

FAITH CAN MOVE THE MOUNTAINS!

(Scripture Reading: Mark 9: 14-18)

Mark 9:14-18. 14And when they came back to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. 15Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. 16And He asked them, "What are you disputing with them?" 17And one person from the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, because he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; 18and [!]whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes stiff. And I told Your disciples so that they would cast it out, but they could not do it."

Introduction:

Last week, we came across a bizarre demon possession, Legion! Legions are everywhere in this world nowadays. They may lurk around in our workplace, our schools, in our neighborhoods, and in our favorite two political parties. There is no way we can get rid of them totally. The only way we can guard ourselves from these demons is by staying close to Jesus! Today, we will see another kind of demon, a powerful demon that pushes us to commit suicide!

This incident happens just after spectacular transfiguration on the mount! Life is like a roller coaster. We have ups and downs! There are moments of mountain top experience in our lives, as Jesus, and His disciples, James, John, and Peter experienced on mountain top transfiguration experience, but there are times we may have to walk through the valley of hospital corridors! The transfiguration experience was so enthralling for the three disciples, but when they came down, they were brought back to the reality - the valley of human suffering immediately!

When Jesus came down, He saw people arguing with His other disciples. When Jesus asked what was going on, one person explained as follows:

Mark 9:17,18 And one of the crowds answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; 18. and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it.

A father brought his son who was possessed by demon, but His Disciples failed to cast out demon! Disciples were given the power to cast out demons when they were sent on a mission. But after the trip the disciples never stirred up the gift and it subsided inside. It can happen to us also. If we do not preach or teach, we will start losing our gift. If we do not sing for a long time, we will not be confident to sing again. If we do not play an instrument for a long time, we will not be able to play again skillfully when we want to. We have buried that talent that God has given! God wants us to use our gifts. Let us not bury it.

2 Tim. 1:6,7. For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh (stir up-KJV) the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

Romans 1:11, 12 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— 12. that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

God has imparted the gift of the Holy Spirit within us so that we may develop many gifts and edify the church.

Jesus rebuked His disciples!

Mark 9:19 And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!"

The disciples had seen Jesus in action repeatedly. They had personally done that during their first mission trip. Yet they did not venture out to cast this demon! At least they could have attempted to cast it out. Fear of failure will always choke us!

The boy's evil spirit responded to Jesus' presence vehemently. We see that in Mark 9:20-22.

Mark 9: 20-22 They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. 21. And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22. It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!"

The symptom clearly tells us that this boy was suffering from seizure or epilepsy attack. Also, he had the demon of suicidal tendency! Yes, the psychologist may call this, acute depression. But when people decide to end their life, they do become possessed with more supernatural power of destruction of their own body. You cannot destroy your own body unless you are totally possessed by demon who constantly makes you hear the voice, "Go ahead, kill yourself, nobody wants you, nobody loves you! Your God does not want you anymore and He wants you out of this world. It is a real lie of the devil. Whether any human being loves you or not, God loves you dearly and He will never say that you go ahead kill yourself! We must listen to the voice of God and not the devil. Beware! The devil attacks us to kill and destroy! He wrecks our children's lives. He wrecks our marriages for no apparent reason. Devil is a liar. Do not listen to his voice and fall for it. Let us not be enraged by him and turn out as monsters like this boy and start hurting ourselves.

The father pleaded with Jesus, if you can do anything, take pity on us, and help us.

Jesus' reply teaches us the very fundamentals of our faith Journey. Here lies the secret of the power of God!

Mark 9: 23, 24 And Jesus said to him, " 'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes." 24. Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

The punctuation of "if you can?" is a problematic text. Depending upon how you apply your punctuation the meaning could change.

1. If you can only believe, all things are possible. Straight forward! Most likely this is what Jesus meant.

2. If you can? I wish you could only believe me.
3. I can do it. But can you believe?
4. Are you telling me if I can? I wish you could only believe.

Let us go with the straightforward interpretation, "if we can only believe, all things are possible!"

We say, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

But before that we must believe that all things are very much possible through Christ and He can fulfill all our desires according to His will and purpose. If we can only believe that, then we can do all things through Christ!

Do we really believe that Christ is able to perform any kind of miracle and He is willing to perform? Is anything too hard for the Lord?

But we must understand this important faith lesson and try to get this important information into our thick skull so that we will never forget. This is critical to our faith journey. "All things are possible to him who believes." I would add "according to God's will and purpose!" Or else this doctrine will become more like positive thinking!

There is a subtle difference between positive thinking and believing that Jesus can. Positive thinking is all about "Yes, I can!" Sounds familiar? It is all about believing in our own self strength. But we must believe that Jesus can! Yes, Jesus can do all things! Yes, I can do all things through Christ who can make it happen! This is a huge difference. All the movie heroes portray that they can crush all their enemies with their own mighty strength, and clever plans. But a true believer of Jesus Christ demonstrates his power through Christ, and he will move mountains, not by his own strength, but through Christ!

Beware of positive thinking! We do everything through Christ, and we can do all things through Christ according to His will and purpose. If it is not according to God's purpose, it will not move! Does that answer your questions why we cannot move the actual mountains? God wants those mountains to stay right there where it belongs!

Sometimes, we go overboard with our strong faith!

(Effort to raise the pastor who was clinically dead for 2 hours. Pray everything according to the will of God. Why should God raise a saved, old, retired pastor? Sometimes we want miracles for our own selfish reasons!)

It is the will of God that we should have good healthy body, mind, and soul.
It is the will of God that we should do well in our job and do well financially.
It is the will of God that we should shine in good works.

If we truly believe and ask Jesus, we will receive, and all those things are possible.

