**Desperate for Help! Luke 9:37-44**

Back in January, we had some friends over to celebrate my birthday. After dinner, we sat in the dining room enjoying one of my favorites- homemade key lime pie. Everything was fine, until our oldest son walked in – holding a plate and savoring a bite of key lime pie. As soon as I saw him, I gasped and shouted – You can’t eat that! Stop! You can’t eat that! It wasn’t selfishness, it was fear. You see, my son has a severe tree nut allergy and this pie had walnuts in the crust. He spit it out pretty quickly, but the damage was done. Within just seconds, his mouth began to itch, then his throat began to swell. Then he ran out the door and began vomiting in the yard. Almost instantly he exhibited 3 of the 4 symptoms of Anaphylaxis. We’d had episodes before, but this was the worse. We knew what to do: benadryl, epipen, Urgent Care. I confess, I broke the speed limit, may have run a red light, but I was desperate to get help for my son. This morning, we’re going to look at an encounter that Jesus had with another dad who desperately seeking help for his son.

**Luke 9:37-44**

*37The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.*

Jesus, along with Peter, James, John have just come off a pretty incredible and exhilarating experience. Together, they had been surrounded by the manifest presence of God and heard the voice of the Almighty. Not your ordinary hike in the woods. You’ve just got to stop for a second and think about what they all, Jesus included, must have felt. I mean this was a deeply spiritual, glory soaked, mountain top experience. But, whatever bliss there might have been was pretty quickly erased. From the account in Mark 9, we learn that they don’t just come up on a crowd but into the middle of an intense argument between the disciples and the teachers of the law – the religious elite of the day. It’s not hard to imagine Jesus being frustrated by all this. Kind of like when you come home from a really nice date night and you walk in the door, only to hear your kids fighting with each other. But before Jesus can say much, there’s a cry for help.

*38A man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child.39A 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.*

Over the top of the noise of the arguing comes a desperate cry for help. “Teacher, I beg you look at my son.” It’s likely that this father had seen or at least heard of Jesus’ miracles. He’s not exactly sure who Jesus is other than a teacher with a reputation for miracles. Whatever he thought, he had enough faith to bring the boy to Jesus and cry out for help.

He’s desperate and exhausted. For years, this poor dad has watched his son suffer, tormented by an evil spirit. It’s been one continuous attack. One crisis after the other all aimed in one direction – destruction. It’s been so long since things were normal. There’s no peace and no rest. Not a moment that this father can take his eyes off his son for fear of what will happen to him. Nothing will break you down and make you desperate before God, like watching your kids hurt or suffer. There is no pain like kid pain. And this Dad knows that if something doesn’t happen soon, his boy will be dead. He’s in agony.

*40I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.”*

You might wonder why he was asking the disciples to cast out the evil spirit. Well, Luke 9 begins with Jesus sending out the disciples and telling them to cast out demons and heal the sick. And Luke 9:6 tells us they healed people everywhere. The Word on the street was these disciples could work miracles.

And this father came looking for help, expecting some relief. But the disciples could not drive out the spirit. So when Jesus shows up, he asks for Jesus’ help. And Jesus’ responds to his plea, but maybe not the way you would expect.

*41 “You unbelieving and perverse generation, ”Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”*

Hang on, who is Jesus talking to? Doesn’t seem like this addressed to an individual *unbelieving and perverse generation* seems more like he’s talking to a group. And besides, this seems like a harsh and insensitive way to respond to this desperate and hurting father.

Remember, there’s a debate going on between the disciples and the scribes. Those were the experts in the scriptures, the teachers and interpreters of the Jewish law. It seems they had seized on the disciples’ failure to cast out the demon as an opportunity to discredit Jesus. Their intent was to discourage others from following Jesus by arguing that he could not be trusted. So I think Jesus was largely addressing them. But maybe he was also including the rest of the crowd in his rebuke, because while they witnessed the miracles they never really surrendered to Jesus. So I think Jesus looks at the crowd, rebukes their refusal to believe, and then turns toward the father and with a heart of compassion gently says: “bring your son here.” Y’all, that is consistently Jesus’s invitation to us – call to me in the day of trouble, cast all your anxiety on me, come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, “bring your son here…”

