

SERMON: A WORK IN PROGRESS

Mark 9: 23-24

(23) Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. (24) And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.

Introduction

Jesus took Peter, James, and John to what we now call the Mount of Transfiguration. While there, a man came to the remaining nine disciples, who were at the foot of the mountain and asked them to heal his son. The boy was possessed by a demon since his early childhood. The nine disciples failed to drive out the demon. Their failure caused a lot of commotion and was the subject of a great deal of theological questions and debates. The enemies of Jesus used this failure to discredit Jesus and His followers. (Christians be aware; some people are eager to discredit your witness by emphasizing your failures, mistakes, and thoughtless blunders. “Look what he did and he calls himself a Christian.”)

When Jesus came down from the mountain, the crowd greeted Him with enthusiasm. The man with the son approached Jesus. Jesus told the man if he had faith, anything was possible, even the healing of his son. The man’s reply seemed totally contradictory. “Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.” So, one may ask, did he or did he not believe? The answer is simple: He was saying in essence, “I am a work in progress. I believe, that’s why I came here in the first place, but my belief is not strong enough to heal my son.” Our ancestors put it this way: “I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I am going to be, but thank God, I am not what I used to be.” We all are a work in progress. God is still working on each of us. We are new creatures, but we are not perfect nor complete. To quote our ancestors again, “We are climbing Jacob’s ladder and every round goes higher and higher.” Let’s look at this man’s actions and extract some spiritual and practical principles.

Exposition

1. He Performed An Objective Self-Evaluation.

(He Did Not Play The Blame Game.)

(Self-Evaluation Can Be Difficult.)

2. He Proceeded From The Positive.

(“I believe”.)

3. He Perceived The Need For Improvement.

("My Unbelief.")

(The Biggest Room In My House Is The Room For Improvement.)

4. He Petitioned For Help.

("Help Thou Mine Unbelief.")

(Some People Are Too Proud To Ask For Help.)

5. His Persistence Produced A Miracle Performed By The Savior.

(Jesus Healed His Son-See Verses 26 And 27.)

Closing Thoughts

As I bring this sermon to a close several thoughts come to mind. Yes, we are climbing Jacob's ladder, but we will not get to the top rung until we get to heaven and see Jesus. We must keep on climbing and trust God to give us the strength "to keep on keeping on."

I also remember an interaction with my father, William Bradford Ward, Sr. I was running scales on my alto saxophone. One was extremely difficult. Mrs. Jones, like most music teachers, had us running all types of scales in all of the keys. On one particular scale, I kept playing several wrong notes and in frustration I said, "I can't do it. I can't do it!" My father over heard me. He came over to me, put his finger on my noise, with a chastising voice, and said, "You left out a word and it's very important." My reply was, "What word did I leave out?" He said, "You left out the word 'yet.' You can't do it yet. Now, stop whining, sit yourself down, and practice until you get it right." I obeyed the fourth commandment and practiced until I got it right. I had to miss several of my favorite TV shows but I got it right. There are a lot of things we have not done yet, but with God's help we will achieve them.

I heard this often in Morehouse chapel services. There are well-known artistic masterpieces. There are literary masterpieces, musical masterpieces, and painting and sculpture masterpieces. Many are unfinished yet still considered masterpieces. That's amazing! Their incompleteness did not subtract from their majestic beauty or the craftsmanship of the artist. Here are just a few of these unfinished masterpieces- you can google many more. The Canterbury Tales by Chaucer is an unfinished literary masterpiece. Bach's Art of Fugue is an unfinished musical masterpiece. The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City is an unfinished architectural masterpiece. Raphael's Transfiguration of Christ is an unfinished masterpiece. Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling is an unfinished masterpiece. Here is the one I really like. Mozart's Requiem was

left unfinished, but his friend and student Franz Xaver Sussmayr completed it. Now you know where I am going. Yes, we are unfinished masterpieces, but Jesus our friend will bring us to radiant beauty and blessed completeness. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scriptures

Mark 9:17-27

Philippians 1:6

1st John 3:2

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