Jesus can do anything. There is nothing that He will not be able to do. Why do we doubt? Nothing is too difficult for Him. He is the resurrection and life! If He can raise the dead, why can't He heal a demon possessed boy? Why can't He heal a cancer patient? Or a deaf and dumb? Why do we doubt His omnipotence, His power?

Sometimes, He delays His healing touch.

e.g., The daughter of Blackaby, (the author of Experiencing God), suffered from cancer and at the near point of death. But at the last-minute miracle happened! Yes, He can if He wants to, but in His time!

The father's answer was a terrific one. When someone is frantic for help, they become brutally honest. The father cried out frantically, "I do believe, help my unbelief! This should be the prayer of everyone. If we pray like this, we will receive every time if what we ask for is indeed according to God's will!

The father had some faith. That is why he came running to Jesus and his prayer with humility invokes God to meet him rest of the way. Come to Jesus first. He will fill the gap and increase our faith. Jesus is the author of beginning and the end of our faith. Ask and your faith shall be increased for you.

James 5:15-18 the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. (James 5:15-18 NASB)

Elijah was just an ordinary man like you and me. But he believed without any wavering and his prayer was answered according to His will every time! Effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. But Elijah's prayer concerning his death wish was never answered! Why? Because it was not according to His will!

Jesus heals the boy!

Mark 9: 25-27 "When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." 26. After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out. and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" 27. But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.

Jesus commanded the deaf and mute suicidal spirit to come out. God wants us to command these evil spirits to come out. Do not plead or beg them to come out. Command them to be gone! Then our Lord gives another peculiar instruction to this demon! "Do not enter him again! Very important command. It is no use praying for deliverance from alcoholism, drugs, sexual sins, tobacco, anger, hatred etc. We must pray that it never enters again! Pray that people do not relapse! Do not forget!

The demon was so strong, it tried to destroy the boy before it left. Finally, it left, but left him lifeless. It caused Jesus to perform another miracle of reviving the lifeless boy.

Why could not the disciples heal this boy? The disciples asked Jesus privately and Jesus replied:

Mark 9:29 And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer." (Mark 9:28-29 NASB)

But Mathew gives little more detail.

Mat: 17: 20,21 And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. (Matthew 17:20 NASB) [But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."] (Matthew 17:21 this verse is not in early manuscripts).

Mark in older manuscripts says that only through prayer such demons can be thrown out. But Mathew and Mark add, according to some other manuscripts, add fasting also!

Is prayer alone sufficient? What is prayer? Acknowledging that only God can do and pleading to Him to perform that action. If we ask God according to His will and purpose with humble heart, and if we believe that only He can grant that petition, we will receive.

But beware of too much emphasis on fasting! It can turn out to be a works righteousness. Now the deal is you fast, and therefore God must answer! Fasting is a personal decision. If God tells us to fast, we fast. We should fast for ourselves, we should not fast for others' sake. We fast only unto the Lord if He specifically instructs us to do so in our circumstance, as He commanded Jesus, as He commanded Daniel. When we are sad, we do not feel like eating and we naturally fast and pray. When we are totally focused on doing something and praying about it, we fast naturally. Let God dictate in each person's life. Many evangelists fall into their spiritual pride because of their boasting about excessive fasting. Yes, in book of Acts (chapter 13 and 14) we see some fasting, especially when they sent Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, and when the church nominated and appointed the elders. Those were Spirit prompted fasting! Let God tell you when to fast!

But their prayers were answered because they prayed through Jesus our Lord and through His power, and not because of their fasting. Their fasting may have been habitual, and for some, it may inspire them and edify them to pray more fervently. Beware, let not our fasting become an additional legalistic requirement for God's answer for our prayers. Let fasting not become a bargaining chip for God's answer to our prayer and cause us to stumble in our spiritual pride. I encourage all of us to fast not because of our prayers to be answered, but because we all eat too much like pigs! Our prayers will be answered if we trust Christ by faith and come to Him for our problem! Period! You do not need anything else!

Folks, we are without any excuse! Are we going to believe in Christ and exercise His power by faith or are we going to exercise our own power and go nowhere? Even though this church is small, many mighty miracles have happened because of people's faith in Christ here. Let us pray like that boy's father: "Lord increase our faith." We have unlimited power reserve in Christ. Let us come running toward Christ our Lord! There is nothing too difficult for Him.

We are His servants in this world. We are supposed to do mighty miracles in His name and help many people around. But instead, we feel helpless! We are not able to! I can still hear the voice of our Lord telling us all, o ye of little faith! Can we start taking our prayers and supplications to the Lord in faith and start receiving His answers according to His will and purpose? There is absolutely no need that we should stand helpless like those disciples! We have the same power as the disciples had 2000 years before, because the power is in our Lord

and not in us! The only power we have within us is the Holy Spirit that produces abundant Faith in Christ!

Our Lord is still all powerful, and He is able! He is still the same, yesterday, today, and forever. His power is still available, and we need to believe to tap that power! Let us pray for the increase of our faith to at least a mustard seed level so that we can literally move the mountains! Remember, Elijah was just an ordinary man like us. But he prayed every time with unwavering faith. Let us become effective prayer warriors like Elijah. Anyone can become an Elijah through the unwavering faith in Christ!

Conclusion:

1. Do not bury your talents. Keep stirring your gifts. Disciples forgot their power.
2. Rebuke the demonic evil spirit, and make it flee from you.
3. Only Jesus can move the mountains!
4. But mountains may not move if it is not God's will!
5. Positive thinking is "yes, I can!" But the real faith is, "Yes, Jesus can!"
6. Let our prayers and fasting be Spirit prompted, but not a legalistic exercise!
7. Exercise humility! Lord, I do believe! Help my unbelief!
8. Any ordinary person can move the mountains! You do not have to be a pastor or a prophet!

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2.28.21