

SERMON FOR SEPTEMBER 12, 2021

TEXT: MARK 9: 14-29

THEME: WHEN IN DOUBT

20 And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. **21** And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. **22** And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." **23** And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." **24** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" **25** And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." **26** And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." **27** But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

In the name of Jesus:

When it came time to do some cleaning and reorganizing possessions around the house, our family had a saying: "When in doubt, throw it out," meaning that when you were wondering if you should keep a prized possession for posterity or get rid of it, you were reminded, "When in doubt, throw it out."

Thank goodness the Lord doesn't treat His own like that. God doesn't say when in doubt, throw it out. Rather, the Lord hangs onto and keeps His prized possessions.

In our text for today we see a couple of things. One, there is a father who is concerned with the health and wellbeing of his son. His son had a spirit that made him unable to talk, and to compound matters, the young boy was thrown into convulsions. The father and others brought the young boy to Jesus and Jesus healed the lad. But before the healing, there is this that happens, which kind of gets lost in the healing miracle, “**20** And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. **21** And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. **22** And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” **23** And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.” **24** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

Yes, the boy is healed, but what is interesting and revealing in this conversation with the father is that the dad had his doubts. Doubts about Jesus. Doubts about whether Jesus would be able to help, doubts if Jesus would be able to do anything to make the situation with his son and for his son better.

Be honest, you are more like that dad now, aren't you? We all are. We all have our doubts. Doubts about whether or not Jesus knows what is going on in our troubled lives. Doubts if Jesus will answer our prayers, doubts if Jesus can do anything that will make our situation better.

Jesus doesn't operate nor does He deal with us angrily or does He give us what we deserve because of our doubts. Jesus, instead, deals with us by grace. Note, Jesus doesn't judge the father for doubting, Jesus doesn't send him away because he doubts, no, Jesus comes to help and hold onto that dad you doubts. When someone doubts, Jesus doesn't throw them out!

The dad is just like you and me. He believes, but he has his doubts. He tries, but he is at the end of his rope and is tired of trying. He holds on, and he lets go. So he confesses to Jesus: "I believe, help my unbelief." He unloads everything and places it at Jesus' feet. Just like you, when you bring all of your doubt, your stumbling and mumbling and grumbling, when you bring your lack of faith to Jesus, and Jesus, as He does to this doubting dad, He also offers to you, His love, His forgiveness, and His grace.

This is who Jesus is and this is what Jesus does. He is your Savior, who has come to save. The prophet Isaiah wrote of Jesus and said that "a bruised reed He will not break, a smoldering wick He will not snuff out." Jesus comes

to save sinners, sinners with doubts, sinners in despair, sinners who are too weak, have a weak faith, He is even the Savior for those who have no faith at all. Jesus came to give life, and faith, abundantly. He forgives sins by the blood of His cross, and He restores faith and life by the power of His resurrection.

Jesus has come to live for all people, to die for all people, and to rise again for all people. Jesus holds on to those whose faith is strong, and to those whose faith is weak or lacking. Jesus holds on to people, even when they are letting go. God has given you faith by the power of the Spirit by water and the Word, to trust in Jesus who is strong enough to save. Your life, your faith, is not about you, it is all about Jesus. You belong to Him because He lived for you, He died for you, He has purchased you with the price of His own shed blood on the cross. You are His prized possession. So, when you are facing a faith shaking trial, the Good News is that it isn't about how tightly you hold onto Jesus, but rather it is about how tightly He holds on to you.

Jesus describes faith in Him as having faith as a little child. To have a childlike faith recognizes that you have a total dependence upon God.

(At this point, pick up granddaughter Eleri). The Lord says to each of us to have faith as a little child. The strength of this little one is not found in the

child's ability, power, stature or strength. This child rests easy because the child is in the arms of one who is stronger.

So also faith in Christ doesn't rely on one's own ability, power, stature or strength. Faith in Jesus rests easy because Jesus is the One who is stronger and who is able to hold onto us and save. When in doubt, Christ doesn't throw you out. He hangs onto you, to hold you, because He loves you and saves you. Jesus is strong enough to save you, in your doubt, and in your weakness. So like the dad in our text, "cast your cares on the Lord, and He will sustain you, He will never let the righteous fall." Thanks be to God.

Amen