

Jesus heals a boy with an unclean spirit

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[0 : 0 0] I was watching a program last night, or there was a program on last night in the background, and it was something to do with an individual who was in a school, and he was teaching in a school environment and looking for pupils to be able to help in a particular way.

So I took my mind back to the classroom, and I was thinking about what happens when the teacher leaves the class for a few minutes and says to the pupils, just carry on working, I'll be back shortly.

One of the helpers who was with us in the holiday club was saying that her geography teacher back in Renes was also a coast guard, and so he'd be teaching and working through a lesson, and all of a sudden he would reach for his bleeper on his belt, and he would just say, I'm off, just page number 73 and 74, make your way through it, give your attention to it, just keep on working, and I'll be back in a wee while, and someone will be along shortly.

Now, from memory, when you think back to the classroom and that kind of situation, what would happen in the class? Well, from memory, all kinds of anarchy would happen, but not much work would be done.

Sometimes when the teacher looked away, even just for a moment or two, the students would get into all kinds of mess. And as we look at Mark 9 here, we see Jesus, and we see how Jesus is teaching his disciples.

[1 : 5 3] And in the first 13 verses of the chapter here, we see Jesus take Peter and James and John aside, and he says to them to follow him.

And then he takes him up on the mountainside, up to the top of the Mount of Transfiguration. And on the top of that mountain, Jesus reveals something more of his glory to them.

He's taught them a difficult lesson in the verses previous in chapter 8, the fact that he was going on to a cross, he would suffer, he had to suffer, he had to die.

And if they were going to follow him, Jesus is making very clear to them that they too would have a cross that they would have to take up and bear. And that was a hard lesson.

And it was beginning to penetrate the minds of the disciples. And so from the difficulty of the lesson that he's taught them, at ground level, he takes them up onto the mountainside.

[2 : 5 6] And they have this huge blessing as Jesus gives these three disciples a special blessing on the top of the mountain.

But now as Jesus comes down the mountainside to meet back up with the other nine disciples, having been away for a wee while, Jesus finds them struggling.

And there's two things that we can note as they are seen as Jesus comes down the mountainside.

And we'll think about these things first, and then we'll go on to look at the blessing that Jesus brings. So the first point is the argument that they shouldn't be having. It's what Jesus hears and sees as he gets down the mountainside.

There's an argument going on. But likely they shouldn't have been having. The second thing is that we can note the impact that the disciples weren't having.

[4 : 03] And then the third thing we see, and we'll give more time to this, is the blessing that Jesus brings when he comes back down. So first of all, the argument they shouldn't be having.

What are the disciples of Jesus doing as they come down and see them having been up the mountain? Well, they're engaged in an argument. Verse 14. When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and the teachers of the law arguing with them.

As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. What are you arguing with them about? He asked.

Again, if we stick in the school playground for a minute. When you think back to these days, we can all visualize a situation.

I can visualize the cloakroom in Poetry High School. Two lads. They were big lads. And they started having a discussion about Shinti. And the discussion went from quite calm to less calm.

[5 : 12] And it got more heated and more heated. The temperature started to rise. Voices started to raise. And in no time at all, fists were flying. And the whole place was crowded with people who were looking in on this argument that had exploded into a proper fistfight.

Social media. It's an art thing. You know, if you think about your phones and whatever platform that you're on. If you post something on social media that's peaceful and wholesome, it will pass by the world virtually unnoticed.

But if you post something that's provocative and a little bit edgy, before you know it, there will be huge interest. And 356 comments.

And much heat. And much arguments. See, the world loves a good argument. And here is Jesus comes down from the mountain.

That's the first thing he sees. His disciples are engaged. They're locked horns with the teachers of the law. They were like the religious experts.

[6 : 28] The legal experts on the scriptures. And the disciples and the teachers of the law are in dispute. And a large crowd is gathered around the disciples and the teachers of the law.

As they go out to each other. And because there's a large crowd there, I think we can probably assume this argument has not just started, but it's been going on for a wee while. And that's the first thing Jesus sees.

It's the first thing he hears as he comes down from the mountainside. Did it please Jesus that this is what they were using their energy and minds for? Did he encourage them when he arrives to keep on going with the argument?

Well, it seems that he didn't. And when Jesus arrived in the middle of this argument, he brings an almost immediate end to it.

The argument seems to have exasperated him. And I think we hear a little of that in verse 19 when he speaks to this unbelieving generation.

[7 : 39] When he says, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? There's lots of debate over what these words actually mean and who they're directed towards.

But I think it speaks to us about something of the exasperation that Jesus felt as he came down from the mountaintop and finds the disciples locked in this argument.

