

How to Get the Power Back On

(Mark 9:14-29)

(preached 4/19/15 Pine Grove BC)

Introduction

In July 1977, two separate lightning strikes caused the power to go out in most of New York city.

9 million people were without power for our 26 hours, and you can guess what happens in those situations.

Looting and stealing began to take place as people broke into all kinds of shops and stole merchandise.

Strange as it may sound, most people believe that hip hop music began shortly after this event because so many people had stolen DJ equipment in the looting.

Eventually, the power was restored to New York City and order was also restored.

Though power outages like this probably highlight the sinfulness of men to take advantage of situations like this..

They also remind us of how are we prepared to go without power for an extended period of time.

Obviously, no power creates immediate problems in larger cities...

But even in Fairview, it would also lead to some inconveniences.

Now, this isn't a sermon where I am trying to sell you a generator....

But in some ways, the message today is a lesson on what to do when you flip the switch and the light doesn't go on.

I have entitled this message....

How to Get the Power Back On.

And I will explain what that means in just a minute.

But if you will take your Bible and open them to Mark 9.

We are going to look at verses 14-29 in Mark 9 today.

At Pine Grove, we believe that the Bible is authoritative in our lives.

We believe that God breathed out every word of Scripture, so we study it for understanding and then apply its truths to our lives.

We encourage you to therefore open your Bible and follow along as we look at Mark 9:14-29 this morning.

Normally, I read the entire passage, but today we are simply going to let the events happen as we move through the verses...

Very fascinating story this morning...

It begins in verse 14-18 with what I have entitled as....

I. A Power Failure (14-18)

Verse 14...

¹⁴ When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them.

Now, we need to find out a few things here to refresh our memory of what is happening...

The 'they' of verse 14 is speaking of Jesus, Peter, James and John.

At the beginning of chapter 9, they were selected from among the 12 disciples to go up a mountain with Jesus.

Where Jesus was transfigured before them.

We saw this two weeks ago, and then last week, we followed their conversation as they came down the mountain asking Jesus about Elijah.

Well, today they are off the mountain and back in the town of Caesarea Philippi.

Jesus had travelled there in chapter 8.

The town is very far north in Israel.

In the coming weeks, we will begin our journey with Jesus from Caesarea Philippi all the way south to the cross outside of Jerusalem.

But today, Jesus is still in this northern town and he is still teaching his disciples.

Now, we are going to see a miracle today that we have seen before.

Jesus is going to cast out a demon, but the focus of the miracle is going to be a little different.

In the beginning of Jesus' ministry, miracles were used to display His power..

To prove that He is God in the flesh.

To motivate people to listen to Him.

To cause people to show faith in Him.

And though that may have happened to some on this occasion, the focus of this miracle is to teach his disciples and us the importance of faith.

I'll talk more about that in a minute, but for now, let's just set the stage.

Peter, James, John and Jesus are off the mountain and back in town...

And they immediately see a crowd that has surrounded the other disciples..

This would be the 9 disciples who did not go up the mountain with Jesus..

They are surrounded by a crowd and on top of that, they are arguing with the scribes.

These would be the Jewish religious leaders of this town.

So, the crowd is there. The other 9 disciples are there and they are in a shouting match with some scribes...

Verse 15...

¹⁵ Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. ¹⁶ And He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?”

Word has spread about Jesus even in this remote town, and when the crowd sees him, they run to greet him..

However, Jesus jumps right into the argument that the scribes are having with the disciples...

And asks them, “What are you discussing with them?”

Though I can't be certain, I tend to think that question was directed at the scribes.

To me, this is when your big brother shows up right before you are about to get in a fight.

Doesn't matter who started the fight, big brother is on your side from the very beginning.

So, I like to think that Jesus knows that the scribes are up to no good here, and he asks this question to them...

"Hey, what's going on here?"

Well, guess what the scribes say to answer Jesus question...

Nothing!

Verse 17...

¹⁷ And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; ¹⁸ and ^[k] whenever it seizes him, it ^[l] slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and ^[m] stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it."

The scribes remain strangely silent when Jesus asks what is going on here...

Instead, someone in the crowd answered Jesus....

And this someone in the crowd was the father of a demon possessed son...

His answer tells Jesus exactly what he needs to know about the crowd, the disciples, and the scribes.

While Jesus and 3 of the disciples were away, this man had brought his son to the 9 disciples.

He assumed that Jesus would be with them, but all he found were 9 of the 12 disciples and an absent Jesus...

He has a son that has been sick for a long time.

He needed help.

So he came looking for Jesus.

Can you imagine those 9 disciples when this man walked up?

He has a demon possessed son.

They have seen this before.

They had watched Jesus cast out demons.

In fact, they had also been given the ability to cast out demons back in chapter 6.

But this time was different.

Jesus hadn't sent them to this city with that mission.

And beyond that, Jesus wasn't even around when this man first came.

He was on a mountain with Peter, James and John.

This time when they tried to cast out this demon, they failed to do it.

And that had drawn the crowd and began the argument with the scribes.