*42Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father.*

Seems like the demon, even though he knew he was about to be bested by the all-powerful, almighty God, made one last attempt to destroy the boy. It was a violent display of demonic power. I can’t imagine what the father felt in that moment. The desperation, the agony. “the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion…BUT JESUS…” The power of hell raged…but Jesus. It looked like it was all over…but Jesus. I can’t tell you how much I this. It’s not over until we’ve heard from Jesus! *But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father.*

3 distinct actions here. Jesus spoke directly to the impure spirit and he was cast out. All it took was a word and the demon was gone. But it also says he “healed the boy.” I can imagine Jesus reaching down and picking up the crumpled body of that battered boy. It wasn’t just the momentary convulsion that had rendered him lifeless. A lifetime of demonic abuse had left it’s mark physically, spiritually, and emotionally. So as Jesus held him in his arms, healing flowed to every part. Fully restored. And then Jesus gave him back to his father.

The only son returned to the father who loved him. There’s was nothing lacking in what Jesus did that day. The tormented son was finally free, healed, restored.

*43And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.*

Wow.

I think there are at least 3 very significant things that we should take note of today. But before we get to those, can we just pause for a minute and acknowledge the elephant in the room? For some, me included, this hits really close to home. It doesn’t feel like something that happened a long time ago when Jesus walked the earth. It feels like a very present reality. We are the ones crying out “Jesus, look over here, Hey Jesus, see my child, see my pain. Jesus, look at me, please, look at me and do something quickly or I’m not gonna make it.”

Maybe it’s a son, or a daughter, or even another family member or friend. But it seems you’ve been given a front row seat to their demise. When you read that Jesus said “the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” that’s not hyperbole to you. Because you feel like you are watching it happen in the life of someone you love very much. And the agony feels almost unbearable. You are that Dad watching his prodigal son go off to the far country, just hoping against hope that one day he’ll come back.

And on top of it all, you hear the voice of the enemy in your own ear, hurling his lies and accusations – “this is your fault, you did this. If you’d been a good enough parent (friend, brother, spouse) this would never have happened.”

And he doesn’t just accuse you, he maligns the character of God – “a good God would never let this happen. If he really loved you he’d stop this. He’s not listening to you, he doesn’t care about you.” Lies, lies, they’re all lies. And I know some of you hear them, because I’ve heard them. I still hear them. But they are lies. So let me remind you of a couple of things – nobody else’s sin is your fault. James 1:14 *each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.* You didn’t cause it and you can’t prevent it.

And your Father in heaven loves you deeply. And that love is demonstrated in Jesus, not in your circumstances. He sees you and he cares for you, even when things are going terribly wrong. Your compassion for your child is just a fraction of the Father’s compassion for you and for those you love.

For all of us, there are 3 significant truths that I think we need to remember as we consider this passage.

Here they are:

1. There’s a spiritual battle
2. The struggle for faith is real
3. The Gospel is our hope

**1. There is a spiritual battle** –

This incident in Luke 9 is not a parable – it’s not just a story that Jesus told to make a point. It’s a real situation with real people who had a real problem. And that problem is as real for us today as it was when Jesus walked the earth. There is a spiritual battle.

Maybe you think that sounds a little like ancient superstitious malarkey. But I want to remind you that Jesus was very convinced that the devil is real. 57 times in the NT he directly addresses the devil or demons. Of the miracles recorded in the NT, 12 of them portray Jesus casting our demons.

We have a real enemy who has proven strategies and a singular purpose: death and destruction.

Often, there are real and material implications, physical manifestations of the work of the enemy. But that’s not his ultimate goal. He’s not simply trying to make your life hard or painful. He is trying to use the difficulties of life to distance you from God. Satan wants to disrupt and destroy the work of God in your life. He wants to keep you from knowing, loving and trusting Jesus.

Jesus didn’t mince words when he talked about the enemy’s intentions. He said:

John 10:10 *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

The contrast could not be more stark. It’s like the difference between light and darkness, slavery and freedom, gloom and glory. Jesus said, this is the enemy’s singular goal and the end to which he works – he comes ONLY to steal (rob), kill and destroy. Satan schemes to take what doesn’t rightfully belong to Him. He works to bring spiritual death and destroy the work of God in our lives.

The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy.

