

Good morning, church family.

If you would take your Bibles and turn with me to Mark chapter nine. Mark chapter nine. We're gonna be looking at verses 14 through 29 this morning. The title of the message is Christ's Gift of Belief. Christ's Gift of Belief. Mark 9, verses 14 through 29.

Once you've found the text, if you would stand with me in honor of the one who gave us this word as we read our text this morning. Mark chapter 9 verses 14 through 29, it reads, And when they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. And immediately when the entire crowd saw him, they were amazed. And as they ran up, they were greeting him. And he asked them, what are you arguing with them? And one of the crowd answered him, Teacher, I brought you my son possessed with a spirit which makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. I told the disciples to cast it out and they could not do it. And he answered them and said, Oh, unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me. And 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, foaming at the mouth. And he asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood, and it is 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. And Jesus just said to him, if you can, all things are possible to him who believes. Immediately, the boy's father cried out and was saying, I do believe, help my unbelief. that when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit saying to it, you mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again. And 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. But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him, and he stood up. And when he came to the house, his disciples began questioning him privately, why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, this kind cannot come out by anything but prayer. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful to be here today gathered to worship you. We are so thankful that by your grace, you have redeemed us, united us with you and one another. And I pray that we will, this morning, focus on glorifying you in all that we do, that your spirit would send this word into the hearts of your people to impact them exactly as you would have it to. I pray for myself that you'd remove any distractions, hindrances, or nerves, that your word would be proclaimed with boldness, accuracy, and with the intent of the original writer, which ultimately is you. I pray, Lord, that you will guide our services throughout the day,

help us to rest in you today on this day of rest that you've given us, and to glorify you throughout the week. In your holy name I pray, amen. All right, you can be seated.

So last week we saw the transfiguration. So we saw Jesus's glory and all

that that entailed, the beauty that it entailed, the multiple points were appointed to Moses, showing Christ as the mediator, the high mountain showing the connections to the Old Testament. So last week we saw a beautiful glimpse into Jesus's inward nature displayed on the outside. outward side of who he is. Now, just as Moses descended from God's presence and went back into humanity, we know what happened when Moses came down from Sinai, right? He ran into Israel, who was making a mess of things.

As Devin said this morning, they literally had a cow, right? The Israelites had a cow and had made an idol. No sooner than God had given them the covenant, Moses walks back down from God's presence and enters into the idolatry of Israel. And we see here today a very similar occurrence. Jesus and his inner circle have descended from the high mountain. They're coming back down and they immediately are back into humanity. They're back into arguing of scribes and disciples. We see him face-to-face with the enemy and the demon-possessed boy. So, very much like Moses descending from God's presence and back into humanity, Jesus and his inner circle are now doing the same. Now, this particular account of this miracle here in Mark is twice as long as the other synoptic Gospels. So Mark adds extra details to this particular passage, which are going to be important, and we'll talk about it as we go through. But the way this one is written, the details that we have, it is most likely a firsthand account, and like I've mentioned a few times, most likely from Peter.

Mark likely got the information that he wrote about from a direct account from Peter. And this morning, what I want

us to look at is we're gonna see ability, the inability of the followers of Christ to cast out a demon apart from him and the ability to defeat the enemy coming from Christ and Christ alone. So let's dig into the text this

morning. Our first point this morning, we only have two. Our first point this morning is the disciples' inability. The disciples' inability. And we'll be looking first at

verses 14 through 19. And when they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. And immediately when the entire

crowd saw him, they were amazed. And as they ran up, they were greeting him. And he asked them, what are you arguing with them?

And one of the crowd answered him, teacher, I brought you my son possessed with a spirit, which makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. I told your disciples to cast it out and they could not do it. And he answered them and said, oh, unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you?

