Introduction:

The tug of war begins. Confronted with what seems an insurmountable challenge, one tries to align the heart and mind to believe what Jesus says to be true. That, if faith is allowed to be released without the chains and bars of doubt, all things are possible.

Today’s lesson explores this struggle. It exposes the destructive force of the enemy and the doubt that stands as a blockade from seeing the impossible made possible.

Mark 9:14-18

14) “And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15) And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

16) And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17) And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;
18) And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and
gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they
should cast him out; and they could not.”

“And when he came to his disciples.” Mark 9 opens with Jesus making this
promise: “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here,
which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with
power,” (Mark 9:1). This He said referring back to the previous chapter where He
spoke of His death and resurrection (Mark 8:31), and the call to take up one’s
cross and follow Him, (Mark 8:34).

Following that speech, six days later, Jesus, along with Peter, James, and John
went to a certain mountain apart from the others. There, the three with Jesus,
saw Him as they never had before. All aglow was He in His heavenly glory being
transfigured before them (see Mark 9:2-10 for complete story).

As they descended the mount, He came to where the remaining disciples were.
As He drew nearer He spied a ruckus ensuing between a gathered crowd and His
very disciples. No doubt heated arguments pervade the air as He notices the
“scribes questioning with them.”

As a good father who happens upon school yard brouhaha, seeking to get to the
bottom of the situation Jesus takes matters into His own hands. Turning to the
scribes involved, He says, “What question ye with them?”

Jesus has dealt personally with the “scribes” before. Them, and their cohorts the
Pharisees, have sought on many occasions to discredit Jesus and His ministry (see
Mt. 12:38; Jn. 8:3-4; Mk. 3:1-6; Lk. 11:53-54, just to name a few). Bringing to
mind the old adage, “While the cat’s away, the mice do play,” they seized an
opportunity to jump on His disciples without Him in attendance, as most often
enemies try to do.

As the situation unfolds at the telling, we see with more clarity supposed
dissentions that may have arisen among those present there that day. It all
revolved around a hurting boy with an even more hurting father. Although it was
their issue, as we will find out that lay at the center, it was the scribes who took opportunity to argue with and rebuke Jesus’ disciples.

After Jesus’ questioning of the scribes, “one of the multitude answered and said, Master I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not,” (vss. 17-18).

The love of a father will break through crowds of naysayers to reach Jesus for his son. Although Jesus was questioning the scribes, it was as if this father wasn’t going to let anyone speak on his behalf for his son. He would be his own son’s advocate. Originally, he sought to bring him to Jesus, which he made clear when he said, “Master, I have brought unto thee my son.” Now, he has the opportunity to speak with Jesus face to face and no one will interfere or plead his son’s cause before Him, but he.

More often than not, those who sought miracles from Jesus were the crowd breakers (see Mk. 2:4 and 5:27 for examples). They are the ones who refused to be silent or pushed back. They would not go unnoticed. The crowds are no match to a truly desperately seeking soul.

Many will run to Jesus, be amazed, and salute Him (see vs. 15), but he with the need is the one that will break free from the multitude to speak with Jesus one on one.

Please note: Dear Friends, sometimes you have to be willing to be a crowd breaker to be a Jesus seeker. He holds the key to solve your problems and speak peace over your life – not the multitudes.

This father knew it and refused to be silent. No doubt he is well aware of the capabilities of Christ. He wouldn’t have brought his son if he didn’t believe Jesus held the fulfillment of his hope in His hands. Thus, he spoke up and exposed the violent nature of all his son and his family had been dealing with.
Mark 9:19-24

19) “He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20) And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21) He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22) And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

23) Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24) And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

Exasperated of all that was unfolding, Jesus made His displeasure known, saying, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?” pinpointing their lack of faith.

Many in that “generation,” in that crowd before Him witnessed with their eyes what some would just hope to see today. Some then followed Jesus just to get from Him bread and to see miracles without a real life change (see John 6:2, 26). They’ve heard stories. Some may have even seen evidences of healings and dead raised before them. So, when Jesus calls them out and marks them as being “faithless” (meaning without faith), He does so rightly. He asks as a sighing father over a misbehaving son, “How long?”

Those in that crowd surrounding Him in the New Testament remind me of the crowd surrounding Moses in the Old Testament. Back then, the people too have witnessed the unthinkable with their eyes (10 plagues, Red Sea crossing, and such), but when things didn’t come about as they wanted, they wished they could
return to Egypt to eat cucumbers (Ex. 16:3; Nu. 11:4-10). Both generations saw amazing miracles, and yet, both still struggle to believe.

“How long shall I be with you?” Jesus asked, “How long shall I suffer you?” How much more is it going to take? Surely, His own disciples, as well as those in the crowd, fell under His rebuke there that day.

