

Ministering in the Valley

Mark 9:14-29

Intro

If you have been a Christian for more than a few weeks then it is likely that you have had ***mountain-top experiences...***

- [expand on the mountain-top experiences of retreats, mission trips, outreaches, personal supernatural experiences, etc...]

And though these ***mountain-top*** spiritual experiences come in countless varieties they all have one thing in common--***they always come to an end...***

- No matter how impactful the experience is, it doesn't last forever...

Eventually we must come down from the mountain and get back to the day-to-day affairs of this life...

- [ex. I usually experience this after men's retreats and Youth Retreats...]

Now, it is important to accept that coming down from the mountain is what we are supposed to do...

Because it is the *experience on the mountain* that empowers us for working in the valley...[expand]

Consider these biblical examples of mountain-top experiences that empowered individuals to minister in the valley...

- ***Moses on Sinai***
- ***Jesus in private prayer***
- ***Peter being restored on the shores of the Galilee***
- ***Paul on the road to Damascus***
- ***John receiving the book of Revelation***

And I would argue that we find a similar situation in Mark 9...

- In this passage, Jesus, Peter, James & John are coming down from a mountain-top experience and they are immediately encountered with difficult ministry...

But before we get into today's passage, it is important that we remind ourselves of the context of this situation...

So please open your Bibles to...

Mark 9:1-13

1 And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste

death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

2 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.

3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

5 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” —

6 because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

7 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”

8 Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.

9 Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

10 So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.

11 And they asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

12 Then He answered and told them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?

13 But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.”

*This brings us up to speed as we move into vs 14-29 of Mark 9 this morning in a message I have entitled **Ministering in the Valley...***

I've divided this message up into 3 sections...

- 1) The Scene**
- 2) The Situation**
- 3) The Solution**

Let's move into our first section...

1) The Scene (vs 14-16)

14 And when He came to the disciples,

Jesus comes down from Mt. Hermon with Peter, James and John following Him...

- And as the Lord reaches the bottom of the mountain, He meets up with His other nine disciples...

As the Lord Jesus surveyed the scene, we read that...

when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them.

- *The mountain-top experience is over...*

Here are the 9 disciples with a large crowd gathered around them and they seem to be in an argument with a group of **scribes**...

- As you might remember, the **scribes** were the self-proclaimed interpreters of the law and they were mostly Pharisees — they were the theologians and lawyers of Judaism...

From the looks of it, these scribes were taking issue with the disciples about some issue — and the disciples don't seem able to handle whatever it is...

15 Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him.

- Once the crowd notices that Jesus is back on the scene they rush over to Him...

All at once, the Lord is confronted with ministry — no time to **rest** and **relax** and **reflect** on the mountain-top experience...

And this is usually how it will be for us as believers...

We will have an incredible mountain-top experience one moment and the next moment we will be in a situation where we must focus on meeting some pressing need...

- And it is easy to allow these types of situations to be **joy-stealers...**

It is easy to become resentful and frustrated because we are not able to bask in the glory of our experience with the Lord...

- ***The remedy is to remind ourselves that the mountain-top equips us for the valley...***

God gives us wonderful experiences on the mountain-top so that we might be empowered to serve Him in the valley...

- [expand on mountain-top experiences not being an end in themselves — they enable us to minister...]

[expand on us entering Heaven one day — ever-increasing mountaintop experiences with the Lord and with each other...]

Continuing on in vs 16, Jesus seeks some information regarding the situation at hand...

16 And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”

The Lord Jesus wants to know what it is that the scribes and disciples are arguing about...

From this we see that Jesus is concerned with the situation at hand...

IMPORTANT - As we come down from the mountain-top, it is important that we don't go through life merely looking for another mountain-top experience...

It is vital that we **reengage** with the ministry opportunities around us...

- It is essential that we walk into the valley, put our hand to the plow and get to work...[expand]

[ex. we must not be like those who go on a wonderful vacation but never return mentally — still dreaming of being on vacation...]

- Helpfully, the Apostle Paul presents us with a wonderful example of how to handle both the mountain-top and the valley...

The Apostle Paul recounts the ultimate in mountain-top experiences in...

