They receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit- to convict, guide, sanctify. Although, as Wesley would say, we are “moving on to perfection,” there is still sin in people’s lives, even if they are a Christian. A believer can be demonized, meaning that there are demons that have, in a sense, taken residence with them and have some influence. Demons may have been there before someone was saved and never left, or they may have even knowingly or unknowingly invited them in, in spite of being a Christian. Some of the greatest ways that people hold onto or acquire demons in their lives can be through perpetual, intentional sin, and unforgiveness. There is no need to fear demons- Jesus is conqueror, and through Jesus we have the power and authority to cast out demons! Jesus is victorious! But we do need to remember that there is a spiritual battle going on and we need to be aware and diligent. If you have time, read Ephesians 6:10-20 about the armor of God. Pray for God’s protection, power, and healing grace!

Saturday: v.16 The father said to Jesus, “I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him”- as was discussed in the sermon, the disciples were for some reason powerless, in spite of having cast many demons out before. I suggested it was because they hadn’t “powered up” with prayer and fasting, and were instead relying on experiences from the past- that they had been drained of their fuel, fire, power. Do you have any other thoughts as to why the disciples were powerless? Some have suggested that the reason was because it was a particular kind of demon that required extra prayer and fasting, citing v.21 that says “this *kind* only comes out by prayer and fasting”- that some demons are more stubborn, resistant. In Ephesians 6:12 we learn that there are varying “kinds” of demons, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but

against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” What are your thoughts about this?

V.17 “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?”- okay, Jesus sounds a bit frustrated! Who do you think he is frustrated with, and why? Consider the words, “unbelieving,” “perverse”- what do you think he is referring to, and why would those be frustrating/upsetting for Jesus? He says “generation”- who is he referring to? “Stay with” and “put up with” (suffer, bear with...)- ouch. Imagine that Jesus also knows that after his death and resurrection, the enemy will be conquered, and all believers will have power and authority to defeat the darkness through him. Does that change your perception of why he may not want to stay? Why, or why not?

v.17b- 18 “Bring the boy here to me.” Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment”- When people are demonized, battling spiritual darkness, we bring them to Jesus! When WE are wrestling with spiritual darkness- come to Jesus! “Jesus rebuked the demon”- breaking any “legal right” the demon may have had to be there- the permission that we have knowingly or unknowingly given. That spiritual chain was broken, and the boy was set free! When we encounter demons, in ourselves or when ministering in deliverance ministry, we “rebuke” the demon. What that means is to acknowledge, through the Word of God, that it is ungodly and does not have permission to be there. The demon is bound by the Word, and cast out in the name of Jesus. “And it came out of the boy”- deliverance! Amen! “And he was healed at that moment”- deliverance is a form of healing. There is healing not only spiritually, but physically, mentally, relationally- and casting out of demons can sometimes bring healing in all these areas. Please know, as stated above, that not every physical ailment, mental issue, and relational issue is caused by demonic activity!! But sometimes there is a connection, a spiritual root.

V.19-20 “Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you”- these verses are so often taken out of context, used to promote a “prosperity religion,” that says, you want it- have faith and you will get it. It doesn’t work like that. Faith to do God’s will, absolutely. Faith for you to get a corvette convertible, nah. The faith Jesus is talking about is trusting God, who has complete authority. The context is in their inability to cast out a demon, to provide healing to someone who needed it. Notice that Jesus was not blaming the boy or the father- they came wanting healing. Have there ever been times where you needed an extra dose of faith? Have you ever experienced times when you realized you had an increase in faith that helped you get through somehow? How do you believe more faith works toward us doing and living into God’s will? Consider the analogy of a tiny mustard seed- unless it’s planted, and in good soil, it will remain tiny. We take our faith and plant it in the good soil within ourselves. How do you think we become “good soil”? What does that say to you? Is God leading you in some way to amend your soil?

“Moving mountains”- have you ever faced “mountains” in your life? Something so big and daunting, that was blocking the way so much, that it seemed as if there was no hope? What happened? Where was God in those moments? Are you experiencing any mountains now? Imagine that Jesus is saying that those “mountains”- those things not of God that are blocking you- you can move them with faith, trusting fully in God! It seems too simple, like a “Pollyanna” view, but if there is a mountain that God does not want there, God will empower you to move it. Choose to do that. But that choice does take faith. There is power in faith because it is based upon, and dependent upon, God- and God is omnipotent!

v.21 “However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting”- reminder, as mentioned on the first page, that this verse is not in some manuscripts. It is however, reflected in Mark, and biblical principles. Growing in faith, mountain-moving faith, will happen when we align ourselves with God. This happens with growing relationship with God which comes by prayer, and by gaining control of the flesh through fasting. Usually fasting is done with food- not as a diet, but as a denial of something that gets filled with God instead. As we enter into Lent, I encourage you to consider some form of fasting, whether it be skipping one meal a week or day, or fasting from something else. Make sure to fill that time with God. Pay attention as you do so, and take note of any changes. Pray that God moves your mountains, that God empowers you, and fills you. Pray thanks to God, for he is good! His love endure forever!!