How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me. So as they've come down the mountain, they're back into humanity. And the first thing that occurs is Jesus is seen by the crowd. Now normally when the crowd sees Jesus, they do gather around him, but this particular one is different in the way it's written. When they saw the large crowd and the scribes arguing with the disciples, the crowd sees Jesus. and they are amazed by him. So we've got three distinct groups of people here that we've seen throughout Mark, crowds, scribes, and now a demon-possessed boy. We've seen these three groups of people over and over again, and the scribes doing their normal scribe thing, arguing with the disciples, coming to a meeting. Ideally, most likely, I should say, coming to confront Jesus again. You remember they've been sent out from Jerusalem multiple times to gather data on Jesus, to accuse him. And yet the crowd's reaction here is completely different than other times that they've seen him up to this point in Mark. The crowd this time is amazed by him. The word in the original language here can be translated trembling astonishment that verges on alarm. Trembling astonishment that verges on alarm. So they see him this time and they are absolutely beside themselves amazed. Now, when we've seen the word amazed used to describe the crowds in the past, It has not been at the beginning of seeing Jesus or at the beginning of his interaction with him. It's always been after a miracle, right? We've seen the miracle occur and then it says the crowds were amazed. But this time the crowd immediately sees him and is so enthralled with him, so astonished by him that it's a trembling level of astonishment. So it's completely different than anything they've seen or exhibited before. And this immediate, this reaction, excuse me, was immediate. The moment they beheld him, they were absolutely amazed. Now there's lots of different reasons why this could be. There's some different thoughts around a few different things. But ultimately, I think what it boils down to is that the absence of the Messiah was sorely felt. The absence of the Messiah not being with the people was absolutely missed. They could not stand being without the Messiah. Some have argued that perhaps it was like Moses when he came down from visiting with God, his face would shine. I don't think that's necessarily the case here because he told the disciples not to tell anyone at the end of the transfiguration about what had happened and what they had seen. It would make no sense for him to tell them not to say anything and then for him to still glow. So I don't think that argument holds weight. The true cause here appears to be simply him not being with the crowd. So this level of engagement causes them to sprint to him, to run to him, an immediate reaction of amazement and gathering around him. And then he asked them in verse 16, what are you arguing with them? This seems to be directed

at the scribes in particular. The authority that he uses here, the word argue here has a combative tone. So he's asking the scribes, why are you here arguing with my disciples? And the beauty of this is his authority coming back so quickly. He comes in and establishes his authority. No, if you have a question, talk to me about it. Don't talk to them. And so he comes in and takes control of the situation, establishing his authority over the scribes. We still don't know specifically what they were arguing about. It's most likely something to do with the disciples not able to heal the boy. But he takes control of the situation, establishes his authority over the situation and asks them what they're arguing about. But before the scribes can even answer, this hopeless, helpless father answers to the one person that he thinks can make the difference. In verse 17, one of the crowd answered him, teacher, also perhaps your translation reads rabbi, I brought you my son possessed with a spirit which makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. I told your disciples to cast it out and they could not do it. So now this desperate father responds to Jesus's question, responding even before the scribes could respond, and he lays out the idea of this oppression that his child has been under. Now, there's been attacks through the years on scriptures trying to take out all supernatural hints. And this is one of those times that a lot of people have said, no, no, this boy isn't demon possessed. He's just epileptic. They just didn't know what to call it then. He just has seizures. He falls to the ground. This was just a natural thing that happens sometimes. They just really didn't know what to call it. So they blamed it on demon possession. That that does not hold water based on the text that we have because later on it says that the spirit himself threw him into another convulsion. So we know that this was supernatural we know this was an oppression a demonic oppression and the level of detail from the father is quite astonishing. It causes him violent seizures, convulsing, foaming at the mouth, grinding his teeth, becoming rigid. And then later on, we're gonna learn that it also attempts to destroy him by throwing him in fire and water. And so what we see here is the enemy, the goal of the enemy always is to distort what God has made. God made humanity in his image, the Imago Dei, he created them, breathe into them the breath of life, and the enemy does everything it can to twist and destroy what God has made. And this is no exception. What's interesting though is that the disciples were unable to cast it out. The father was very clear, they could not do it. Which is interesting, because earlier in Mark, if we recall, Jesus had commissioned the disciples

