

EQUIPPING DISCIPLES FOR KINGDOM GROWTH
Mark Series: *Let the Gospel Tell the Gospel*

A JESUS-FOCUSED HELPLESSNESS

Covenant Presbyterian Church

MARK 9:14-32

27 January A.D. 2013

In ever-repenting helplessness we cry out for the presence of Jesus who calls us to trusting faithfulness.

Mark 9:14-18 **Jesus' mountaintop presence is needed in the valley.**

Moses came down from Mt. Sinai into conflict and rebellion. Elijah came down from the mount to more conflict with King Ahaz and Queen Jezebel. Jesus came down from the mountaintop of his baptism to temptation in the wilderness and now to attacking arguments in the valley.

Jesus' presence on the mountain meant absence in the valley. We run to him as he's there for us both places.

Mark 9:19 **The presence of God in Christ Jesus calls men to receive him, trust and follow.**

John 1 ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

The scribes had run things for so long they wouldn't see that the presence and power of God had come.

Mark 9:20 **Jesus, the Destroyer's Destroyer, is immediately known and feared.**

The presence of God in Jesus is immediately known to the spirit whose realm is threatened.

We ought never be surprised at the world's fear of and rejection of Jesus.

From what source comes the spirit who turns the hearts of fathers from their children and children from their fathers?

We see the fruit of evil even when its presence is not so visible.

Mark 9:21-22 **As others argue issues and events, Jesus sees a father's heart and a child's need.**

Note well the care of Jesus for this man and his son.

Jesus sees your heart and need just as well.

Mark 9:23-25 **Jesus calls us to an ever-repenting helplessness that lives by his person and longs for his presence.**

If you can? Jesus capability and authority are not in question.

I believe; help my unbelief!

John Calvin: "He declares that he *believes* and yet acknowledges himself to have *unbelief*. These two statements may appear to contradict each other but there is none of us that does not experience both of them in himself"

True faith always knows how inadequate it is and throws itself on the mercy and strength of the Faithful One.

We live under the illusion that if we can acquire complete control, we can understand God, or we can write the great American novel. But the only way we can brush against the hem of the Lord, or hope to be part of the creative process, is to have the courage, the faith, to abandon control. For the opposite of sin is faith, and never virtue, and we live in a world which believes that self-control can make us virtuous. But that's not how it works.

Madeleine L'Engle in Walking on Water. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 4.

Mark 9:26-29 Conflict precedes peace; suffering prepares for resurrection.

The boy's seeming death does not spell disaster.

The words: *lifted him up* and *he arose* are resurrection language and point to what God will do with Jesus.

Why could we not cast it out?

William Lane comments, "The disciples had been tempted to believe that the gift that they had received from Jesus (6:7) was in their control and could be exercised at their disposal." This attitude springs from a subtle form of unbelief. When one has success, it encourages trust in oneself and one's techniques rather than in God. I. H. Marshall points out that the disciples are therefore guilty of an "anxious self-concern" and a "misplaced self-confidence."

Presumably they had come to regard their power to heal and exorcise as their own autonomous possession rather than being a commission from Jesus to realize his delegated authority afresh each time through dependent prayer. Mark is suggesting then that self-confident optimism may "feel" like faith, but it is in fact unbelief, because it disregards the prerequisite of human powerlessness and prayerful dependence on God.

Prayer is worship in the presence of Jesus, calling on him to walk with us and work through us in our journeys and battles.

Mark 9:30-32 Jesus, deliberate death and bodily resurrection now complete, is ever present to enable us to follow him.

⁹ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; ¹¹ and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹² having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Colossians 2:9-15^{NASB}