

Why Are Faith and Prayer Powerful?



Sunday, 9/16 – 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, 9/17 – 7 PM

17th Sunday after Pentecost / 16th Sunday after Trinity – 2018

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Have you ever thought you could do something, and then tried – *only to realize that you could not do it!* When that happens, we can feel embarrassed and others can ridicule us 😊. Therefore, today, *we will learn two ways to avoid such things!*

Just before today's text, Jesus, *along with Peter, James, and John*, had been up on the mountain where Jesus was transfigured; now they are all returning to the other disciples.

1. **Setting:**

- a. **Argument:** ¹⁴ **And when they came to the [other] disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing [disputing, debating] with them.** ¹⁵ **And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him [Jesus], were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him.** ¹⁶ **And he asked them, “What are you [scribes] arguing [disputing, debating] about with them [my disciples]?”** // Jesus certainly knew what was going on,

but He saw a teachable moment; therefore, He wanted to proceed slowly and ask enough questions so that everyone present could *understand* and *benefit*.

- b. **Dilemma:** ¹⁷ **And someone from the crowd answered him** [*thus, not one of the scribes*], **“Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute** [*speechless*]. ¹⁸ **And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid** [*thus, his whole body stiffens up*]. **So I asked your disciples to cast it** [*the demon*] **out, and they were not able.”** ¹⁹ **And he** [*Jesus*] **answered them** [*basically all who were gathered – the disciples, the crowd, and the scribes*], **“O faithless generation** [*you people who lack in your faith*], **how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear** [*put up*] **with you? Bring him to me.”** // So – while Jesus was away with Peter, James, and John – a man showed up with his demon-possessed son to seek help from Jesus. However, since Jesus was not there, the nine disciples who were present decided to help the man – and why not? As recorded in **Matthew 10:1**, Jesus gave His twelve disciples **“authority over unclean spirits...”** **So what was the problem?** In the past, the disciples were connected to God’s power; but now – *trusting in their own strength* – they could do nothing ☹!

2. **Demons:**

- a. **Hate Jesus:** ²⁰ **And they brought the boy to him** [*Jesus*]. **And when the spirit saw him** [*Jesus*], **immediately it convulsed** [*shook (like someone having a seizure)*] **the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.** // Even though some may conclude that the boy had epilepsy, the timing of **the demon seeing**

Jesus and **the boy immediately going into great distress** tells us otherwise. Because the demon hated Jesus, *he did what he could to make the boy miserable!*

- b. Seek to destroy people: **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 [kill] him.** // Jesus knew the answer to His question, *but He wanted the father to have the whole condition of his son in mind – how long he had been possessed, how often the demon tried to destroy him, and how many people had tried but were not able to help the boy.* Also, *let us be aware of the devil’s tactics – to spiritually destroy us by tearing us away from Jesus, our Savior and Lord!*

3. **Faith:**

- a. Connects: The father said to Jesus: **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** [literally, believing (present participle)].” // The father said, “...if you can”; why? Think about his previous, countless disappointments – no one could help, *not even Jesus’ disciples!* When WE try and try, and fail and fail, we begin to lose hope *as did the boy’s Father.* So Jesus encouraged him by saying, **“All things are possible for one who believes.”** Why? Because true saving faith is IN GOD, and that saving faith taps into the POWER OF GOD!
- b. Is desired: **²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”** // The father understood what Jesus said AND he desperately wanted his boy to be freed from the demon, so, *being*

weak in faith, he shouted, “Strengthen my faith!” His shout was a prayer that Jesus desired to answer!

4. **Power:**

- a. To Exorcise: 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 [shaking] him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.”** // At the command of Jesus, the demon had to leave – but he left, in a sense, *kicking and screaming!*
- b. To Restore: ²⁷ **But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.** // Immediately the boy was completely healed – all glory to God, *He did it!!!*

5. **Prayer:** ²⁸ **And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it [the demon] out?”** ²⁹ **And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”** // Why not? The disciples believed in Jesus *for eternal life*, but they wavered in their faith in Jesus *to be able to cast out the demon*. Jesus did refer to the demon as *“this kind,” thus a tough one!* When the disciples had failed, they should have cried out for help in prayer – *but they did not.*

Let Us Pray: Dear Father, keep us always trusting in Jesus *for eternal life*, but also keep us *tapped into Your power* – by
♦trusting in You for ALL THINGS and, *in every time of need*,
♦crying out to You through prayer! In Jesus’ name!