

Sunday July 23, 2006

*Jesus: Up Close & Personal*

## “WHEN FACING THE IMPOSSIBLE”

Mark 9:14-29

### Introduction

Mission Impossible – if you accept this mission, Mr. Phelps ...

Sometimes life seems to have its share of impossible scenarios ...

Personally, when areas in your life that just never seem to change; financially, when you just can't seem to make ends meet; relationally, when other people are the problem; vocationally, when your under circumstances or people; physically, when your body is hit with something that affects you severely; spiritually, following Jesus.

This morning we are going to look at a situation that became impossible for Jesus followers; learn some important lessons for our lives when we face seemingly impossible scenarios.

### 1. **HOLD ON to your faith.** (Mark 9:14-19)

*When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. 15 As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. 16 “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.*

*17 A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 18 Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.*

*I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.” 19 “O unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”*

A dad brings his son, who has been controlled by an evil spirit since childhood, to Jesus in order to be healed.

His son could not speak, was physically tormented, foaming at the mouth, grinding his teeth, his body becoming like a board.

Jesus isn't there when he arrives so his disciples attempt to bring healing to his son by driving out the demon.

This would not be the first time they faced a situation like this (Mark 3:15 – called them to cast out demons; 6:13 – they had done when sent out 2x2)

When Jesus arrives he finds his disciples arguing with the religious leaders; most likely because of their inability to heal the man's son. Why arguing? (attack their credibility = Jesus credibility)

Jesus listens to the dad's account of what has happened and by his own words reveals the cause of the disciples inability to help this man's son; “unbelieving generation” (general and specific).

The disciple's problem was a crisis of “belief”. When they needed it most, they let go of their faith and the possible became the impossible for them.

The Bible teaches that faith is the critical link that relationally connects a human being with their creator.

Today: “*It's not important what you believe in just that you believe in something or it's not important what you believe just as long as your belief is sincere.*” – the demons believe and shudder.

The Bible says that faith is a “gift of God” and that it is so highly valued by God that “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Biblical faith gives us all equal access to God and his purpose and plan for our life. (Let's look at distinctives of Christian faith in NT)

### The Bible defines ...

- **Christian faith centers on a Person; Jesus** (Romans 3:21-22)

Lived, died, rose, coming again – source and center of our faith

Christian faith is “tethered” to Jesus Christ (not morals, ethics, rules/regulations, party affiliation, ethnicity, brand name)

- **Christian faith is a way of life** (Romans 1:17, **2 Cor. 5:7**)

*“Live by faith not by sight.”* Life - not temporary, seasonal, circumstantial, based on feelings but how we live day to day.

Christian faith values what is unseen more than what is seen and lives in light of this great revelation.

- **Christian faith is active not passive** (James 2:26, 1 Thes. 1:3)

Biblical faith works; *“your work produced by faith”*

Not a trophy on this shelf collecting dust, it is working, energetic; about life change.

- **Christian faith moves God to action** (Mark 5:34, 10:52)

Why? Because it is the way God wanted it to be.

Holding on fast to this kind of faith makes what seems to be impossible, possible. It was what was missing in this story and at times in our own lives ... what about you?

## 2. **COME CLEAN with your faith gaps.** (Mark 9:20-27)

*So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.*

*21 Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. 22 “It has often thrown him into fire or water (plural, river or streams) to kill him.*

*But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” 23 “If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” 24 Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”*

*25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I*

*command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” 26 The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.*

Jesus comes face to face with the enemy of people’s lives. In this case manifested in a visibly tangible way; so often this is not the case, the enemy’s work is less obvious, subtle but just as deadly.

John 10:10 reminds us that fallen angels, the devil and his demons, exist to kill, steal and destroy (2 Cor. 4:4 – “blinded minds”)

But that Jesus has come so that people could have abundant lives, under his control and not the devil; that he came to destroy the devils works. We see him do this in this story (read 25-27).

Don’t miss the significance of this dad’s admission ... (22b -24)

*“But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” “If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” **Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”***

Dad has his doubts (disciples couldn’t help maybe he can’t either?)

Jesus assures him that he can and that this man’s own personal faith would have a role in seeing this take place.

At this the dad expresses his belief but admits that gaps in his faith exist and that he needs and wants help in this area.

Jesus responds after this admission, why? (responds to faith)

- **To admit faith gaps demonstrates humility** (James 4:6)

*That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* (new believer’s honesty)

- **To admit faith gaps adds power to your life** (2 Cor. 12:9)

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

3. **STICK TO the basics of your faith.** (Mark 9:28-29)

*After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 29 He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."*

His disciples watched Jesus interact with this dad and his son and when alone w/Jesus asked him why they couldn't heal man.

Jesus response focuses on 2 spiritual disciplines that reveal dependence upon God; prayer (fasting).

The spiritual force they were facing in this situation required a greater show of dependence upon God for healing to take place.

It seems that Jesus expected his disciples to know this. Maybe they had so much previous success that they approached this one with too much personal confidence instead of total dependence upon God.

Whatever the case Jesus makes the case to them and to us that sticking to the basics of what it means to follow and depend on Jesus is critical when facing humanly impossible situations (theirs/ours).

*Why?*

- **The basics are always relevant** (Col. 2:6-7)
- **The basics (talking to God) are powerful and effective** (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, James 5:16, 1 John 5:13-15)

It is sticking to the basics that would have made the impossible possible for his followers then and it is sticking to the basics that still makes the impossible possible for his followers today.

So ... How is your prayer life? How is your personal study of God's Word? Do you connect with other followers of Jesus on a regular basis? Do you tell others about who you're following?

Concluding statement: When facing the impossible, hold on to your faith, come clean with your faith gaps and stick to the basics of your faith. It's in these actions that we take that the impossible becomes possible.