and given them power to do what specifically? To cast out demons. They had been given the authority to do that. What's going on here? We're gonna learn later on, but I want you to keep in your mind, the disciples had been commissioned to this, but they were at this time separated from Christ. Keep that in mind. But at this point, all human hopes had ran out. This man, through this father who loves his son, who's seen this, as we will later learn, this son has been dealing with this oppression his entire life from childhood. All human hopes have basically run out at this point, because as far as this father was concerned, these group of people, these followers of Jesus, and in those times, disciples or learners of rabbis were said to have the same knowledge and power. In other words, they represent the teacher. So they should be able to, by normal custom of that day, be able to do what Jesus did. And yet they could not. So we see that the faith of this man was placed in the right area, but he was let down by the disciples.

And so now his hopelessness, you can hear it in his voice and the way he describes it, this, that they just could not do it. Now Jesus responds in verse 19. And he answered them and said, oh, unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me. Now there's been some debate as far as who Jesus was speaking directly to in this particular case. Some have argued that it was the disciples. Some have argued that it was the crowd. As I dug in here, I don't think it is at the disciples. Because in every instance of

using the word generation or unbelieving generation, every instance in all of Mark, every single one of them references to a crowd specifically. There's no doubt about it. Every other reference in Mark speaks to the crowd. which tells us that Jesus did not, and this is a key point here in this first section, Jesus does not hold the disciples responsible for their inability. I'm gonna say that again. Jesus does not hold the disciples

responsible for their inability. It's their inability. They just can't. They don't have the power to do it. They didn't do anything wrong. and didn't do anything incorrect, they just don't have the ability to do it. But what he calls the unbelieving generation are the crowds around him. Oh, unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long should I put up with you? The scribes were there arguing, the crowds were there, as we've seen over and over throughout Mark. The crowds always sought Jesus for their own personal gain in the moment, haven't they? Every single time through Mark, the crowds are there for what they can get out of him at that particular moment. Can I have another feast, please? And yet, in this case, Jesus, through his mercy, says, bring

him to me. And so he's put the scribes back in their place, exhibited his authority. He's called the crowds, the unbelieving generation. And he says, bring the boy to me and the father's hopes. You can almost hear his heart lift in the scriptures, bring the boy to me. Now, our next point we'll take over the rest of the text, but I want to apply a couple of things here so that we understand throughout the rest of the text, how this impacts us today. The inability of others in human unbelief does not determine Jesus's work in them. The disciple's

inability does not determine whether Jesus can act in this young man's life and cast out the enemy. The unbelief of the crowd does not impact Jesus's ability to impact this father and his son. He has the authority to help whomever he chooses to help. And we're gonna see this as he goes on in this text. But the most important thing that I want us to understand is that Christ exerts absolute sovereignty over the affairs of man. He comes in and establishes his authority. He tells the scribes, no, no, if you have questions, you talk to me. He puts the crowds back in their place, calling them out for their unbelieving hearts. They are the unbelieving generation and we have to rest in the sovereignty

of that king. We must learn to rest in the sovereignty of the King, not worried about the faithless crowds around us, not worried about the inability of the pastor, the inability of the elder, the inability of the deacons or any other family member. We look to Christ and Christ alone, for he has all authority and power. And it doesn't matter on the lack of faith of the people around us. And what we're gonna see here in just a moment, I'll give you a teaser, it doesn't matter about the lack of faith within us. where Christ is the one that gives us the gift of belief. Number two, so we've looked at the disciple's inability, now we're going to look at the Christ's ability. The ability that we trust, the ability that we lean on, the ability that we have come to glorify. The Christ's ability, verses