Then, He commanded, “Bring him unto me.” What no one else can do, Jesus can. Jesus has always been very compassionate to those seeking Him for help. Never is it recorded that He turned one away. And, He wasn’t going to start this day with this boy. He heard enough. He invited the father to “bring him.”

Those two words speak volumes of what Jesus invites us to do with all our cares and woes. Did He not say, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” (Mt. 11:28)? As with the father, He invites us to “bring him.”

“And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.” The response of evil we see in his reaction when nearing the glory of God should be no surprise to us. It is almost certain the “spirit” felt Jesus before “he saw him.” But, it wasn’t until they brought him nearer that he knew eviction day has arrived. His reign of terror in this boy and this family was over. Thus, the violent reaction we see before us in these words.

Stories such as these tend to make people squirm. The thought of such things are uncomfortable for most. But, for the saint it should invoke the power of positivity and bolster one’s faith rather than make it squirm. It shows when in the presence of Jesus, even the worst case scenario will react to His holiness and soon will succumb to His power and authority.

Jesus is not fazed by evil’s show of behavior. Cool, calm, and collected, Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long is it ago since this came unto him?” I love this about our Lord. He’s not only concerned with the present crisis, but He wants to know of all the suffering that has taken place before leading to this moment.
That’s the heart of God at work. All the suffering, the tears, and the pain – He wants to know about it all.

But, doesn’t He already know? Didn’t Jesus already know? Yes, but as a friend sits with a friend in confidence and pours out one’s troubles to the listening heart, Jesus wants him to open up and trust Him with the now and the then of life.

The boy’s father’s response seems very simple here when he said, “Of a child,” (vs. 21). But, I have to wonder as he unfolded the details of what his family went through, of what they witnessed, if tears didn’t pool in his eyes.

The age of the boy in question is not known; therefore it’s hard to determine the length of years this struggle has ensued. One thing that is not hard to figure out is the pain the father felt over his son’s condition. “Of a child” gives the impression of being very young in age. At a time when fathers are teaching boys to play ball (as we suppose it in our time), this man was watching his son like a hawk to guard him from the destruction of the evil spirit who “ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him . . .” (vs. 22a).

Jesus warns in John 10:10a, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy . . .” This is the scene playing out in this story. The enemy is seeking to “destroy” this young life.

If one could only imagine the daily life for this family (since he said, “ofttimes”), meaning quite frequently. Momma may have been cooking over the “fire” when an attack comes and attempts to “cast” the boy in. Maybe there were similar instances with water. This family’s whole life has been viciously disrupted for years. Oh, to have peace back in the home; to be able to live without being on constant guard against the destruction of one boy.

After the father gave explicit details concerning his case to Jesus, he pleaded with Him (I’m guessing with a lump in his throat, speaking through tears of anguish.), “But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us,” (vs. 22b).

Please note: May I interject here. In my opinion it is never wrong to ask Jesus for help (Mt. 7:7; He. 4:16; 1 Pe. 5:7). Over
and over again we see those seeking relief from crisis situations find rest and healing in the Lord (Mt. 8:13; 14:14; 15:30). But, when you do come, come with a heart filled with assurance of faith (He. 10:22-23).

In an article I previously wrote titled *Blessed Assurance*, is says,

“We have the blessed assurance of every promise that God has bestowed upon us. When adversity comes, know that you are not the only one going through it. Sometimes the journey will be harder than we like it to be, yet the assurance remains the same. In the end, if we hold on to our faith despite what our eyes are seeing right now, the promise is ours. “All came to pass,” for the children of Israel and it will for us too. “Be of good cheer,” Jesus said. “I have overcome the world!” (Wordforlifesays.com for full article).

What was the father implying when he asked Jesus “If thou canst do any thing?” Did he doubt Jesus? I don’t know if that’s true because he’s the one that brought the boy to Jesus looking for a hopeful ending. Perhaps after all that has transpired he doubted Jesus will do it for him.

We may never know the depths of that word “if” in his questioning. But, it’s there because something has shaken his faith between his initially bringing his son to Jesus and now. Maybe it had to do with the disciple’s failure. Mayhap the arguments of the crowd placed doubt in the atmosphere, making this man’s faith feeble and wanting. Nevertheless, he asked on, pleading that “compassion” be shown.

Speaking to the heart of the father, the place where that tug of war was battling, Jesus said, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth,” (vs. 23). In my opinion, this would allow the man himself to look within his own being and evaluate what he really believes. Was he so soon to give up on his original intentions of faith because of circumstances that had arisen? As noted, there were many obstacles that came up before him as he tried to approach Jesus for a miracle. The disciples messed up. The people in the crowd wouldn’t shut up. Perhaps the whole thing emanated disaster in his opinion. With unbelief and
dissentions permeating the air, it’s not the best surroundings for miracles, or so it would seem.

