

Prayer and Fasting

Mark 9:14-29

I have sort of a weird question to ask today as we begin our conversation together.

A) Do you have a favorite appliance at your house?

B) I am guessing no one has ever asked you that.

1) Favorite appliance – really – especially guys
Favorite a lot of things – appliance not one....

C) I have a Favorite appliance – Ninja Blender

See I love smoothies – How many of you like a good smoothie?

A) I love smoothie's – but with my regular blender – I could never make a smoothie like, Jamba juice

B) Frozen Fruit or ice would get stuck – spoon in there to stir – and it would take forever.

1) Give up – Making a smoothie was just too much work.

C) That was until after 33 yrs of marriage – last year we purchased a Ninja blender – oh my...

D) I love making smoothies – Josiah loves

1) Why did we wait so long – wasn't expensive
\$60 dollars

Been said that having the right tool can make all the difference in the world.

A) Butter knife verses a utility knife – huge difference

B) In the Christian life we have tools that the Lord has given us – aid us in the Christian life

1) Not in this alone.

C) Today we are going to talk about one of those tools.

Mark 9 – Setting is the MT of transfiguration – glorious moment

A) Jesus takes Peter James and John – up on Mount Hermon. – other disciples in valley below

B) Transfigured – saw an aspect of his glory that was concealed in his Humanity

1) GLORIOUS MOMENT on the MT.

C) In the Valley below – there was a Hellish moment occurring –

1) Father brought his son who was demon possessed to the disciples – but they couldn't help him

D) That is where we are going to pick up the story

Jesus and Peter, James, John come down

1) Met by a crowd and commotion

14 And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. 15 Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. 16 And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?"

17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. 18 And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

Picture this scene – Jesus comes from this glorious moment on the Mountain – to a commotion

A) The religious leaders are arguing with his disciples about something! – Tension in the air

B) Jesus seeks to intervene – what is going on what are you discussing with them?

Enter this Desperate Dad – Luke's gospel reveals to us that the boy was the man's only Child.

A) Luke states plainly that this Mute spirit was a demonic spirit.

B) This demonic spirit would seize control of this boy

1) Epileptic Seizure like symptoms

C) If you have ever witnessed that it is really scary

D) Dad was helpless to help him – there is something that has control of my boy – I can't help him

1) I was hoping your disciples could help him but they couldn't!

E) Imagine being in that place – your only child is being terrorized – nothing you can do to help him

1) So frustrating

Now it is interesting to me that Previous to this, Jesus had already given His disciples the authority to heal the sick and cast out demons in His Name.

A) And they had experienced God's power in doing all of that!

B) BUT NOW they have situation that is obviously too great for them.

1) No matter what they attempted, had been unable to deal with it.

C) I can relate to the disciples here:

1) I have all been in that situation before – faced with a problem that I couldn't handle – overwhelmed

D) My guess is you have too – In the midst of a situation that was bigger than you.

1) Nothing you tried worked

GOOD NEWS Jesus is the MASTER OF THE UNMET NEED.

A) Nothing is too hard for Him. Hallelujah!

B) He responds in a positive way to the desperate heart.

C) Notice what Jesus does next 19 He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?"

Now this seems like an odd response of Jesus to this situation.

A) But I think the dispute was over – Can God really help someone like this?

B) Religious leaders saying no – institutionalized – Disciples arguing yes – we have seen it before

1) Probably people in the crowd on both sides

C) But Jesus has already exercised control over demonic beings in this ministry

1) He is a little frustrated here at this situation

D) But he doesn't just say – Oy Vey- I am out of here

1) When will they learn

No he says Bring him to Me.

A) That is always the answer when it comes to situations that are beyond our control

Bring it to Jesus! – Prayer – Don't carry it – Cast all your cares on Him – he cares for you.

A) Prayer is one of the tools in our spiritual tool box

B) The amazing thing about the Christian life is that it involves this incredible combination –

1) Divine power and human effort – human participation and preparation

C) Now yes there are times and instances where God moves – apart from us – we do nothing –

1) He does everything

But there are many other instances where he invites our participation in the process.

A) Prayer is one of those ways – there is power in prayer

B) Let me illustrate to you this way. Tool box

C) Sand paper – This is often us – trying to work out our Christian life in our own strength – push hard

D) But look at this – Palm sander – now there is a power behind us – helps us do more – do ourselves

Or think of it this way: Philips screwdriver

A) I can do a lot with this – tighten a screw – undo a screw – put a screw into dry wall

B) But then I find myself – in a situation where I need to drive a screw into a stud –

1) Harder I push, but just not happening

C) So then I pull out of my trusty tool box my cordless power drill

1) Putting that screw into the stud – no problem

D) There is a power attached to that Philips head that I didn't have

That is how the Christian life works – there is a power in Jesus – we can tap into through prayer!

A) So often we are reluctant to tap into it – until we just can't do it – hit that stud and we are stuck

B) Or we unnecessarily hurt ourselves or wear ourselves out by trying to do it on our own

C) My wife is a handy woman – not afraid to do projects – but sometimes I will come home

1) She is straining with a screwdriver – screw something in

D) Babe – let me get my drill – make it easy – I don't need the drill – I can do this –

1) Next day her back is out of wack or – shoulder hurting

E) Babe – it would have been so much easier with the drill – Turned 55 yesterday finally learning



1) We have tools – need to use them!

When we bring things to Jesus in Prayer we are tapping into power and resources that are beyond us

Andrew Murray:

"The powers of the eternal world have been placed at prayers disposal. It is the very essence of true religion the channel of blessing, the secret of power and life. "

"Prayer is the slender nerve, which unleashed the muscles of an omnipotent God!"