20 through 29. And 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 foaming at the mouth. And he asked his father, how

long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood, and he 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. And Jesus said to him, if you can, all things are possible to him who believes. Immediately the boy's father cried out and was saying, I do believe, help my unbelief. Now when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit saying to it, you mute and deaf spirit, I command you come out of him

and do not enter him again. And 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. But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him, and he stood up. And when he came into the house, his disciples began questioning him privately, why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, this kind cannot come out by anything but prayer. So he issues a command, he's taken authority, he's taken over the situation. The crowd was so amazed, they were trembling. So it's no surprise that they enact immediately and they brought the boy to him. And as soon, as soon as this spirit sees him, he shows Jesus on full display, the kind of oppression that this poor child has been under for most of his, if not all of his life. Now, when we think about this happening, I can't imagine seeing my child in this sort of state. And any parent in here, I think, could agree, being beside yourself, seeing your child in this sort of state. You can imagine what the father is thinking, or his heart's beating. He's wondering, is this the moment that finally we get some relief here? And instead of immediately engaging with the boy, Jesus directs his attention to the Father. And what's interesting is the other two Synoptic Gospels have none of the interaction of the Father and Jesus together. So verse 20 through 24 is not included in the other Synoptic Gospels. Now why is Mark making such a point to add in the details of this conversation? As Mark has shown us throughout the multiple times that we've looked at faith and the teaching of the disciples, Mark is specifically building the case for faith in the man, Jesus Christ. Over and over throughout Mark, he's built the case and teaching the disciples and through miracles that faith is not in a miracle itself, but is in the man, Jesus Christ. And so the object of this story suddenly becomes not the demon-possessed boy, but the father. Yes, it's a miraculous thing that the boy is gonna be healed, and we're gonna see that and talk through it in just a moment, but I want us to focus our attention on the father himself, the father of this boy, because here's where our lesson comes to light, as Jesus builds this father's faith. So Jesus continues to go about his mission. 1 John 3, 8 tells us that the son of God was manifested for this purpose to destroy the works of the devil. So he came to do exactly what he's doing. So he gets set to take on the enemy as he was sent on this mission to do so. And as he exerts his authority here, we're going to see him fulfilling what John said at the beginning of Mark and that one that is greater than I, one more powerful than I is coming. But before he exerts this authority and casts out the demon, he asks the father in verse 21, how long has this been happening to him? And the father explains from childhood, 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. And the wording here in the plea of the father is one of compassion. He is seeking the compassion, the innermost parts of who Christ is. I need the compassion that you have. If you have compassion at all, please help us. Now you can see the father's faith waning and growing throughout this situation. It grew enough that he had enough hope to bring his son, who I'm sure was an eyesight for those around him. He didn't, I likely didn't want to take his son places. I mean, he throws him into water, the spirit throws him into the ground, he convulses. So he gets the hope, the hope enough to go, this Jesus that I've heard about, perhaps he can do something for us. So his faith, you see it coming, faith works out in action. So you see his faith in the action of coming to Christ, but then you see it wane here again. If you can do anything, take pity on us. And what we're seeing here, is the faith that we are given, and the Father's gonna cry it here in just a moment, the faith that we are given is not perfect yet, is it? I think all of us can rally around that statement, right? The faith that we are given is not perfect. How many people doubted maybe even just this morning, right? The faith isn't always, it isn't what we want it to be. And let me tell you, that is an indicator of true faith. True faith knows it's not what it's supposed to be. True faith understands that. The cry of all of us should be, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. And so what we're seeing here by this boy being thrown to the ground again, Jesus's question here is that the presence of God, I found a quote this week, this indicates how the presence of God can produce storm and stress before anything constructive is accomplished. The father brought the son to the Christ. The Christ takes authority of the situation and he says, bring the boy to me. And before peace can be found, the storm rages once more. And it's enough to make the father go, if you can, if you can have compassion on me, if you're able to help me, please help me. And as the father has described this parent's nightmare, Jesus looks at him and ignores what the spirit has done, ignores the fact that this demon is doing what demons do, which is try to distort and destroy the creation of God. He looks at the father and goes, if you can, if you can, you can hear the sarcasm in the tone. If you can, what do you mean if you can? And then he adds on, all things are possible to him who believes. All things are possible to him who believes. What an interesting statement. In fact, this particular verse has been ripped, kicking and screaming out of context multiple times. in our generation especially, to say as long as you just believe, you can speak word to power and



