

JESUS HEALS A DEMON-POSSESSED BOY

Matthew 17:14-23

Key Verse: 17:17

"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me."

In the last passage Jesus took Peter, James and John to the Transfiguration Mountain. Jesus showed them his transfigured appearance. 17:2 says, "There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light." His figure immediately showed them that he was originally God. But he came to this world and was despised and rejected, and he wore ordinary people's clothes, old and rugged. Jesus took the disciples to the Transfiguration Mountain so that they might prepare for his upcoming death and resurrection without fear, but with courageous faith. It is indeed amazing to see Jesus' transfigured appearance on the Transfiguration Mountain. It is indeed amazing that later the apostle John in exile described his image. Revelation 1:14-16 says, "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a [furnace](#), and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance." Jesus' transfiguration was also for the purpose of meeting the suffering servants, Moses and Elijah, so that Jesus might prepare himself for his upcoming crucifixion, death and resurrection. In today's passage Jesus heals a demon-possessed boy. Matthew's account of this event is different from the other Gospels in description and wording, but the main point is the same. Today let's learn what the unbelieving generation is like and how to cast out demons.

First, the boy's father (14-16). When Jesus, together with Peter, James and John, came down to the foot of the mountain where the other nine disciples were waiting, a great and baffling event was taking place. As soon as Jesus and his three disciples arrived, a man approached Jesus, knelt before him, and beseeched Jesus, "Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often [falls](#) into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him" (15-16). This father was at a loss because his son was doing dangerous things. To him, it was sure that his son was having seizures. So he brought his son to Jesus' disciples, but they could not heal him.

Through the experience of the evangelistic journey (Mk 6:7-13), Jesus' nine disciples were very sure that they could heal this boy, who was violently [throwing](#) himself into the fire and the water. It was because they had great experiences by driving out many demons and anointing many sick people with oil and healing them. They had healed many people. So they thought this one little boy would be no problem to heal. According to the other Gospels, some Pharisees and the desperate father were intently watching for the boy to be healed. At the moment, one of the disciples struck a pose, made a gesture and shouted, "Boy, you get well immediately!" But his condition was just the same. Several

other disciples did the same. But the boy was not healed. At that time Jesus was coming down the Transfiguration Mountain. The boy's father met Jesus and told him the truth about what had happened. "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." Jesus' disciples had cast out many demons and had healed the sick when God gave them the power of the Holy Spirit during their evangelistic journey. But this time they had no power of the Holy Spirit. So they became the objects of ridicule. They were greatly embarrassed. They learned that old experience doesn't work newly. Modern people would see such a boy as a psychiatric patient and take him to a mental clinic, give him heavy doses of drugs and make him worse, not better. What was the boy's real problem? It was demon possession.

There was a pretty young woman, a born-pianist. If she practiced piano hard, she might have been a contestant at the Tchaikovsky piano competition in Moscow. So in the hope of raising her as our Chicago pianist, we applied for her permanent residency. Soon she received permanent residency. Then we came to know that she was going to a young boy's house, and had slept with the boy for almost one year. Not only so, she also cooked many other boys. We thought that we could help her. So many shepherds, especially Pastor Mark Vucekovich, worked hard. But she could not leave the boy alone. She stuck to him like a rat sticks to flypaper. After much pain, we sent her to her home country, where her father was. There was a UBF full-time staff shepherd. His ministry was prosperous. But he was seized by a foxy woman and only listened to the lady; he refused to listen to his senior shepherd. We could not believe how he could do that. Soon his ministry crumbled and disappeared. In 1982 a 19-year-old country boy came to Chicago UBF. He looked as if he had some problem. So a shepherd asked him, "What's your problem?" He answered, "I have a great marriage problem." Everybody was surprised that he had a great marriage problem and was so heavy when he was just 19 years old. His desire was too mean; he could not be a young man of vision and dream. It was not the 19-year-old boy who talked about his great marriage problem, but obviously the demon in him. Many young people do things that they could not even imagine doing. A great question arises in our hearts: Why? They are not themselves; they are possessed by demons.

Second, Jesus rebuked the unbelieving generation (17-18). When Jesus saw the generation, he saw that the people were all unbelieving. History proves that there were unbelieving generations and there were believing generations. Believing generations were blessed by God, and unbelieving generations seemed to be cursed by God.

"In God We Trust" was once in American people's hearts. "In God We Trust" enabled American people to cultivate this vast land. In order to cultivate this vast land, many American people died young, on average at age 40. They worked so hard to cultivate this country. Whenever we drive the highways of this land, we are amazed at the greatness of the highways all around the country. Once I went to the southern part of this land, hoping to see the Mississippi River. At that time I saw cotton fields which seemed to be so big that they stretched endlessly from east to west, and from south to north. Our American forefathers cultivated this land when they had strong faith, in spite of

innumerable hindrances and obstacles. As I said, I went to see the Mississippi River, but my tour guide was so poor that I never got to see it.

Now there is a strong impression that America has changed to an unbelieving generation. Dr. Joseph Chung and Dr. John Lee were arrested on the Loyola campus and were handcuffed, simply because they were inviting students for Bible study. They slept overnight in a government motel. On the other hand, Loyola allowed Muslim people to build a big mosque inside the campus. What a surprise in the sight of God! Harvard University was originally founded as a Bible school. But at last year's graduation ceremony, they invited a Muslim leader and a Christian pastor and both prayed the opening prayer. What a surprise in the sight of God!