I think it's an argument they probably shouldn't have been having. And it's something worth mulling over.

When we find ourselves heading in the direction of an argument, or when we find ourselves in the middle of an argument that just seems to be intensifying, the more we're speaking.

And then we start to see other people being drawn in, and attention being given to this argument. We have to always consider carefully, whether we're on a phone with our thumbs buzzing, or we're actually face to face looking someone in the eye, we have to consider carefully, why am I arguing?

[9 : 02] Is it about me? And my reputation? And how I look? Is it about me not looking stupid?

In front of the crowd who've now gathered? Is it about me trying to get one over on the person that's decided he's going to try and put me down? Or is it about me trying to get one over on the person that's decided he's going to try and put me down on the person that's decided he's going to try and put me down on the person?

Or is the argument that we've been drawn into something that will actually bring glory to Christ? And uphold his word?

Who's the argument about? What's driving it? Is it my ego? Or Christ's glory? Is this discussion, is this argument that's ongoing something that will bring glory to Jesus?

Is it something that Jesus would encourage? Stop and think about these things. In a world that's increasingly argumentative.

[10 : 15] And increasingly hostile to the Christian message. Let's think about these things when we find ourselves in this kind of situation. I remember a minister speaking to a group of Christians.

And he was speaking about how to speak winsomely about Jesus in a world that was becoming more and more argumentative. And he said to this group of ministers who were gathered, We have to be careful in this kind of environment.

Not to become the awkward squad. Not to become the people who are defined by and recognized by our readiness. Always to enter into an argument.

Sometimes, even though it may damage people's perceptions of how clever we are. Even though it may sometimes cause people to think less of us.

Sometimes, we're called to step back. Say nothing. Some arguments we shouldn't be having. That's the first point.

[11 : 22] Don't overemphasize that because some arguments we should have. When Christ's glory is at stake, there's a time to speak. When God's word has been trampled, there's a time to speak.

But when it's about us and our reputation, then sometimes, we have to step back. The argument they shouldn't have been having.

Secondly, the impact they weren't having. Jesus says in verse 16, as we follow through here, What are you arguing with them about? He asked. A man in the crowd answered, Teacher, I brought you my son who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech.

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.

The impact they were not having. When Jesus is up on the mountain. Now, if you glance back a few pages in Mark's gospel, And you just allow your eye to scan over the different episodes that Mark records, We see much activity.

[12 : 45] And it's activity for good. Thousands of hungry people were being fed. The feeding of the 5,000, the feeding of the 4,000. The blind were being given sight.

The deaf were having their ears open. Sick men and women and boys and girls, Who were impossible for doctors to be able to bring any help to, Were being healed absolutely by Jesus and his disciples.

Storms were being calmed supernaturally. Evil spirits were being cast out. And at the center of all this were the disciples.

They were, as we glance back through the previous pages, They were having a huge impact on the community that they were in. Mark chapter 6 verse 13 tells us that they actually had been used to drive out many demons already.

So when you think about this father, His son is in such a state of suffering. It's perfectly sensible for this father to come to these disciples of Jesus that he recognizes and has heard of, And ask that they would help his son.

[14 : 06] That they would cast out the evil spirit from his son. The spirit that was destroying his son from the inside out. But what we find here at the bottom of the mountain is the father is disappointed.

And in all likelihood the teachers of the law are rubbing their hands with glee as they see the disciples fail. And we can perhaps imagine the smirks on the faces of some in the crowd as they see the disciples flapping around, Trying to defend themselves and their own reputations.

And they're not able to do anything. Now the question is, Why? The impact they weren't having is obvious.

But the question we must ask is, Is why were these disciples, Who had such impact in previous chapters, Not able to do anything In this chapter?

And I think the answer is, Because they were physically, And they were spiritually, Apart from Christ.

[15 : 28] One of the commentators, Derek Thomas, He speculates that maybe the disciples were a little put out, That Jesus didn't take them up the mountain. Peter and James and John, Jesus takes them, Close to him, And he takes them up the mountain.

And he's given them this special lesson. And the nine disciples are at the bottom, And perhaps, They were a little disgruntled about the fact that they'd been left behind.

And Thomas speculates, And he says, Maybe the conversation was something along the lines of, Well, we'll show them. They're up on the mountain, But, you know, There's all this need around us, And we'll show them that we can do something.

And yet, What they quickly discovered was, They could do nothing. It's a visual aid for John 15.

A passage that I'm back to, Week after week after week. Jesus says, I am the vine, You are the branches.

[16 : 40] If a man remains in me, And I am him, He will bear much fruit. Apart from me, You can do nothing.