you can facilitate whatever you want. Speak that you believe that you'll have a new car or the biggest house or that your wife will be healed or whatever the case may be. But is that what the text is talking about? In context of the text that we're in and the pericope that we're looking at, is Jesus saying that you can have whatever you want as long as you believe hard enough that you want it? No, of course not. What Jesus is demonstrating here, what Jesus is teaching this father is that faith is the bridge to the power of God. Now, don't hear me saying that you can conjure up enough faith to make God do whatever you want. Don't hear me saying that you can read enough self-help faith pop psychology books with Christianity sprinkled in to develop enough faith to pull yourselves up by your bootstraps and do whatever you want. What Jesus is telling him, and we know this by the response of the father here in just a moment, what Jesus is telling him is faith in God, faith in me is the only thing that accomplishes anything. Now, where do we know the root of faith comes from? Where does the gift of faith come from? Within ourselves, can we conjure up a little bit of faith? Can you try really hard and make your, is there faith exercises that you can do to pump up the faith muscle, if you will? No, where does faith come from? From God and God alone. Faith is a gift, lest any man should boast. So what Christ is telling him that all things are possible to him who believes, and the father replies, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. What an interesting statement. And I wanna point something out here. In verse 24, the boy, or excuse me, the father cries out. Did the father cry out about his son's condition? No, the father calmly spoke about his son's condition, which I don't know that I could do at that point, right? Seeing my child have those kinds of problems. The father doesn't cry out about his son's condition. The father cries out about his lack of faith. He understands that he must receive faith from the one and only one who can give it to him. So I do believe, and his faith is valid. We know that he does believe to some extent. He brought his son, didn't he? The action for the true faith is there. We know that faith produces, true faith produces action, doesn't it? And so the action is there. He brought his son. He does believe, however minuscule, he does believe that the Christ can help his son. So there is a level of belief there. But there's an unbelief when he says, if you can. So it's this dichotomy that we constantly wrestle with as believers, don't we? Constantly. I believe in Jesus, but let me control this situation. I have faith that God is sovereign. How many of us would go, amen? Amen. Did you live your life yesterday the way, living in such a way that God is sovereign? I know I didn't perfectly. Ask my kids, I fought with that

pressure washer for two hours. See? So all the time we live out our lives, we know that we believe, right? All of us will give a hearty amen. How many believe in here in Jesus Christ? Raise your hand. How many of us live our lives as if we have 100% faith in Jesus Christ all the time? Do you see the dichotomy? This man is simply voicing what all of us think and talk and relate to one another all the time. I believe, help my unbelief, because we know that the only place that faith comes from is from Christ and Christ alone. It's been said the sole bridge between frail humanity and the all sufficiency of God is faith. So Jesus, in his statement of all things are possible to him who believes, is not about conjuring up our own faith. It's about understanding that faith is the only way to God. Faith alone in Christ alone is our only access to God alone. And so the father in realizing this cries out with this heartfelt cry that he needs more belief. He needs more faith. and he understands the only place that it comes from is through this man, the Messiah. So after this statement, as the father cries out, I do believe, help my unbelief, the crowd has now seen what's going on. You can imagine the commotion of the oppressive episode of this spirit throwing the boy back to the ground. And now the crowd is rapidly growing. So there was already a crowd who knows what size, it's not specified, but now the crowd is gathering. There's even more people rushing over. They have to see what's going on. So Jesus turns his attention in his normal fashion of wanting to make sure that his power is not yet put on full display. He moves forward against the spirit. And in verse 25, Jesus says, you mute and deaf spirit, I command you come out of him and do not enter him again. with Jesus' exousia, his power, his authority that he's now putting on display. He tells the spirit, which if you note, it hasn't been noted that he was both mute and deaf. Jesus knows exactly who the spirit is, exactly what he's doing to this boy, because he even adds on another symptom that we haven't seen yet. You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again. There's two words here in the original language, both rebuke and command. This is an authority, this is absolute supreme authority that Jesus is carrying here. As he does have absolute supreme authority over demonic forces. And then he adds that the spirit is not to enter the boy again. And this spirit, as though, as futile as it may be, throws the boy into one last convulsion, crying out with a loud voice and coming out of him. Now it's interesting here that the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said he was dead. What in the world could that, why was that notated? He wasn't dead. It just says it looks like he was dead. Well, in verse 27, it says that Jesus took him by the hand and raised him and he stood up. Do you guys recall last week, the