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 *[turn there]*

1 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—

4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

And even though Paul had seen Paradise, He continued to faithfully serve in the midst of extremely difficult situations...

To see what I mean, please turn to...

Philippians 1:12-26

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:

16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

**21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.**

23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,

26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

- [expand & apply to ministering in the valley...]

*Please turn back to Mark 9 as we move from **The Scene** into our second section...*

2) The Situation (vs 17-18)

17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son,

Apparently this man interrupts before the scribes can respond...

- And we can understand why once we realize that this man is a desperate dad who is seeking help for his tormented son...

[expand on how situations escalate if our children are involved...]

As we move on in vs 17, we see the issues that the man's son was experiencing...

I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit.

This boy is demon-possessed and the demon causes the boy to be unable to speak...[expand]

18 And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid.

These manifestations are very similar to what one endures during an epileptic fit but in this case the cause is demonic...

- [expand on what the man and his son must have endured during these episodes...]

As we think about the difficulty of this situation, it is important to realize that if Peter had had his way this man and his son would have suffered indefinitely...

- *Remember, Peter wanted to stay on the mountain-top — but the man and his son were in the valley...*

LESSON — If we want to minister to people we must come down from the mountain-top and meet them in the valley...

- [ex. argue against the monastic lifestyle...]

Instead of isolating ourselves, we are to reach out...

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Acts 1:8

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- [expand on finding your valleys to minister in — home, school, work, etc...]

Continuing on in Mark 9:18...

So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”

Though the disciples had previously cast out demons, they were unable to do so in this case...

- Perhaps this particular demon was more powerful than the demons that they had encountered before...

Regarding the idea that there are differing levels of demons we read the following in...

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

What the category or rank was of the demon who was possessing the boy, we don't know...

- But we do know that the disciples were unable to cast the demon out of the boy...

With that said, let's move now from The Situation to our final section...

3) The Solution (vs 19-29)

19 He answered him and said, “O faithless generation,

With these words Jesus makes it clear that He is not impressed with the scene before Him...

The Lord is frustrated with the lack of faith of those gathered at the foot of Mt. Hermon...

- It seems likely that the 9 disciples, the desperate father and the unbelieving scribes are all included in the phrase **O faithless generation...**

And as we think about that label, it seems fair to say that the Lord Jesus applies it to the majority of planet earth...

- For the most part, human beings living at this time in human history are a **faithless generation...**

[expand on secular humanism & false religions...]

- Now, as we look around and see the faithlessness of the world as a whole we should also look in the mirror and ask ourselves if we are faithless as well...

In other words, even though we are born-again believers, are we a faithless generation?...

- Are we living out what we say we believe?...[expand]

Continuing on in vs 19...

O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?

We get the sense that the faithlessness of those around Jesus was wearing Him down...

- [ex. Moses w/ Israelites in the desert...]

But it is also likely that Jesus is making a veiled reference to His coming departure--His death on the cross...[expand]

Jesus continues...

How long shall I bear with you?

The faithlessness of the people was a **burden** to the Lord Jesus...[expand]

Continuing on in Mark 9:19 Jesus directs his attention to the desperate father and says...

Bring him to Me.

In spite of Jesus' disappointment with the lack of faith that He finds around Him, the Lord still seeks to minister to the demon-possessed boy...

20 Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

- As the demon within the boy recognizes the Lord Jesus, the boy is thrown to the ground and tormented by the demon within him...

This unclean spirit knew that Jesus was about to overpower him and the unclean spirit did not want to go...

- [expand — throughout the gospels we see clearly that Jesus is able to overpower any demonic force...]

21 So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?”

And he said, “From childhood.

22 And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him.

Imagine how difficult this boy's life had been...

- [expand on the fact that the demon wanted to destroy the life of this boy...]

One commentator

"Demons possess people not because they wish they had a body but rather to torture and kill those who are made in God's image. This is a central element in their war against God."

Moving on in vs 22, the weary father makes his plea...

But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

I love the fact that the father sees the son's situation as his own situation...

- Notice, the father does not say "have compassion on **him** and help **him**"...

Instead, the father says **have compassion on us and help us...**

- This is a beautiful picture of the oneness that this man had with his son...[expand]

Similarly, this is the attitude that we should have as believers...