It's a necessary lesson for us, As it was for them. When we lose sight of Jesus, As they had for a period here, Where there is a distance, Between Christ and his disciples, As there seems to have been here, Then, Very often actually what happens, Is we become more interested in our own name, And our own reputation, Perhaps even our own denomination.

And when that's what's driving us, Rather than the glory of Christ, And the salvation of souls, We find we can do, Nothing fruitful.

And all the things that we do, They have little or no impact. And that was the hard lesson.

The disciples were learning. There was the argument, They shouldn't have been having. And then there was the impact, That they weren't having.

[18 : 16] And then the third thing, That we'll give a bit more time to here, Is the blessing, That Jesus brings. We often hear the phrase, Being used, Blessed to be a blessing.

Jesus and Peter and James and John, Had just been on the mountaintop, Physically and spiritually. They had received the most amazing, Supernatural, Heavenly blessing.

And they'd loved it. Peter, Made very clear, That this was an experience, That he was loving. And an experience, He just did not want to end.

Peter says to, To Jesus, In verse 6, When he's up on the top of the mountain, He says, It's good for us to be here. Let's put up free shelters. Let's stay a while up here.

Let's just enjoy all this, All this blessing. Peter wanted to, To stay on the, On the mountain. Peter seems to have, Actually lost sight of the nine disciples, Who are down at the bottom, Struggling.

[19 : 33] Peter seems to have forgotten, The fact, That Jesus, Has just said, I'm here, On a very particular mission. And it's not to stay on the mountain, It's to head in the direction of the cross.

But Peter, Doesn't want to go to, The cross. Doesn't want Jesus to go to the cross. He made that clear before, In a sense, He's making it clear again, Here. He wants to stay on the mountain.

But Jesus knew, They had to come down. Yes, They had been blessed, But they were blessed, In order to be a blessing.

I think that's something, That we need to remember, Ourselves as well. We're coming close to, Our communion season again. And, We love these few days, When we meet here, Two or three times a day, And we open up, God's word.

We love to gather, Around the Lord's table, To take the bread, And the wine, And to remember, The death, Of Jesus. And it's good that we do, It's right that we do, It's a real, Weekend of blessing, But often, What we see on a Sunday night, Is, If only, This could go on, If only, I didn't have to go back, To work tomorrow morning, If only, If only we could just stay here, Let's remember, Jesus wouldn't have any, Of that kind of talk, From Peter.

[21 : 27] Jesus knew, That at the bottom, Of the mountain, There were people, Who needed, A saviour. People, Who were under the power, Of the enemy, Like this poor, Little boy.

People who knew nothing, Of the blessing, Of salvation. And they needed, To reach them. They were blessed, On the mountain top.

But they were blessed, In order, To be, A blessing. And now we see, Jesus coming down, From the mountain. Bypassing, Bypassing the argument, Bypassing the argument, And bringing his blessing, Into the life, Of this poor, Distressed boy, And his father, And his father, Who's at the end, Of his tether.

So what does Jesus, Do here? Let's look at how, Jesus, Ministers to this boy, And his father. The first thing, Is Jesus calls, Verse 19, Bring the boy, To me, Says Jesus, So they, As the disciples, 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, Jesus, Calls, And he's calling the boy, But he's calling the boy, Through the disciples, He says, Bring the boy to me, See the boy, In the state that he was in, He couldn't come, To Jesus himself, And the spirit, That was in this boy, And was causing such, Carnage in the boy, Was clearly, Resistant to Jesus, And was violently, Rebelling against Jesus,

And the physical, Condition that this boy, Had been, Had been tortured with, Meant that, He wasn't able to come, To Jesus himself, That's why he said, To the disciples, Stop the argument, Bring the boy to me, And Jesus still says, That to his disciples, Every person here, Who is a believer, Is a disciple, And Jesus, Says to us, Says to us, Bring the boys, And girls, And men, And women, Who are lost, Bring them to me, Bring these people, Who are still under the, The power and the control, Of the enemy, Who are on the road to hell, Bring them to me, Don't waste your time,

[24 : 30] Arguing with them, Don't try and outsmart them, With your clever words, And phrases, Bring them to me, But they don't want to come, You might say, Neither did this boy, But that didn't stop Jesus saying, Bring the boy, To me, So the question for you and I, If we are Christians, Is are we doing that, We are doing much, In our lives, But are we still doing that, Are we bringing people, To Jesus, Through prayer, Real people, With real names, That we rub shoulders with,