inner circle of the transfiguration as they were coming down the mountain? What did the inner circle focus on? You guys remember? They took something that Jesus said and they focused on it and they debated it and they almost wanted to hide it. They weren't sure what it meant. You guys remember? The resurrection. So Jesus said that he would die and be resurrected, right? He was teaching them on the way down the mountain. And what they fixated on was the resurrection. How many times in Mark have we seen the disciples be taught, like small children, with teaching and an example, and then teaching and an example, and he shows them with his actions what he had taught them, right? He would teach them something or say something, and then he would back it up with an action. This is no different. He had just taught the disciples mere hours before this, maybe even less than an hour, depending on how long it took them to come down the mountain. What resurrection, he had mentioned resurrection, they didn't understand, they couldn't grasp it. And here he shows them what resurrection looks like. And in fact, in verse 27, the original language it says, and Jesus took him by the hand and resurrected him. And he stood up. So here Jesus is, in all of his mercy and compassion and grace, not only coming to the aid of the father whose faith has been put on display, although may not be the full faith that we would want it to be, that he acknowledges that he needs more faith, But here, Jesus teaches the disciples a valuable lesson of this is what resurrection looks like. You asked me what it looks like, this is what it looks like. Now the boy wasn't really dead, right? We know that from the text. But Mark included this here as a way of teaching the disciples that Jesus was in fact giving them a valuable lesson here on the very thing, a matter of moments or hours before this they had just asked questions about. And so Jesus's healing is complete. He raises him up and he stood up. The demon is gone, the boy is healed. I can imagine the father's heart leaping with joy. But before we get too far into the joy of this moment, I want us to think about from a higher level what the father has just experienced. The father of this boy, has recounted the years, in a small little synopsis, recounted the years of suffering of his son. And Jesus teaches him a lesson. All things are possible to him who believes. And the father cries out, I do believe, help my unbelief. He hears the master, the one he's brought his son to, command the spirit to leave, and suddenly his son is dead. Remember, everyone said he looked like he was dead. So now this father is standing there being challenged in his faith saying, help my unbelief. And how does Jesus help his unbelief? How does he help his faith to grow? By putting him through a situation that causes him to have to depend more on Christ. Imagine what he was going through

in his mind. His son now looks dead. This momentary heart racing, I wanted my son to be free of this demon, but I didn't want him dead. The circumstances around this man who asked for more faith immediately become a storm. It may have been a momentary storm, but it becomes a storm of doubt as his son lies there looking dead. And we don't know how long it was, but it was enough time for the crowd to all start whispering to each other, oh, he must be dead. And so Jesus, in telling him that you need more faith, all things are possible for those who believe, the Father recognizing that, saying, help my unbelief. How does Jesus help his unbelief?

By making him depend on Christ more. I'll come back to that more in a moment, but I want you to be thinking about the circumstances around us that impact our faith. So Jesus stoops, raises up this boy. It's a joyous moment. He stands

up and we see this lesson that he teaches the disciples as a father teaches a small toddler. Over and over again, the small valuable lessons. And then in verse 28, the disciples, as they've entered the house, and we know through Mark, as we've seen over and over and over again, when they come to enter a home, it's a special time of teaching for the disciples. Every time the disciples get a very specific teaching, a very specific revelation about Christ himself, it's in private. So they've come into the house, and his disciples began questioning him privately, why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, this kind cannot come out by anything but prayer. The interesting thing about this

particular text is this is the first time in all of Mark that Jesus has called his disciples to prayer. And it's in the context of teaching on growing faith. This is the first time in all of Mark that Jesus has told his disciples as a call to prayer. Jesus has prayed multiple times.