A) The power and resources are there – available to us they are in the tool box

B) But sometimes he waits until we come to him before he does anything

C) Prayer is a sign of our dependency upon God for everything!

So Jesus says – Bring him to me!

A) What has Jesus been asking you to bring to him – that you have been reluctant to bring?

B) What are you still trying to do and accomplish in your own strength ?

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.

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

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

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

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

18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

C) The Unmet need was suddenly swiftly and powerfully taken care of.

1) It was an awesome display of God's power – but it left the Disciples confused

The confused Disciples!

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

A) They'd had answers to prayer before. They'd ministered effectively at times –

1) They'd had SOME successes. So what was different this time?

B) "Why could WE not cast out this demon?" Lord, we tried everything we knew how.

1) We prayed just like you taught us to pray – we did what we did before – where did we go wrong ?

I don't know about you, but I've been right where those disciples were so many times.

A) Why Lord?" Lord why does this seem so hard this time?

B) Why is there so much resistance? What is the problem? – Brick wall

C) Praying but nothing is happening – what is the deal?

Unexpected reply.

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

A) There are some situations that take more than prayer – they require fasting too.

B) What is fasting: Simply –

C) Denying of the flesh in some form /

1) food/ entertainment / activity for the purpose of setting aside special time for seeking God.

D) It isn't that prayer and fasting make us more “worthy” to receive God's power ;

1) it is that prayer and fasting draw us closer to the heart of God, and they put us more in line with His power.

E) GODLY PRAYER, WITH FASTING, RELEASES BREAKTHROUGH SPIRITUAL POWER.

F) Back to my tool box analogy

Screwdriver – Tool – relies on my strength and ability

A) Some things that are too hard – break out the drill

Like prayer.

B) Project at my house – drill into our stucco – really hard – break the drill bit

C) Steve came over with his power driver – that is like fasting –

1) accomplished a similar thing as my drill but more power – that is what fasting is like.

Jesus says this kind doesn't come out except thru Payer and fasting –

A) Question: How would the disciples know that they were going to face a situation ?

B) Answer is they didn't – So that means that fasting & prayer were to be a regular part of their lives

1) So that when they encountered a situation like this they were ready.

C) Matthew 6 Jesus is giving instruction on the Christian life: Christian disciplines

When you give – Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing –

A) don't make a big deal of it. - giving regular.....

B) When you pray – don't make a public spectacle street corner -

1) Prayer is a regular Christian discipline

C) When you fast - "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting

D) Dress normal – look presentable – don't draw attention to yourselves

1) Fasting is supposed to be a normal Christian discipline – so that if a situation arises you are ready.

E) God is gracious – my most recent demonic experience – not fasting at all.

But the idea is – Lifestyle that is marked by dependency – will include fasting in some form

A) Sometimes – one meal a week – all week – not eating & praying

B) Other times – One day out of the month – fast for that whole day.

C) Other times fasting from – social media or electronics

Point is – Fasting should be in some form a regular part of our Christian life – Christian experience

A) Part of our Christian discipline

B) We see in this story fasting is connected to spiritual power

C) Give you three other reasons why Fasting is important for us

#1 We fast as a way of disciplining our Flesh.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 **Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**

A)As athletes train their bodies for physical contests, fasting trains our spirits for spiritual battles.

B)Fasting is a very tangible way to teach our minds and our bodies that we do not have to gratify the urges of our flesh.

C)When a person fasts, it will not be long before the tummy starts to say “feed me”.

D)That physical urge is a test when you're fasting.

1)Will you do what your flesh is urging you to do, or will you rely upon God for his strength?

E)Fasting is a way of learning to discipline our bodies for the spiritual battles that God needs us to fight

1) Workouts today: Strengthen your CORE – Fasting is a great discipline for Strengthening your spiritual core.

#2 Fasting is important when we need direction Acts 13:1-4

A)The elders in the church in Antioch were worshipping -- ministering to the Lord & fasting

B) It seems that from what happened here that they were seeking the Lord for direction.

1)"Where do we go from here as a church?" They were fasting to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in the direction of their mission.

C) They were telling the Lord - "We want your leading, O God! what is your will for the mission of this church?"

D)We are saying, when we fast, that seeking God is more important to us than the daily routine of finding food for ourselves.

E)That We have a passion for God that supersedes everything else.

It was only after they had paid the price of fasting and praying that God revealed to them what the next step was to be –

A)that they should send Barnabas and Paul off as missionaries.

B)The result of that time of prayer and fasting was the gospel would go around the world

C)Today there are 1.3 Billion followers of Christ – result of that time of prayer and fasting -

What might be the result of our times of prayer and fasting this week.

A)Needed power in your life –

B)New direction for you personally or for us as a church.

C)We could say that time of fasting and Prayer changed the course of human history.

D) So we should fast in times when we need direction.

#3 We fast to demonstrate repentance and brokenness over sin! Joel 2:12-13

12 “Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, **With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”**

13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. Joel 2:12, 13

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

A)There are many ways we can demonstrate our humility before God,

1)but choosing to go without food for the sake of spiritual things is one of the more practical ways.

B) It is one thing to pray, “Lord I’m sorry for what I’ve done.”

C) It is something else to deprive yourself of food and plead with God for him to have mercy upon you for the sins you’ve committed against him.

D) A decision to fast in such a situation demonstrates to God that we are truly serious about our repentance,

1) and that we sincerely long for new life in that area.

E) Many times in the Bible where Fasting accompanied – Brokenness – God’s forgiveness followed

F) You this week – God meets you in prayer/fasting

Fasting is important for because:

- 1) It is sometimes the key to opening the door to breakthrough spiritual power.
- 2) When we need direction.
- 3) As a way of disciplining our flesh in order to strengthen our spirit.
- 4) Effective in times of brokenness and repentance.