In our families, In our workplaces, Wherever, Jesus has put us, Into a place, And he has surrounded us, With people, So that we will bring, These people to him, Are we doing that, Are we bringing people, To Jesus through prayer, And then having prayed, Are we bringing people, To Jesus, As we tell them, The good news, As we invite them, To church, Or YF, Or Sunday school, Or SU, Or Christianity, Explore, Or whatever, Jesus calls, And he calls, Through his disciples, The second thing, We can note here, Is Jesus listens, Verse 21, Jesus asked, The boy's father, How long, Has he been like this, From childhood, He answered, It has often thrown him,

Into fire or water, To kill him, Now why did Jesus, Ask this question, Why did Jesus, Ask about this, Boy's condition, Is it because he didn't know, About this boy's condition, Is it because Jesus, Was very quickly, Trying to come up, With a kind of plan, Of how to, How to treat him, Is that why he asked, About this boy's condition, I don't think it was, I think likely, Jesus knew everything, About the boy, I think likely, Jesus knew everything, About the boy's, Father as well, And Jesus knew, How sore, This boy's, Father's, Heart was, I mean, Can you imagine, Can you imagine, The pain, Of watching, Your son, Being thrown,

Into the fire, And thrown into the water, As, The devil himself, Through his demons, Tries to destroy him, Imagine, The only son, It was this boy's only, His father's only son, Whom he loved, And all this is, Is raging in, In this boy's heart, And his life, Imagine how sore, The father's heart was, I think Jesus knew, Exactly how sore, This father's heart was, And I think Jesus knew, That this father, Needed to speak to him, And Jesus, Was willing, To listen, That's why, He asked the question, The father, Needed to speak, And Jesus, Wanted to listen, Jesus, Listens, He still listens, And there may be,

Some here, This morning, And their hearts, Might be sore, And we might feel, Like we have nowhere, To turn, And no one truly, Who cares, And no one, Who really, Understands, And nobody, Has the patience, And compassion, To listen to us, Pour our hearts out, And yet, Jesus does, He is ready, He is ready, 24, 24, 7, He is willing, He is eager, For us to, To speak to him, To download all the, Trauma, That is in our hearts, Because, Because as we speak, In prayer, He listens, And for those, Who are Christians,

[29 : 37] Here this morning, The disciples, Of Christ, Here's a very, Practical, Thing for us, As we reach out, With the gospel, We should be eager, And willing, To listen, Sometimes we are, Too quick, To want to give our spiel, Sometimes we are, Too quick, To want to tell, The story, When Jesus calls us, First, To listen, Two years, One life, Jesus listens, Third thing here, Is Jesus gives faith, I remember a man, That I was visiting, Once, Not here, In the past ministry, He was a, Expert carpenter, Boat builder, That kind of character,

And he was a, A lovely guy, Very quiet, And very, Rarely, Would actually say, Anything, And show any, Any of his, Cars, And this rare occasion, He did, He began to speak, About deeper things, And he said to me, He says, I'd like to have faith, He says, I would like to believe, But I just don't think, I can, I don't think, I've got it in me, And that's a lot, Like this man, He wants to believe, He wants to believe, But he's honest enough, To admit, That he's wrestling, With real, Doubts, Verse 22, He says to, To Jesus, If you can do anything, Take pity on us, And help us, If you can, Said Jesus,

Everything, Is possible, For him, Who believes, And immediately, The boy's father, Explained, I do believe, I do believe, Help me overcome, My unbelief, It's a prayer, And it's a prayer, That Jesus answered, It's a prayer, For more faith, I said to the man, In the boat shed, If you want to believe, But you don't feel, That you can believe, Ask for faith, Have you ever, Asked for faith, No, He says, I haven't, I said, Well pray, And ask for faith, Ephesians 2, For it is by grace, You have been saved, Through faith, And this not from yourselves, It is the gift, Of God, Faith,

It's not, Something that we manufacture, It's not something, That we work up, It's not something, That we can go, And buy off the shelf, There's a soul supplier, Of faith, It's the gift, Of God, So be encouraged, To ask for it, You're sitting here, This morning, And you want to believe, But you never, Actually have believed, Ask for faith, If you're here, This morning, And your Christian life, Is being suffocated, By doubts, That have crashed in, Ask for faith, Be honest, In your prayer, Tell the Lord, About this, He sees it anyway, Jesus, Gives faith,

Jesus, Listens, Jesus, Calls, The next thing, We're almost done, Jesus saves, Verse 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, The spirit, Shrieked, Convulsed him, Violently, And came out, The boy, Looked, So much like a corpse, That many said, He's dead, But Jesus took him, By the hand, And lifted him, To his feet, And, He stood up, It's an amazing thing, That, Isn't it?