Other items:

Responsive Reading (adapted from 1 Cor. 1:24, 2:4-5, 4:20; Romans 15:13,17,19)

Leader: Almighty Omnipotent God,

People: You fill us with all joy and peace

L: As we trust in You, we overflow with hope

P: by the power of Your Holy Spirit

L: We glory in Christ Jesus in our service to God

P: By the power of signs and wonders

ALL: Through the power of Your Spirit

L: For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk

P: But of power!

L: Our faith is not resting on human wisdom

P: But on Your power!

ALL: Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God! Amen

Unison Prayer

Mighty God, how majestic is Your Name! We praise Your Majesty! We offer ourselves to You fully through Christ. Increase our faith. Shine Your light even brighter through us. We long for Your power flow, for people to be set free from darkness. Move through us in

wonder-working power. Manifest Your presence, glory, and power among us. Surround us with Your life-changing presence. Empower us to be deliverers in Jesus' Holy Name! Amen!

Song Lyrics:

All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name UMH#154 v.1,26

1. All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all.

2. Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
ye ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all.
Hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all.

6. O that with yonder sacred throng
we at his feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song,
and crown him Lord of all.
We'll join the everlasting song,
and crown him Lord of all.

Our God by Chris Tomlin CCLI#5677416

Water You turned into wine
Opened the eyes of the blind
There's no one like You
None like You

Into the darkness You shine
Out of the ashes we rise
There's no one like You
None like You

Our God is greater
Our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other

Our God is healer
Awesome in power our God our God

Into the darkness You shine
Out of the ashes we rise
There's no one like You
None like You

Our God is greater
Our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is healer
Awesome in power our God our God

And if our God is for us
Then who could ever stop us
And if our God is with us
Then what could stand against
And if our God is for us
Then who could ever stop us
And if our God is with us
Then what could stand against
(Then) what could stand against

Our God is greater
Our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is healer
Awesome in power our God our God (repeat chorus)

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah UMH#127 v.1,2

1. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more;
feed me till I want no more.

2. Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.

Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.

Format (this is a repeat from last week, and will be consistently present for anyone new and as a reminder for all):

Find a quiet place and time to focus on the Word, and to hear from God through it. It doesn't have to be long, for some it will be longer than others. I encourage you, if possible, to do this practice in the morning. You will then find that God brings it to your mind throughout your day.

For greater impact I encourage you to get some paper and a pen and journal daily what thoughts and impressions God brings to mind. Write out also your own thoughts and your own prayers, making sure to leave space within your time for God's response. Listen intently, and notice what rises up within you- what you are thinking, feeling, memories that arise and ideas that spring up. It may be something God would want you to address within yourself and/or with others. It may be something God is inspiring you to begin or end. God's possibilities are infinite! After time, it is often beneficial to go back and read what you have written, and notice how God has been moving in your life (and praise God for it!).

Begin with prayer, quieting yourself within and opening up to hearing what God would like to reveal to you. Praise God for who he is, for loving you, being with you, and more. Then ask God to speak to you; to open your heart and mind to hear his message. (if you are journaling, you could write out the prayer)

Read the Scripture passage over twice; once as a read through, and the second time slowly, meditatively. Notice what God illuminates for you. Notice what words or ideas are "jumping off the page at you," impacting you from the Scripture. Ask God why that is being highlighted for you. What is God saying to you? What is God asking you to say, do, change, pray about, etc.? What is the application for my life today? **Most importantly- what am I going to do about it? (If you are journaling you could write it all out, which reinforces it in a greater way)

I have put together some daily questions based upon the Scripture. You may use those, but also feel free to deviate away from it if God is leading you there. They are simply offered to prompt contemplation with God. There is much more in this passage, feel free to delve in more!

At the end of your time pray again. I recommend praying throughout, but the ending prayer would include praise, thanking God for revelation, and asking for the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal, bringing to mind God's will. Ask God for the courage, empowerment, and opportunity to do what you have determined God is asking you to do.