UBF has been teaching the Bible to students so that they might accept the teachings of the Bible and live by them. But anti-Christians have attacked UBF unbearably for the last 19 years. Even though anti-Christians attacked UBF, UBF prayed for the present and future America to be blessed and to be a blessing to the people of the whole world. Once a renowned journalist interviewed Evangelist Dr. Billy Graham: "What would you do if you lived once more in this world?" Evangelist Dr. Billy Graham answered, "If I could live again, I would study the Bible quietly and teach the Bible person-to-person." We are doing what the famous evangelist is aspiring to do, even in his dreams. In this respect UBF is very prophetic and practical and doing what is indispensable for this generation, that is, one-to-one Bible study and discipleship training. One of the IVF leaders visited UBF and said, "If any organization does not compromise with the culture of the time, it is a cult." Some of their great leaders of the past: Stacy Woods, David Adeney, and Hans Burke, were indeed life-giving and life-sacrificing servants of God and they considered UBF a brother organization. How could this IVF leader talk like that? Frankly speaking, he belongs to the unbelieving generation, although his body is in IVF. Jesus rebuked his disciples that they were people of the unbelieving generation. But in truth, Jesus rebuked the people of that entire generation. Many problems crush the people of each generation. But unbelief is the most serious problem. John Tower was the head of the Judiciary Committee for the Iran-Contra hearings. He was stern, and sharper than a knife in dealing with Oliver North, who simply obeyed his senior's order. So many people were impressed that Senator John Tower was a holy man. But he soon died when his own plane crashed. After his death people described him as an "animal man." His appearance as an animal man in Time Magazine was so funny.

Jesus is most sorry when a generation is unbelieving and perverse. An unbelieving generation causes most people to be unbelieving. America seems to be prosperous outwardly. But Jesus is very sorry for America because she is so unbelieving. After lamenting for the unbelieving generation, Jesus rebuked the demon and he came out of the boy, and the boy was healed from that moment.

Here we learn a great lesson. Many people think they will be free and happy if they abandon God. But it is not so. In man there is both flesh and spirit, or a soul. We must fill our physical body with many kinds of delicious foods to make it alive. Likewise, we must also fill

our souls with the word of God. Otherwise, our souls are occupied by demons. There is a story of a young man who lived according to his sinful nature. Later he was possessed by 6,000 demons. A godless life seems to be free. But those who live godless lives are tormented by many demons, and they are extremely unhappy. It is because they are not themselves; they are the possession of demons. I heard that a 69-year old man, who is the father of one of our missionaries, divorced his wife, saying that his wife is not beautiful. What a wretched man he is! He pretended to be happy all the time. But he is not happy^not because of his aging wife^but because of demons driving his soul. He thinks joyful people, peaceful people and sacrificial people in Jesus are all crazy. But he is mad.

Third, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed (19-21). Those nine disciples who failed to heal the demon-possessed boy were greatly embarrassed by the Pharisees, before so many people. They made such excellent gestures to heal the boy. But they only became the objects of ridicule. Then they came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive the demon out?" Jesus answered as follows. Look at verse 20. "He replied, ^Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.'" Here we learn that faith is everything. If we have faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing is impossible. When our American forefathers had a little faith, "In God We Trust," they could establish this vast nation. The establishment of this country is greater than throwing a mountain into the sea. All of us agree unanimously that the establishment of our nation within such a short period of history is indeed great. America was established because of her people's faith. America was established because God blessed her people's faith, and blessed it more than enough.

In Mark's Gospel, Mark wrote not only the word "faith," he also included the word "prayer." Mark 11:24 says, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." Prayer is the same as faith. When we have faith in God, we can pray to God. When we have faith and pray, God will answer our prayer; anything can be done. We have a prayer topic: May God establish America as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. It seems to be too big a prayer topic for us. But it is too small compared with God's prayer topic for the whole world's salvation. Still our prayer topic^may God establish America as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation^seems to be too big for us. Sometimes we feel very vague, and it seems impossible to be done. Of course, we cannot do it. But we can pray so that our prayers may be answered and God would do it for us. We are weak, but we are very confident that everything is possible because God promised that he will hear our prayers. Therefore, we must pray that we may have true faith in our hearts, faith as small as a mustard seed. Then God will pour his power into our hearts through his Holy Spirit. When we pray, we must believe that God will answer our prayer and "it will be ours." We should not make Jesus sorry like his nine disciples did. They did not have faith as small as a mustard seed. So they could not drive out the demon from the boy's soul.

Fourth, Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection (22-23). What the disciples didn't like was to hear from Jesus about his death and

resurrection; they were most afraid of it. But Jesus again predicts his death and resurrection. Verses 22-23a say, "When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, ^The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him and on the third day he will be raised to life.'" What was the disciples' response? The disciples were filled with grief. Jesus' death and resurrection gives man final victory, unutterable happiness, remarkable joy, and the most undisturbed peace. But his disciples were filled with grief. Most people of the world are filled with grief because they do not accept Jesus' death and resurrection as a living hope and as man's final goal.

We want to do something great, like those nine disciples who were at the foot of the mountain. But if we do something without faith and prayer, it is indeed in vain. Even if we do something, if we do it without faith it is like building a house on the sand. Therefore, we must ask God to give us faith as small as a mustard seed, and a clear prayer topic so that God can accept our faith and give us the power of mountain-moving faith and hear our prayer and change America as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. May God help us to overcome the unbelieving generation.