He goes alone by the Father, to pray alone, excuse me, with the Father. But this is the first time that Jesus has instructed his disciples to pray in this type of situation, which teaches us another valuable lesson. It's been said that prayer is faith turned to God. And so what we're seeing here is Jesus explaining to them, you were separated from me. Throughout Mark, we've seen every single time the disciples get separated from Jesus, something bad happens. There's storms. There's things that they have to be rescued from. Now, they got into an argument with the scribes and couldn't cast out this demon. This separation from Christ has made it where they couldn't cast out even this demon, regardless of the fact that they had been given the commission to do so just a few chapters ago. And Jesus' only instruction to them is this kind, so this demon, cannot come out by anything but prayer. Prayer is us focusing our faith on the only one that can give us more faith. Prayer is bringing us in alignment

with the one whose will we want and ought to be subjected to.

Prayer is what helps us realign our idea of who we are and what we think back in line with the one whom we should think like and whom we should be like. So think about this, the disciples were given the commission. Let's look at an overarching principle here. The disciples were given the commission to cast out demons, right? Now Jesus is gone and someone brings them a demon possessed boy. And as we've seen the track record of the disciples, their full understanding of their position in Christ is not fully established, is it? We've seen them doubt and question and miss his teaching in the boat. It was just in chapter eight, or in the chapter seven, that the boat, and he said, watch out for the 11 of the Pharisees, and they completely missed the point, and he chastises them. And so I can imagine the disciples thinking to themselves, okay, we've got this. We can cast this out. Right, we can handle this and there becomes this sense of pride. of I'm a disciple of Christ. We can cast this out without understanding or acknowledging that they are separated in that moment, although physically, but they are separated in that moment from Christ, are they not? The source of their power. And his chastisements to prayer at the end makes us understand that they were not seeking God as the source of their power for this demon, they were looking to themselves as the source of the faith to cast out this demon. Christ wouldn't have chastised the prayer taught on prayer if they had been in the right state of mind praying for the faith to fulfill their commission. So overarching here, their inability is fine. They're not in trouble for their inability, but the issue becomes they did not rely on the one who has the ability. Does that make sense? So in their faith, they did not rely on the one whose ability they have through his gracious gift. And so that brings us to a place of understanding that prayer is the focusing and directing of faith in specific requests to God. Both faith and prayer testify that spiritual power is not in oneself, but in God alone, and both wait in trust upon his promise to save. It's a quote I found this week. Let me read it one more time. Prayer is the focusing and directing of faith in specific requests to God. Both faith and prayer testify that spiritual power is not in oneself, but in God alone. And both wait in trust upon his promise to save. So we've seen multiple valuable lessons throughout this text this morning. One is that the gift of belief comes from Christ and Christ alone. He is sovereign, His power is infinite. It is His authority that we submit to, and it is His authority we depend on to carry out the commission that we have been given. But our belief is not whole, nor will it be this side of eternity. And so we depend on Him. And when we lose focus as the disciples did, when we lose focus on the one from whom the power comes, our inability is then shining through. Our ability depends on Christ.

He is the one who gave us the gifts of belief. He is the one who can bolster that belief. He is the one that takes us through the unbelief of the crowds around us. He is the one who takes us through the animosity of those who are scribes of our common day. He is the one that bolsters the faith of those who want to simply help their children, for example. He is the one who gives us the power to sustain the commission and the tasks that we have before us. And so as a point of, a couple points of application for this second point, we must, we must look to Jesus alone for our faith, to Him alone to further deepen our belief in Him. It is Him alone that helps our unbelief. It is Him alone that gives us the gift of faith. It is He alone that will, raise up and bolster that faith at the right time. We cannot get stuck in looking to ourselves. We cannot, we must not. But how many, how often, how many times do we do that? How many times do we do that? We look at objects around us instead of the object of our faith. We look at our circumstances. Imagine that father's mind as he saw his son there looking as though he were dead. And yet what a valuable lesson that is for us. We cannot look at the circumstances around us to determine our faith, to determine the outcome, to determine how we will proceed. We look to Christ. So regardless of how sick our family members may be, regardless of if our car breaks down for the 17th time this month, regardless of the financial difficulties or the circumstances of our country or the circumstances of the church, we can't get distracted and caught up in the circumstances around us. We must focus on the object of our faith and rest in Christ. And now that we've talked about ignoring the circumstances around us, and focusing on Christ, we must ignore our own fleshly hearts, because the number one temptation and issue with faith and faith faltering is that we put the object of our faith within ourselves, and we look to ourselves, and we want to control the situation and pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and think to ourselves, well, I'll just make sure I follow at least eight of the 10 commandments today, and that should give me an extra few faith points. And it's funny when we say it like that, but how often do we live our lives like that? Instead of resting in what Christ has done, the object of our faith, the one who bolsters our faith, where we know belief comes from, the one who helps our unbelief, we look to ourselves. How frequently do we do that? Over and over and over again, we look to ourselves instead of our Savior. And so I would challenge you, as Jesus taught the disciples then, is prayer the first place that you go? Is seeking God's face the first stop? There's a reason that we are told in New Testament to pray without ceasing, because we are in utter dependence 100% of the time on the sovereign king. Now, does that mean that every single time something goes bad, you