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

1 Corinthians 12:26

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Philippians 2:4

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- [expand on importance of being concerned with the difficulties that fellow believers face — loving others as we love ourselves...]

Moving on in Mark 9 to vs...

23 Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

Now, in order to understand what Jesus is communicating to this father, we must read again what this father said to Jesus...

"But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us"

To which Jesus replies in vs 23...

"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

This is very interesting — because Jesus is basically saying ***"It's not about My ability, it's about your faith"...***

- To put it another way, the Lord Jesus had power to spare — He could heal this boy in an instant...

But what was needed was the faith of the father — the father needed to see Jesus for who Jesus really was...

KEY — When we have the faith to see Jesus as He actually is then the sky is the limit — there is no telling what the Lord Jesus may do...

One author

"the limitless power of God is available to anyone who will trust entirely in Jesus"

Moving on to vs...

24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

One commentator

"This is one of the most important theological descriptions of true discipleship in Scripture. Every one of us should have it inscribed on a plaque and hung on the wall over our desk, for it describes us all."

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

I love this humble response from the weary father...

- This desperate dad confesses that he believes but that he needs help with his unbelief...

His faith is mixed with doubt...

- And if you are anything like me then you can completely relate with this father...

As believers our faith is imperfect — it ebbs and it flows — it is strong then weak and then strong again...

- But as believers we should take heart because the real key is not our ***faith itself*** but instead the ***object of our faith...***

[ex. people by faith getting harnessed up to go on the rock wall, high elements and zip line...

- [those with little faith hold the rope — those with greater faith did not — but either way it was the harness and rope that did the work...]

EXHORTATION -- Get your eyes off your faith and onto the Lord Jesus — the more that you focus on Him the more He will fill out your faith...

25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!”

The Lord Jesus sees a crowd approaching and to avoid further publicity He commands the unclean spirit to come out of the boy and never return...[expand]

26 Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.”

[expand on the scene...]

27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

This is another beautiful example of the Lord Jesus taking someone **by the hand**...

- *Jesus took Peter's mother-in-law by the hand when he healed her of a fever...*

The Lord took Jairus' daughter by the hand when He raised her from the dead...

- *Jesus took a blind man by the hand before He healed the man's blindness...*

And here we have the Lord Jesus taking this formerly demon-possessed boy by the hand and lifting him up...

- What a beautiful picture of the intimacy and fellowship that the Lord Jesus seeks with His people!...[expand]

QUESTION – Will you allow the Lord Jesus to take you by the hand today?...[expand]

28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”

The embarrassed disciples wait until they are indoors and away from the crowd before they ask what went wrong...

- ***Why could they not cast out the demon?...***

We find out in vs...

29 So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

Now, it must be said that many conservative Bible scholars believe that the words **and fasting** were not in Mark's original manuscript...[expand]

- But whether Jesus mentioned only prayer or prayer and fasting, what Jesus is ultimately saying to His disciples is clear...

The Lord is letting His disciples know that they don't have the power in themselves to get the job done...

- ***They must seek God's power to get the mission accomplished...***

And that happens through prayer or through prayer and fasting...

- [expand on how this shows a dependence on God...]

One commentator

"Evidently the nine disciples were ineffective because they believed that the power to cast out demons that Jesus had given them was now inherent in themselves. It was not. It was still God's power, and it came directly from Him.

Therefore they needed to acknowledge their dependence on Him for power to be successful. Jesus' prayer life reflected even His dependence on the Father."

Conclusion

Now, as we wind down our time together, I want to remind us all of a couple of the main points of our passage...

First of all, it is the experience on the mountain top that prepares us for working in the valley...[expand]

Secondly, are you working in the valley?...[expand]

Finally, when it comes to your faith, are you focused on your faith itself or are you focused on the Lord Jesus?...[expand]

I'll close with these words written by a Bible scholar...

"We will never have enough faith; we must depend entirely on God and Christ. We exercise our faith in humility, simply trusting that God can act in and through us. It is God who acts; it is we who trust him as he acts. Like the father [of the demon-possessed boy], we simply center on Christ."