These 9 disciples were not able to offer help, so the crowd gathered and the mob mentality had started.

After graduating college, I took a job at a family owned BBQ restaurant.

I had no experience as a manager; everything was on the job training.

That first summer I worked there, the owner took a week vacation and left the restaurant with me...

I was a nervous wreck and I made the biggest mistake possible.

I forgot to call in payroll on Thursday morning.

That evening, when we were getting ready to close, there were about 10 employees looking at me for payday.

I'll never forget it.

I knew all of them, but I also knew that they thought I wasn't capable of running this place without the owner there.

One of the ladies who worked there told me,...

"Well, just pay us out of the register, and figure out payroll tomorrow."

I was not going to do that.

Eventually, I convinced them that I would have payroll ready first thing the next morning.

But I still remember the feeling of the mob mentality that took over for a moment while the owner was away.

It wasn't a good feeling, and I think this is the atmosphere around those nine disciples when Jesus comes on the scene.

You can hear the crowd..

"Oh, you can't cast out demons when Jesus isn't around."

Yall are fakes.

Jesus is a phony.

And so, we see a Power Failure to start out this passage....

Now, let's look at...

II. A Faith Failure (19-23)

Verse 19....

¹⁹ And He *answered them and *said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!”

There is a faith failure on the part of a lot of people here...

The crowd is obviously filled with unbelief.

This is nothing new.

Most of the crowds that Jesus has encountered in his ministry are only there for the show.

There is clear unbelief among the scribes.

It is their unbelief that has contaminated the crowd as well.

They want to destroy Jesus.

They have rejected Him along with the rest of the religious leaders in Israel.

But this comment is also directed at the 9 disciples here.

Their failure to remove the demon was also due to their lack of faith as well.

Maybe they doubted in their ability to do it since Jesus wasn't around.

Maybe they doubted his missions since he had just told them that He was going to die.

Whatever the reason, it is true that they also lacked faith.

However, there is also a faith failure with the father of this boy as well....

Verse 20...

20 They brought ^[n]the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. 21 And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" 23 And Jesus said to him, "'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes."

You can see the faith failure in the father's words in the middle of verse 22...

He tells Jesus...

"IF you can do anything.."

I love how Jesus responds to this question...

“If you can?”

This is like walking into a Chick Fil A and saying....

“If you sell chicken sandwiches, I would like to try one.”

What is the person taking your order going to say?

“If we have chicken sandwiches? Hahaha”

Jesus is pointing out the lack of the father’s faith by what he says...

“If you can” is a reflection of the doubt in his heart.

That is why our words and actions reflect what is in the heart...

Someone says “I have faith that Jesus can supply all my needs,” but then they cheat on their taxes.

Well, they don’t have faith that Jesus can supply all their needs.

Someone says, “I have faith that God can save anyone,” but then someone walks into the church that doesn’t look like them and they think, “what are they doing here?”

Well, they don't have faith that God can save anyone.

This father may have thought he had faith in Jesus, but his words say just the opposite..

And so, there is a faith failure in verses 19-23 on the part of the crowd, the scribes, the disciples and the father of this boy...

Now, let's turn the corner on this passage. In verse 24...

Where we see...

III. Faith Displayed (24)

Verse 24..

***²⁴ Immediately the boy's father cried out and said,
"I do believe; help my unbelief."***

Wow, you have the honesty of this father..

He believes, but he needs help with his unbelief..

Now remember this about true faith...

It begins in the heart.

Saving faith and repentance begin in the heart of a person when they change their mind about God and about themselves.

And though saving faith begins in the heart, it always works its way to our words and our actions...

This man believed, and he spoke that belief...

And even though his belief was small, it was rewarded.

And the lesson here is for the disciples and for us...

On the power of faith.

Now, Jesus did not always heal based upon faith.

In fact, in the book of Luke, Jesus healed 10 lepers but only one praised God and showed true faith.

But in this scene in Mark 9, Jesus is teaching the disciples about faith.

Though they don't know it or understand it yet...

Jesus is getting ready to leave them.

You have to understand up to this point in time, Jesus has always been there for them.

He has always performed the miracles.

He has always been there when a demon needed to be cast out or a someone needed to be healed.

But pretty soon, he will gone back to heaven and the disciples will be called upon to do those things without Jesus.

Their faith in him will be put to the test.

And in this one scene, he has shown them how they are powerless if they don't have faith...

But He is also about to show them how powerful just a little bit of faith is.

This father has but a little faith, but Jesus is about to honor that little faith.

And so we move from faith displayed to...

IV. Power Displayed (25-29)

Verse 25...

²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was ^[a]rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and mute spirit, I^[b] command you, come out of him and do not enter him ^[a]again.” ²⁶ After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, “He is dead!” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.

The crowd begins to grow because of all the commotion...

And Jesus is not One who wanted attention.

He had no interest in being seen as a miracle worker or exorcist.

His mission was the cross.

He came to seek and save those who were lost.

So before this becomes a stadium show like you see all these false healers putting on today...

Jesus goes to work.