[34 : 37] Not that I've noted it, Until now, But the God, That we sung of, In the first hymn, The one, Who we crown, With many crowns, The God of heaven, And earth, The Lord, Almighty, The one, True, Holy God, And we see him here, Taking this wee boy, By the hand, And lifting him, To his feet, What a God, We are called, To come to, He's a God, Who is so gentle, And yet, Has such power, To save, We see it, On a small scale, Here, In these verses, As Jesus goes, Head to head, With an evil spirit, And with a command, Drives it out, Of the boy, Does the spirit,

Want to go? No, The spirit, Does not want to go, But the spirit, Must go, Because when Jesus, Commands, The spirit, Must obey, And so Jesus here, He saves the boy, We see, Small scale, Salvation, In this episode, But as Jesus, Continues, In the direction, Of Jerusalem, He has the work, Of salvation, In his mind, He was going to go, Head to head, Not with an evil spirit, But with the devil himself, On the cross of Calvary, And he would overcome that, So that not just this little boy, But everyone who believes, Could be saved, Jesus saves, There's no other name, There's no other religion,

There's no other person, There's no other so called God, Jesus saves, There's no other way, If we want to know, Victory over Satan, If we want to know, Life over death, If we want to know, Forgiveness of our sin, Then we will get it, Only through Jesus, Jesus saves, Has he saved you?

The final thing here is, And we'll finish with this, Jesus teaches, The scene comes to an end here, And Mark, You could say, He zoomed in on Jesus, And the boy and his father, For a period, We get to listen into this conversation, And we see, How Jesus ministers to them, And for a period, The nine disciples, Who'd made a right mess of things, Are off camera, But then towards the end of this scene, Mark, He zooms back in on them, And we find them still trying to figure out, What they did wrong, They had failed, They had humiliated, Been humiliated, As they were in the centre of this argument, People are gathered, Crowding around, Probably laughing at them, And they're scratching their heads, Because they still don't know what they did wrong, And Jesus needs to teach them, And notice how he teaches,

He doesn't blast the disciples in public, He doesn't murmur behind the backs of the disciples, Saying, I'm sick of these disciples, Who never learn anything, He speaks directly to them, He speaks tenderly to them, He speaks in private to them, Verse 28, After Jesus had gone indoors, His disciples asked him privately, Why couldn't we drive it out?

[38 : 53] And he replied, This kind, Can only come out by prayer, And it's the lesson that they, And we, Need to learn, Over and over again, We're thankful for the children's holiday club, In the last few days, There was so much activity, So much, That we can be encouraged, By and through, The question is, How effective will it be?

And the answer to that, Depends a bit, On what was done, Last week, As we saw on the screens, Actually though, Depends a lot, On what we will now do, This week, And the week after, And the week after, We need to pray, If the seed, That was sown, Is not going to be, Snatched away by Satan, We need to pray, We need to pray, If young lives, Are to be saved, We need to pray, If lasting fruit, Is to be produced, We need to pray, Hendrickson,

Commentator says, Where there is little faith, There is little prayer, Conversely, Where there is an abundance, Of genuine, Persevering, Faith, There is also, Fervent, Unrelenting, Prayer, We are called, To pray, My faith, Quotes Hendrickson, Looks up to thee, Thou Lamb, Of Calvary, Saviour, Divine, Now, Hear me, While, I, Pray, That's the lesson, And that's the lesson, We finish with today, Let's pray, Our heavenly father,

We thank you, For your love, For us, That, That caused you, To send Jesus, Your son, Into this world, And we thank you, That he came, To seek, And to save sinners, Like us, We thank you, That as we look, At this, One, Encounter, We see the power, Of Christ, We see the gentleness, Of Jesus, We see the compassion, Of Jesus, We see the, The salvation, That Jesus, Came to, To procure, Through his blood, And we hear, The call of Jesus, To bring people, To him, To him, And to keep, Bringing people, To him, As we pray, So help us, Lord, We pray, Teach us, To pray, And if there, Any year, This morning,

Who are, Who are, Who are, Suffocating, Under the weight, Of doubts, As this father, Confessed, Confessed, His own doubts, We pray, That you would, Help them, Not to stick, In a state, Of unbelief, But to, Come as this, Father did, Confessing, The need for faith, And Lord, We thank you, That's a prayer, That you did not dismiss, But you heard, And you answered, And we thank you, That it's a prayer, That you still hear, And you still answer, So we ask, That you would hear, Those today, Who may come, With that, Prayer, Lord, I believe, Help me, Overcome, My unbelief, And we ask, All these things, In Jesus name,