

- 1) **THE DEMON POSSESSED SON – Mark 9:14-29** - “And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. [15] And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. [16] And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” [17] And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. [18] And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” [19] And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” [20] And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. [21] And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. [22] And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” [23] And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.” [24] Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” [25] And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” [26] And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” [27] But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. [28] And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” [29] And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

This section is rich with practical lessons for service in Christ's kingdom:

- A) **THERE IS A RHYTHM BETWEEN PERSONAL DEVOTION AND PUBLIC MINISTRY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS.**

The situation down in the valley with the demon possessed boy is just the kind of thing that could easily be avoided. Perhaps that is why Peter thought that the mountain top would be a perfect place to stay – **Mark 9:5** - “And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

In each of our lives there must be a mix between **worship on the mountain** and **warfare in the valley**. No one will be all that God wants him to be if life becomes all of one or the other. **Service and seclusion, activity and refreshing** must be balanced and protected in all our lives. Mountain top experiences of refreshment are for the purpose of ministry. Ministry will be powerless and mechanical unless grounded in times of seclusion with the Lord. There's a beautiful balance here.

- B) **JESUS TEACHES WHY HIS DISCIPLES WERE INEFFECTIVE IN CASTING OUT THE DEMON**

Mark 9:29 - “And he said to them, ‘This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.’” It's interesting to remember that the disciples had already been told that casting out demons would be a part of their ministry (**Mark 3:14-15**). The lesson here is **any gift must be maintained by a life of prayer and personal attachment to Jesus Himself**.

This is also born out in Jesus' own words in **John 15:5** - “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” This is a lesson in applied **humility**. Even a gifted ministry will soon become barren and forced unless the price of personal devotion is paid. Power needs prayer to be ongoing and useful.

There's another important point here. To meet any crisis point of need takes more than just **strong prayer at that moment of time**. The kind of prayer life I maintained all last week will have much to do with my enablement to minister in the power of the Spirit when the crisis comes. Spiritual muscle is developed like physical muscle. It can't be built at the last minute. It is something done prior to and

behind the scenes of the actual crisis.

C) **JESUS TEACHES WHAT WE ARE TO DO WITH WEAK FAITH**

Mark 9:22 - "And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Here we have a man whose first efforts at obtaining help from God have clearly failed. At this point he doesn't appear to be certain that even Jesus will be able to help. Even his confession of faith is mixed with doubt – **Mark 9:24 - "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!'"**

There's only one thing to do with weak faith. **Bring it to Jesus and use what you have.** Notice that he doesn't allow his doubts to **immobilize him**. He doesn't **measure what he should do at this point by his feelings of faith**. Jesus honors him because he uses the faith he has. Jesus honors him because he **resists his own doubts**. Those are lessons well remembered.

2) **JESUS' TEACHING AND THE DISCIPLES BLINDNESS – Mark 9:30-32 - "They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, [31] for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." [32] But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him."**

The lesson here is that all of us can miss what God wants to say to us because of our own preconceived ideas and prejudices. Because the disciples had it so firmly entrenched in their minds that the Messiah would usher in an immediate, earthly kingdom, they found it hard to grasp anything Jesus said about His death and resurrection.

Remember, they thought their ideas were Bible based. A great deal of care must be taken to ensure that what we think the Bible teaches is, in fact, what it really does teach.

3) **THE ATTITUDE OF SERVANTHOOD – Mark 9:33-41 - "And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" [34] But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. [35] And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." [36] And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, [37] "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." [38] John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." [39] But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. [40] For the one who is not against us is for us. [41] For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward."**

It is pathetic that while Jesus was preparing for the cross, His disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest. No wonder Jesus warned them about the **leaven of the Pharisees – Mark 8:15 - "And he cautioned them, saying, 'Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.'" This desire for greatness among the disciples is instructive. It revealed itself in *two ways*:**

a) **THEY WERE COMPETITIVE AMONG THEMSELVES FOR THE MOST RECOGNITION FOR THEIR SERVICE – Mark 9:33-34 - "And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" [34] But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest."** Greatness carries with it the idea of **reward**. Perhaps Jesus used the illustration of little children because you have to minister to them without any thought of them doing anything great back to you (37). There is no political advancement in helping them.

b) **THEY WERE INTOLERANT OF THOSE WHO WEREN'T OF THEIR GROUP – Mark 9:38-40 - "John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we**

tried to stop him, because he was not following us." [39] But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. [40] For the one who is not against us is for us." Compare this with **Matthew 12:30**. There is loyalty to *Jesus - which is a must* - and loyalty to *us* (9:38). If I am really interested more in the cause of Jesus than building my own kingdom, I will not be threatened by those who are greatly used by Jesus but don't do things my way. I will rejoice with those who rejoice. Compare also **Philippians 1:17-18** with **Galatians 1:8-9**.

The key issues of greatness are these: Am I willing to serve and spill out my life for those whom our church would deem as the "least"? Am I inwardly happy when other people get credit and recognition for what they do for Jesus? Am I content to see other people advance to outwardly more successful levels in their spheres of ministry than I have achieved?