And work is not even the word to describe this.

This is authority.

This is the authority of God on display in Caesarea Philippi.

And though we have seen this over and over in the gospel of Mark, never take for granted the power that is displayed here.

Jesus speaks, and the demon flees the boy never to return again.

This is authority and power that belongs only to the Lord.

And that poor boy was finally freed from years of seizures and attempts by that demon to take his life.

Can you imagine all the head trauma that the boy had experienced with all these seizures...

Can you imagine the trauma that his body had gone through with all these attempts to take his life..

And then don't miss this about Jesus...

Again, we have seen this over and over but notice the compassion of Jesus here...

He takes the boy by the hand and helps him up and gives him back to his father...

I want you to go back to verse 21 for a minute...

When the man first approaches Jesus with his problems...

Notice what Jesus does in verse 21...

He asks the father a question....

How long has been happening to him?

Jesus obviously knew all the details of this boy's condition.

So, why ask the father this question...

The same reason he extends his hand to the boy here and helps him up.

Jesus is full of compassion.

He is not someone who doesn't care about the details of your life...

He listens to you.

He sympathizes with your condition.

The times that I have ever encountered someone famous, I am always hesitant to approach them.

Most celebrities are the "Don't touch me" type.

Most don't care to be approached or talked to bothered by your nagging them for a picture.

That is not true of Jesus Christ.

He asks a father about his son because he cares about what that father has gone through all these years...

And he offers a hand to help the boy up because he feels sorry for someone who has been tortured for so long by a demon.

Jesus is not someone who shows up, doesn't speak to anyone and leaves without saying a word.

HE is a kind, tender and compassionate Savior.

But all the while, he is teaching his disciples....

Look how this scene ends in verse 28...

28 When He came into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" 29 And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

After Jesus and the disciples leave the scene of this incredible miracle, the disciples ask an important question...

Why weren't we able to cast out this demon?

And Jesus gives them a clear answer...

If you want to cast out demons, you need to use prayer.

And what does that mean?

What is prayer?

It is an exercise of faith in two ways...

First of all, prayer believes that Someone is listening....

Second, prayer believes that Someone else has the power to change circumstances...

Jesus is telling the disciples...

You could not cast that demon out because you lacked faith...

When you were relying on your own power to cast out that demon, you failed....

Instead, you need to rely upon God through prayer to cast out demons...

Conclusion

Now, what does all this mean for us today?

Well, first of all this isn't a passage about how to cast to cast out demons...

No, the truths here are much bigger than what we just read about...

The point of all of this is to bring the disciples attention to the idea of faith...

Their faith is about to be put to the test when Jesus dies...

Their faith is about to be put to the test when he goes back to heaven and leaves them to do the work of spreading the good news to the world...

And though there may be countless lessons about faith in these verses...

I want to leave us with two lessons this morning....

First, faith does not trust in human wisdom or power.

Most people would deny trusting in themselves...

But if you ask them why they would get into heaven, they will usually offer answers of human accomplishment...

“Well, I taught Sunday School for 40 years.”

Or “I gave a lot of money to the poor.”

Or, “I am a pretty good person. I don’t do the bad things that the guy down the road does.”

Or, “I said my prayers ever night since I was a little boy.”

And while all of things are good and fine, none will save you apart from faith in Christ alone.

True faith has no confidence in the flesh.

Instead, true faith has confidence only in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The disciples couldn’t cast out a demon when they trusted in themselves...

And you can’t enter heaven by trusting in your own wisdom or good works...

The second truth about faith is this...

A little faith can do a big work...

This same scene is also found in Matthew 17:14-20...

I have put the finale verses of what Matthew wrote about this miracle on the screen for us to look at as we close...

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not drive it out?” ²⁰ And He *said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith ^[i]the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Now think about this for a moment....

The disciples have been with Jesus for two years now, yet they lacked the faith to cast out a demon...

Yet, a father that Jesus had just met showed enough faith to lead Jesus to cast out a demon.

And what is the point?

To teach that a lack of faith has disastrous results...

But that a little faith has incredible results...

This morning you may not need to cast out a demon or move Mount Everest....

But you may need to move that mountain of sin that is weighing you down...

You may have a lifetime of sin strapped to your back or simply a few decades balanced across your shoulders...

And you know what I would say to you....

Be encouraged by the father in this story...

HE didn't have perfect faith.

When he said, "I do believe," that was the mustard seed of faith that Jesus requires...

If you are straining under the mountain of sin this morning, repent of your sin and believe upon the Lord Jesus this morning...

You don't need to know every book of the Bible to be saved...

You don't need perfect Sunday school attendance to be saved.

You don't even need to own a Bible to be saved....

You simply need to admit your sin....

Turn from that sin and show faith in the person of Jesus Christ....

Who lived a sinless life in your place and died a sinner's death in your place..

You need to believe upon him.

That mustard seed of faith will pick up the
mountain of sin in your life...

And place upon the cross of Christ.

Today is the day to say "I believe. Help me in my
unbelief."

Let us pray.