

The Gospel of Mark: Peter's Story of Jesus by Steve Petty
Bible Interpretation and study

Mark– 9: 14-32

We got back to town and found the other disciples and scribes arguing. But when they saw Jesus they ran to greet him with reverence and awe. Jesus asked, “What are you arguing about?” A man with a child answered, “Rabi, I brought my son for you to heal, he can't speak and sometimes falls down and grinds his teeth and gets all tense and rigid. But, since you weren't here I asked your followers to heal him, and they all failed to help him at all.”

Jesus looked at us and said, “You faithless followers, how much longer will you torment me? I can't stand this much longer. Bring me the child.” So we did immediately.

When the spirit saw Jesus he immediately threw the boy into a seizure and he fell on the ground shaking and foaming at the mouth. Jesus looked at the father and asked, “How long has this been going on?” The father said, “He has done this since he could walk. Sometimes it throws him into the fire or a lake; we nearly lost him a couple times. If you can, please do something. Please, take pity on us.” Jesus backed up a step and looked again at the father. “If I can? What kind of faith is that? I can do anything, if you believe I can do anything.” The father was in tears and he screamed out, “Oh Please, I do believe, I want to believe, increase my belief!”

Now the crowd was swelling with onlookers and Jesus commanded the spirit, “You deaf and mute spirit, stop tormenting this child. Let him hear and speak again. Come out of him, now! Never go near him again!” And the child screamed and flopped down and he stopped moving. At first we thought he was dead, but Jesus reached down and helped him up and he was completely well.

Later we asked Jesus, “Why couldn't we heal the boy?” And Jesus said, “You have to pray a lot to command this kind of unruly spirit.”

After that we went about Galilee secretly so Jesus could teach us, “I will be betrayed and killed and I will rise after three days.” But we still didn't understand what he was talking about and after the way he yelled at us, well ... , we were afraid to ask.

“Failure Isn't the End”

Mark– 9: 14-32

It is important to remind ourselves what is happening just before this passage begins. Jesus, with Peter, James and John, had gone up the mountain where he was met by Moses and Elijah and transfigured to a dazzling white. When this happened to Moses, he glowed for a few days afterwards. There is no mention of this with Jesus, except that the crowds run to meet with reverence and awe.

The “other disciples” are those who did not ascend the mountain and witness the transfiguration. They have not spent the time in meditation and prayer. In fact, they have assembled a crowd and they are arguing with the scribes. They are actively doing this when the man with the afflicted child approaches and asked them to heal him. Presumably they make some attempt to do so, but it doesn't work and the boy is still quit ill.

The father sees Jesus returning and asks him to heal the boy, pointing out that the disciples had failed to do any good at all. Jesus, who has been in conversation with Moses and Elijah and transfigured by the power of God, and we expect him to be somewhat mellow and a bit more powerful. But he is very angry with his disciples. He berates them and scolds them and then seems to nearly dismiss them. Finally, he asks that the child be brought to him. When the child approaches he falls into another seizure. The father then explains the whole thing to Jesus again, as if he wasn't sure Jesus understood it the first time.

Then he lets slip the famous faithless request, "If you can...". The man has obviously made the assumption that since Jesus disciples could do nothing, maybe Jesus would be as impotent as they.

Jesus is miffed by this faithless response. Remember how often the requesting person told Jesus, "I know you can heal him/me" and Jesus would respond, "Go, your faith has healed you." Jesus can't say that here. The father has little faith. Having been reproached for his statement he begs Jesus to increase his faith. Jesus commands the spirit to exit and leave the boy forever. The story ends with the disciples still unable to understand what just happened. But presumably the father's faith was increased.

WEEK #16 – FAILURE ISN'T THE END

Do you think that God is ever angry with us? _____

If we believe in an all loving and all forgiving God, can we believe that God gets angry with us?

God sends us into the world to be the Holy Body of Jesus Christ. Like his followers, Peter and the others, we are called on to do Jesus' work.

Our strength and our power comes from the Lord. Therefore, we need to use Jesus power rather than relying on our own power. Think of a time when you counted on your own power to get you through and yet were unable to prevail.

Think of another time when you knew you did not have the power to get through the crisis and had to leave it in Jesus hands. How did that go? _____

We are called to learn from our mistakes, to be there for others, and to be the Body of Christ in the World. We are going on to perfection! But none of us is there yet! What did you learn from the boys father about faith? _____

What did you learn from the Disciples about faith?
