

Lent devotions

READ:

Mark 9: 2-29 (click to open link)

REFLECT:

It's not always easy but it's absolutely necessary some times to ask for help. Like the man who went looking for help for his afflicted son. Jesus's commentary on the way people were in his day shows us a lot hasn't changed. A few things stick out.

First, Jesus laments the unbelief of a generation. Jesus would have been in his thirties at this time. Assuming the boy was perhaps 6-10 years old this puts his father somewhere mid-twenties to probably early thirties. He would have been one of Jesus's peers age-wise. So, Jesus isn't saying in effect "You darn kids!" More like he's saying something to the effect: "We just don't get it do we?" The same goes for his disciples (remember, they were in the crowd too). The point is well taken. Even followers just don't get it sometimes nor do we realize how little time we have here. Being fully human, Jesus includes himself with us. It's a challenge to make the best use of our time while figuring out what we believe.

The father calls himself a believer and yet asks for help in his unbelief in the same breath. I'm a black and white guy and yet I completely get how the father can believe but not believe. We believe in the teachings of Jesus we read in the bible but we just can't believe he could rise from the dead. We believe God exists but we have trouble accepting he has a plan for us. We trust in the Holy Spirit but we can't see how it could ever work in our lives. We're like the father and that's okay. We need to own our shortcomings in the belief department and ask Jesus to help us overcome them. Isn't it logical he would want to?

Finally, Jesus states to his disciples this type of evil spirit can only come out by prayer. In the past this puzzled me a bit because I thought, certainly the disciples would have prayed, wouldn't they? Maybe they didn't. Maybe they laid hands on the boy or there was some other ritual. Or maybe it was the commandment Jesus issued to the spirit to leave the boy that did the trick. But I actually think that Jesus's meaning goes far beyond the method the disciples used or any so-called trick.

I think prayer here means calling on the authority of Jesus. We end our prayers "In Jesus name, amen" a lot, don't we? Far from being an accepted convention I think praying in Jesus's name is us telling God "We can't do it on our own. We acknowledge in our plea that we need the help of our savior, your Son, to rid ourselves of evil. We need the help of your son to believe. And we need His help to break us free from the disbelief of our lives and society today and follow you." That's a pretty big deal and one where I think we would all be wise to follow Jesus's advice and realize this can only be accomplished by prayer.

RESPOND:

Asking for help isn't easy is it? Admitting we're not up to the task isn't something we like to do. Yet, here's a father who knew he was overmatched and asked the biggest guy going at the time for help. We need to keep doing that and not be afraid. What will you ask for help with today?