

Midweek Lenten Vespers #2  
St. Mark 9:17-29  
March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

From a Child

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

**Sermon Text:**

And he asked his father, "How long time is it since this hath come unto him?" And he said, "From a child. And oft-times it hath cast him both into the fire and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." And Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth." Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

**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.

On Sunday we had an example of a woman of great faith imploring the Lord + Jesus to heal her daughter who was grievously vexed with a demon. She prayed persistently and unceasingly. Her faith that the Lord + Jesus would hear her and heal her daughter was unwavering. Great, indeed, was her faith. Today, my dear friends, we get an example of how we pray to our Lord + Jesus. A man with a son who had been afflicted with a mute demon since he was a child. This man has faith enough to come to the Lord + Jesus, even as we often go to our Lord in prayer with our deepest, heartfelt needs. But this man is full of doubt that the Lord + Jesus can actually heal his son. We pray in this way, too. We want to believe that the Lord + Jesus will hear our prayers, but when the trouble persists, we are filled with doubts.

Our Lord had just been on the mountain of transfiguration with Saints Peter, James, and John. When He had come down from the mountain, having talked with Moses and Elijah on the mountain, and having been transfigured before them, so that His clothes were whiter than any launderer could launder them, he meets the rest of the Apostles being confronted by a father of a demon-possessed son. He had come to the disciples of the Lord + Jesus hoping that they could cure his son; that they could cast out the demon. The disciples had already been sent by the Lord + Jesus to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to prepare the way of the Lord; to announce His coming. They had been given the authority to cast out demons. So, it was not out of the bounds of possibility that they disciples would be able to heal this man's son. But they were not.

This man must have been frustrated as we are when our prayers are not answered in the time frame we expect them to be answered, and in the way that we expect them to be answered. This man's son had been tormented by this demon from a child. And this speaks to the affliction of original sin that torments us all. If this boy was demon-possessed from a child, it reveals that sin can and does

inhere in us from the moment we are conceived and born. We are under the spell of the devil and his angels from youth. We are tormented by sin, and afflicted with sin from a child. On account of this no one is able to save himself. Even other people cannot save us from the condition of original sin. We can in no wise set ourselves free from the bondage of sin.

But that does not mean that we, who are of the Christian faith, and filled with the Holy Ghost, do not wish this to not be the case. We do not want to face our own sin. This goes also for those we love. We do not want to see them tormented by the sinfulness of this world, and their own sins that plague them from a child. The frustration of this father in today's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Mark, mirrors our own frustration at times when we have to deal with the evil that this world is full of. Like any loving parent, this man did not want to see his son suffering any more. Just as it pains us to see our children suffer on account of sin in this world, and on account of our own sinfulness which causes us to hurt those we love the most.

This man comes to the Lord + Jesus to have his son healed. The Lord is not there at the moment, so he places his trust in the disciples who were there. They were unable to heal him. And it is natural for us to assume that if this boy had been afflicted with this since a child, that this loving father had tried other means, and other people in order to heal his son. Imagine the disappointment of the father, when the one place that seemed the most promising also turned out to be a dud. This is why he expresses doubt when asking the Lord + Jesus to heal his son. "If Thou canst do anything." This is the statement of someone who has doubts. Even our Lord + Jesus reveals this man's doubts when He cries out about how long He must endure this faithless generation.

Many people like to talk about the "power of prayer." But it is not our prayers that do anything. It is not some ability, power, or strength in us that makes our prayers effective. It is rather the One to Whom we pray; the One in Whom we place our trust and faith to grant our petitions that makes prayer effective. When we pray we have the temptation to make our petitions dependent upon our own power. Lord, "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." We need to stop being unbelievers in the Lord; need to stop trusting in our own power to bring about the fulfillment of our petitions, and need to believe on the One Who can actually fulfill our petitions.

Our Lord + Jesus teaches this man full of doubts to trust solely in Him. He teaches him to place the ability to heal his son completely in the Lord + Jesus. When we are plagued with doubts about our own petitions, let us look away from ourselves and our own abilities, and trust simply that the Lord + Jesus will fulfill our petitions in His own time and according to His own good will.

It is after all our Lord + Jesus alone who can save and redeem us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. This boy who was demon-possessed from a child; who was plagued by the consequences of original sin from a child, could not save himself. Nor can we save ourselves from sin and death. Not by our working or striving. Not by our ability to keep the Law of God. Not by our ability to do good works. We cannot save ourselves from sin—from the power of the devil—because it inheres to us like a burr on a dress. Sin so inheres in us that we cannot save ourselves from it. Neither could this boy who was grievously demon-possessed by a mute demon.

But our Lord + Jesus can save us from the power of the devil. He already defeated the devil on the tree of the holy cross. He suffered and died in order to save us and all mankind. He paid the penalty of our sins with His innocent suffering and death, and defeated sin, death, and the power of the devil once and for all. He even rose again from the dead on the third day, to show that He has indeed defeated death and the devil once and for all. He then sent to us—the Church—His Holy Ghost, Who creates faith and life in us by the means of grace, so that we can not be unbelieving, but believe that our salvation is found in the works and merits of the Christ alone.

Therefore, my dear friends, we have a Savior Who cares for us and wants us to be free from the torments of our sins. He desires to heal us of our sin. This is why He desires us to find a home in the Church. For here in this place, He gives to us the healing of our souls by preaching into our ears the good things He has done for all of us. We may not at times have the great faith of the Canaanitish woman from Sunday's Gospel reading. We may often times be more like the man, the father, from tonight's Gospel from St. Mark. But our Lord + Jesus desires, like He did for this man, to cling to Him alone for all good things. Our Lord wants us to give up trying to achieve things by our own striving and ability; by our own power. He desires that we doubt not but believe that He is the only One Who can grant our petitions, and redeem us from the powers of hell and Satan. Let us cling to Him in faith, and trust that He will save us from our enemies. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

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

*Soli Deo Gloria!*