What did he really believe in his heart? Could he look past all this outward stuff and continue to believe and have faith? If he could, his faith could open up a world of possibilities to him where he can experience the miraculous.

The father’s honest confession is one, I believe, many of saints have uttered at one point or another. “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Jesus spoke to his heart and with his heart the floodgate of tears and desperation opened, exposing the weakness inside.

Let your honest cries come before Him for healing of the soul.

Please note: When we come to God pleading our case why do we try to hide what He already knows to be true? Let your honest cries come before Him for healing of the soul.

The father went there seeking the deliverance of his son and ended up finding help for the unbelief that was in him as well. “I know You can help my son. Help me, too!”

Mark 9:25-27

25) “When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26) And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27) But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.”

As crowds often do when an ambulance pulls into your neighborhood, the people gathered to be closer to the action, hoping to see something. Never a glory seeker, knowing the intent of the crowd, Jesus “rebuked the foul spirit.”

Enough was enough, as far as He was concerned. Jesus took authority over the atmosphere. He took authority over the boy.
affliction. He took authority over the situation. He took authority over the evil that was present. Notice was served that he was to leave and never return again to mess up this boy’s life.

“I charge thee” is a command given from the mouth of Jesus that even the devils have to obey. No matter how powerful it may seem, all evil must succumb to Jesus. Does not the Bible tells us, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,” (Phil. 2:10)? Jesus is Lord, and they must obey His “charge!”

The reaction was very violent, to say the least. “The spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him . . .” (vs. 26a). But, dear friends, let’s not focus on the big show he attempted to put on. Draw your attention to the results. He came out of him as he was commanded. Like a dog with tail tucked between his legs, he obeyed Jesus.

The boy’s exhausted body lay still prompting the “many” that gathered to exclaim, “He is dead!” Jesus doesn’t deliver to kill, and He doesn’t heal without full restoration.

Once again, not being fazed by their human perception of what they see on the outside (for they are still operating in a state of unbelief), Jesus calmly and quietly without word, “took him by the hand, and lifted him up: and he arose,” (vs. 27). Those same hands that would bear the scorn of the cross, that would end the enemy’s reign once and for all, laid hold of the boy and lifted him to his new life.

Remarkable!

Much has been spoken of the crowd’s reactions throughout this lesson. When the boy arises to his new life, Luke 9:43 let us know in his telling of the same story, “And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. . .” The wonder of it all rippled through the multitude present.

Mark 9:28-29

28) “And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?
29) And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”

Leaving from the crowd, with everyone going back to their lives and routines, Jesus “was come into the house.” Behind these doors, the disciples who were quiet throughout the exchange that took place, asked, “Why could not we cast him out?” (vs. 28).

Previously, they had been given the power to do so and had performed it successfully (Mt. 10:1; Mk. 6:7; Lk. 9:1; 10:1, 17). What made this time different? One may wonder if they were embarrassed to fail in front of others again, therefore not to be put into the same predicament, they seek a solution. Or, is this in fact an honest self-examination of why this time they couldn’t do what they were previously anointed to do?

We can put the questions out there, but honestly, we just don’t know their reasoning. Everything is speculation and judging what we read. The Bible, neither Jesus gives specific reasons to why they are asking (be it pride or honest reflection).

But, Jesus does get very specific on the reason they could not “cast him out.” If we stay right here in the premise of just dealing with what is written in Mark 9, we think we immediately have out answer. “This kind came forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting,” (vs. 29).

If we go to the parallel story shown in Matthew 17, there we see another ingredient that deals directly with the gist of this lesson: “unbelief.” When they questioned Him here, “Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief . . .” (Mt. 17:20). They, of themselves, were battling with some sort of unbelief. We don’t know where it came from or what situation spawned it but it was there. They couldn’t free someone by faith when they were struggling with their faith.

Perhaps they took their focus off of Jesus, who is to be the center of that faith, and relied more on self (there is a hint to that in the next verse). Soon He would be gone and as a baton in the hand of a runner, this ministry would be passed on to these men who needed to be fully persuaded in their faith.
Continuing to speak of their “unbelief” in Matthews, He goes on to say, “. . . For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of a mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you,” (Mt. 17:20); even removing a foul spirit from a boy.

Then Jesus instructs, as He does in our verses of study today, “This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting,” (vs. 29; see also Mt. 17:21). Prayer and fasting deepens the relationship between saint and Savior; between God and His children, and fosters an atmosphere of reliance upon Him as their source (the other area they needed to be fully persuaded in – relying on God). When that core concept remains strong for those that are in Him, nothing shall be impossible. But, “Apart from me you can do nothing,” Jesus once stated in John 15:5.

**Conclusion:**

Nurtured faith and full reliance on God can lead to unlimited possibilities.