have to stop and kneel? There are times for that. but having a constant relationship and dependence upon God and a constant unceasing attitude of prayer is exactly where we should be. When the first thought is, I must align myself with the one from whom my faith comes, the one who bolsters my belief, the one who gives me the ability, because I have an inability, that's where we should reside. We are utterly dependent on Christ and Christ alone, and we must, through the exercise of our gift of faith that he's given us, align that faith through prayer with the source of the ability, because our inability will always fail. So in conclusion, we've seen the inability of the followers of Christ, and all of us would give a hearty amen, right? We see the inability within ourselves. And these followers that were up against this inability, they were intentionally brought against this so that they could understand that they do not have the power to overcome, only one has the power to overcome, the enemy. So this situation is ultimately to drive the, excuse me, drive the disciples to the arms of Christ, to push them to rest in Him. Our motto here at Grace Covenant is where the weary find rest in Christ. And that's, I can't say that emphatically enough. Rest in Christ in what He has done, regardless of the circumstances around you. And we've learned today that the gift of faith given to us is not where it should be. God has given us the faith to understand who Christ is, who we are, our need of a savior, but we are not there yet, and we will only ever grow in our faith in a complete and utter dependence on the one who gives us that belief and faith. Only he can strengthen our faith and help our unbelief. So we must cry out in an unending never stopping, never ceasing voice, a loud, humble voice to our Savior to help our unbelief. That there's nothing else you hear from me today, your utter dependence upon Christ and crying out to him in a never ceasing, humble voice, Lord, help my unbelief. For there's nothing in this world or in yourself that you can conjure to help your unbelief. There's no circumstances you can look to. There's no spiritual leader on YouTube or faith healer that you can go to or books that you can get written by people to make money. They're out there that will help you bolster your faith. So look to your savior and your savior alone. I'd like to read one last quote to you this morning to finish out our time together. Jesus calls disciples to tasks beyond their abilities, and the fact that the tasks surpass their abilities is evidence that the ministry is Christ's, not theirs. The inadequacy of disciples is not their fault, nor should it have the effect of impairing either their faith or fellowship with Christ. Rather, inadequacy drives the disciples to prayer, which is God's gift to them on another

form of fellowship with Jesus as their Lord. I couldn't, I had to read that. There's no way I could outdo the way he worded that. It's a beautiful way. Understanding that all these circumstances, everything that we've talked about, the storms, everything going on around us drives us into the arms of our loving Savior, which is where we should be anyway.

So think this week with me and I pray my prayer for you is that you will join me in crying out to our Savior every moment of every day, Lord help my unbelief, because without his ability, our inabilities will win the day. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the opportunity to come to you today. We pray for your grace and that this text would impact our lives and that we would understand that the gift of faith is from you and you alone. And that our unbelief and faith is only defeated by you and you alone and that your ability surpasses our inability. And I pray that each one of us would rest in you as we meditate upon this today and throughout the week. That we would encourage each other as members of this body to look to Christ and rest in him. And that we depend wholly upon you for all things. In your holy name I pray, amen.