

I Believe; Help My Unbelief

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Mark 9:14-29. Jesus, Peter James and John had just come from Jesus' Transfiguration. As they descend from the mountain they see a great crowd surrounding the other nine disciples.

What had attracted the upset throng had been the inability of the nine disciples to heal a man's son who had a spirit that made the son mute. After rebuking the nine for their failure of faith, Jesus inquires of the man how long this problem had plagued the boy and Jesus states: "*All things are possible for one who believes.*"

That is when the father utters: "*I believe; help my unbelief!*" (9:24). The father cried out with faith but struggled with his son's burden and the failure of the disciples. "Worthiness does not depend on the greatness or smallness, the weakness or strength of faith. Instead, it depends on Christ's merit, which the distressed father of little faith enjoyed as well as Abraham, Paul, and others who have a joyful strong faith" (FC SD VII 71). (TLSB) For this father Jesus both healed his son and strengthened his faith.

The disciples' earlier success in exorcism (6:13) had either not prepared them for this case or made them overconfident in their own work. (TLSB) Jesus pointed out this kind of demon could only be driven out with prayer. The disciples apparently had taken for granted the power given to them or had come to believe that it was inherent in them. Lack of prayer indicated they had forgotten that their power over the demonic spirits was from Jesus. Faith works through prayer. Prayer is admitting that we are unable to handle the problem before and relies on the Lord to take care of it.

When we misplace our faith in God for our own merits of works we can be assured that the Lord will strengthen our faith help to focus on him once more.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for forgiving us when we try to do things on our own. Help us to put our focus solely on you and your strength. Amen