

Midweek Lenten Vespers 2
St. Mark 9:17-29
March 20th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Arose

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Gospel reading from this past Sunday was about faith and prayer. It was about how believing that your prayer will not only be heard by the Lord + Jesus, but faith also believes that through persistent prayer to the One True God, even when He seems to not be listening, the desire of your prayer will be granted to you. Today's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Mark, the Ninth chapter, also deals with faith and prayer. Except today, unlike on Sunday when the Canaanite woman had such great faith that she would not be deterred by the seeming rebukes of the Lord to get her prayer answered, we have the opposite case of a man who lacks faith in the Lord, even while he is asking the Lord + Jesus for help. And, not only is his unbelief pointed out in the Gospel reading, but also the unbelief of the Apostles, who were unable to drive out the deaf and mute demon.

Our Lord + Jesus has just come down from the mountain on which He was transfigured before Sts. Peter, James and John. The full revelation of the Lord + Jesus in all of His glory as He spoke to Moses and Elijah, is met with unbelief and a deaf and mute demon when He and Sts. Peter, James and John come down the mountain. You could say He has gone from the height of His glorification as God made flesh, to the lowest valley as He is met with the unbelief of the crowds. Even His own disciples start to doubt their own ability when they are unable to cast out the demon, which is why they ask the Lord about it later when they had entered into their house.

The frustration of the Lord + Jesus is evident in that He cries out, "*O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?*" He clearly states the issue in His cry. He was living in a "faithless generation." Indeed, that charge can be leveled against the entire generation of man, from Adam until today. Even we here today, have times when we doubt the Lord and His ability to answer our prayers. Especially when we have been praying for a long time for a particular help from the Lord. There is good news for you today, O doubting Christian. The Lord, through this pericope on casting out a demon, shows us that He desires to help us. He especially teaches us today about faith and prayer.

When the boy who has the deaf and mute demon is brought to the Lord + Jesus, it "convulsed" him. The Greek word literally means to "tear something up." This demon upon seeing the Lord + Jesus apparently knows what is about to happen, and is determined not to give up this child without a fight. This shows us two things: one, that this is a powerful demon. It has the ability to resist the Lord in some

capacity, although as we will see, he is not as powerful as the Christ. The second thing this shows us is that this is an actual demon possession. This is not epilepsy as some suggest, trying to diminish the miracle of healing and the power of the Lord + Jesus. Or, to show that deny the existence of a spiritual realm; that there are no such things as demons and devils, or even angels for that matter.

The demon was trying to hurt the boy; to tear him up from within. The demon would throw him into fire and throw him into water to try to burn him to death, or drown him. The demon sought only to harm this child whom he had complete control over. This is not something that epileptics do. They do not deliberately throw themselves into things that will destroy them. Another thing that epileptics do not do is go into epileptic fits as soon as they see someone. The demon upon seeing the Lord + Jesus seeks to do as much harm to the boy as he can before he is cast out. The deaf and mute demon does the same thing after the Lord + Jesus commands that he come out and never return into the boy.

When the deaf and mute demon convulses the boy, our Lord asks the father how long this has been going on. Now, this is not to be understood as if our Lord + Jesus is acting like a physician who is gathering all of the symptoms so that he can prescribe the proper treatment. No, our Lord asks this of the father to help the father's unbelief.

The father of the boy had enough faith to come to the Lord + Jesus for help. But he only encounters the nine disciples, who are unable to cast the demon out. This damages his faith. Doubts again begin to arise. He again wonders if there will be any help for his boy. We would act the same way. When we thought there was a ray of hope to get some sort of relief from our trial, and that hope is taken away? We also would begin to doubt again.

But this is why the Lord + Jesus asks him the question about how long this has been going on, for the Lord is showing the father just how powerful He is, and how trusting in Him as Lord and Savior is still the right thing to do, even when every indication is being given that it is an impossible task. The Lord in asking the question confirms the thoughts of the father. This has been going on since the boy was a child. No one has been able to help. Not even the disciples.

So, the father realizing that no man can help him is at a loss. Even in his request of the Lord + Jesus he shows his lack of faith, for he says, *"If you can do anything."* The Lord's response is classic. In the Greek language the Lord does not say, *"If you believe,"* He repeats the father's words, *"If you are able."* As if to say, *"Do you really know to Whom you are speaking? All things are possible through Me."* If we have faith that prayer will be granted, and it is to our benefit and not our harm, then the Lord will grant it. Which is why when we doubt that our Lord is listening to our prayers, we should respond the same way that this father of the boy with a deaf and mute demon responds: *"Lord, I believe; help, my unbelief."*

Then the Lord + Jesus gives this man a reason to believe in Him. For, He commands the demon to depart and never enter into the boy again. And the demon, after doing whatever last damage he can do to the boy, departs and leaves the boy like a dead person. Our Lord then completes the miracle by taking hold of the boy's hand and raising him up. The boy is fully healed. He is able to stand on his own. No longer is he debilitated by the demon.

Such is it for all those who believe. We may not have deaf and mute spirits plaguing us. But we do deal with our sinful flesh every hour of every day. It throws us into great shame and despair. It tries to destroy us and all those around us who we hurt by our sinful thoughts, words and deeds. This is why in our sin, we go to pray to our Lord in contrition and sorrow. We lay our sins before His feet. We are not able to heal ourselves of our sin. No man is able to cure us of our sins. No man was able to cure this man of his demon possession. Not even the Apostles or the Church. The Church can only offer to us the forgiveness that our Lord + Jesus, the Christ won for us on the holy cross by His suffering and

death in our place. Only His perfect fulfilling of Law and death satisfies the wrath of God. Our Lord + Jesus won this forgiveness for us. Through faith we apprehend this forgiveness. And we are given faith through the working of the Holy Ghost through the Word of God.

So then, let us daily and often read, study, inwardly digest the Word of God. Let us receive the Blessed Sacraments often, for in our Holy Baptism we are reminded that our Lord told all that was evil within us to depart and never come back. We hold onto this promise when we believe that for Christ's sake our sins have been washed away. And in the Lord's Supper, our Lord feeds us with His very Body and Blood which gives to us forgiveness of sins when we believe that through this holy meal, we receive what He promised to give. Namely, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation.

And then, after reading and studying God's Word daily and often, and receiving the Sacraments and their gifts, let us pray to our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ that we might never those these gifts; that we might never lose our faith. Let us pray with the father of boy who was demon possessed, "*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!*" And He will remove all doubt from us, and fill us with faith in Him alone as our Savior when He proclaims into our ears, through His ministers, that our sins are forgiven for His sake. And we will arise out of gloom and despair and be filled with the joy that comes from knowing that we have a loving and compassionate Savior, Who guards and protects us from every evil, and watches over our souls through His holy, divine and saving Word. May the Lord Almighty grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!