By contrast Jesus says, *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”* Joby Martin says the abundant life that Jesus offers us is the exact opposite of the work that Satan intends.

1 John 1:8 says *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.* But can we be honest? Sometimes it looks and feels like the enemy is succeeding in his plans.

Here’s the second truth that I think we can learn from this

**2. The struggle for faith is real** –

Faith is necessary, but it’s not easy. Nobody in this passage exhibited great faith. Not the disciples who walked with Jesus, watching and listening to him. Not the Scribes who had all the evidence of the Scriptures to show them who Jesus truly was. Not even the father.

In the Gospel of Mark, we see the father’s struggle for faith – Mark tell us the father says to Jesus: *…if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” 23And Jesus said to him, “‘If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.” 24Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”* Mark 9:22-23

In response to the father’s plea for help, Jesus lays out the condition for his help - faith. He says to this desperate man “Everything is possible for one who believes.” And in that moment, with his son’s future hanging in the balance, this broken father blurts out “I BELIEVE” But he doesn’t stop there. He adds one more confession – “help my unbelief.”

I can’t tell you how many times I repeat this – “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.” I trust God, but I’ve got questions. But I do not want to miss out on what God wants to do because I have questions. So I have to fight to trust and believe when I cannot see. Faith isn’t something that just happens to you, it is a deliberate choice to trust. And it takes work to fight off the lies of the enemy and cling to faith.

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.* Hebrews 11:6

But how do you maintain that kind of faith when things are going terribly wrong. When you pray and nothing is happening? Or you pray and things get worse? Listen, the call to faith is the call to trust a person, not an outcome.

Notice that the verse doesn’t say “he rewards those who earnestly seek a reward” It says “he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” But if you read the rest of Hebrews 11, what you’ll see is that many of those who were commended for their faith, didn’t escape trouble and hardship and pain. But that didn’t destroy their faith, because their faith wasn’t focused on an outcome but focused on Jesus.

There have been and still are places in my life where I don’t understand why God isn’t moving, why he’s not answering my prayers, why people I love are blinded to the truth and held in darkness. But even in the middle of all that I’m called to trust.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.* Proverbs 3:5-6

 I trust because I’m probably not going to understand – because his ways are not my ways, his thoughts are higher than my thoughts. In all my ways, especially when I’m walking hard roads my goal is to know Him and trust Him, and walk with him, because He will make the path straight.

**3. The Gospel is our hope**

*43And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 44“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”**45But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.*

The crowd is going nuts, they’re in shock. They have literally just witnessed something so incredible that it can only be attributed to the “greatness of God.” But in the middle of the celebrating, Jesus turns to the disciples with an ominous prediction.

*While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 44“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”*

In all 3 Gospels where this miracle is recorded, it is preceded by Jesus’s transfiguration. And on the way down the mountain, Jesus tells Peter, James and John that what was written by the prophets must be fulfilled – the Son of Man must suffer. And in each gospel, this miraculous deliverance is followed by Jesus telling all his disciples that he is going to suffer and die. In our text, he tells them *, 44“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”*

But the Gospel of Mark is even more direct –

He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” Mark 9:31

The transfiguration was so amazing that the disciples just wanted to hang out in the glory moment. I would too. But Jesus said “I didn’t come just so you could see my glory on a mountain top. I came restore you to glory for all of eternity.”

Watching Jesus deliver this boy from the demon, that had terrorized him for years, was astounding. But Jesus came to work a greater deliverance for all of us – he came to set us free from the power of sin and death, hell and the grave. These miraculous moments were always just signs pointing to a greater work Jesus came to do. They were never meant to be the substance of Jesus’ mission.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. And that salvation came at a great cost.

***8****But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

God’s love for you and me is never measured by our circumstances, it is measured by Jesus arms stretched out on that cross.

A God who will died for you is a God you can trust.

He will never leave you or forsake.

He will finish what he started

He will work everything together for your good, conforming to the image of His Son.

Jude 1:24-25 *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence faultless and with great joy. to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

Does any of this resonate with you?

Is there a battle raging somewhere in your life? Bring it to Jesus, call out “look at my son”

Are you struggling to trust, fighting for faith?

Call out “I believe, help my unbelief”

Look at Jesus, the one who took your place, put your hope in the Gospel.