

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity, October 2, 2022**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 359, 501:6, 411:1-4, 528:1-3, 377:1

Lessons: Psalm 30, Acts 8:1-8, Luke 9:37-45.

Sermon Text: Mark 9:14-27.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Today we look at a cry for help – and for a stronger faith. *“A man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ‘Lord, have mercy on my son,’ he said. ‘He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.’”* Matthew 17:14-16 (NIV)

*“Jesus asked the boy’s father, ‘How long has he been like this?’ ‘From childhood,’ he answered. ‘[The evil spirit] has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.’ ‘If you can?’ said Jesus. ‘Everything is possible for him who believes.’ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, ‘I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!’”*

The man’s final appeal was

**“I BELIEVE, HELP MINE UNBELIEF!”**

1. Today we look at the man’s plea to Jesus and
2. Our daily plea to Jesus.
3. Jesus’ answer is *“Everything is possible for him who believes.”*

This is a man who was torn between belief and unbelief.

This is a man who realized his shortcomings, his sins.

We don’t know much else about him. We only know what we read in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and that isn’t much.

This is a man who brought his terribly ill, demon-possessed son to Jesus’ disciples to be healed.

We could speculate what was in his mind and heart, but we must be careful. We must look at what Holy Scripture tells us and not go beyond what God tells us in his Word.

God told Moses on Mount Sanai *“Do not add to what I command you”* Deuteronomy 4:2 (NIV) God repeats those words even more strongly in the last chapter of Revelation: *“If anyone adds anything to [the words of prophecy of this book], God will add to him the plagues described in this book.”* Revelation 22:18 (NIV)

Although we cannot speculate on what this man thought, we can think about how we might feel in his situation.

Surely this miracle affected this man and changed his life, just as it would change our lives if such a thing happened to us.

When Mark speaks of the child, he uses a Greek word which is used for a young child.

We can guess that Jesus healing his son in this very dramatic way caused a major change in his life. How would he and his unknown, unnamed wife care for and deal with their son now?

It is easy to speculate that this boy, too, was especially grateful to Jesus, as was his father. Surely the Father should have told his son about the marvelous healing of Jesus.

When something great happens to us, we want to share that. This was a life-changing experience, not only for the child but also for the father, the whole family, and for the people who witnessed this healing or even heard about it.

After Jesus healed the boy, Luke tells us that the people ***“were all amazed at the greatness of God.”*** Luke 9:43 (NIV)

Unfortunately, before being shown God’s great power in healing the child, the father confessed his skepticism with the words ***“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”***

These are really words of repentance when he asked Jesus to help him with his unbelief.

We are living at a time when there is a great deal of skepticism and doubt about what we are being told by our fellow human beings. People need something they can believe, something they can believe in, something they can trust. Well, that “something” is the Word of God, the Bible.

As Christians we have often been skeptical and doubting of some things men are telling us. One of the first and foremost would be the beginning, the creation of all things, including man. As believers in God, we accept – on faith – what God tells us about the beginning of all things. ***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*** Genesis 1:1 (NIV)

Men have trouble with that fact, that truth, that absolute. They don’t want to believe it.

Why? Well, Satan, who ***“is a liar and the father of lies”*** John 8:44 (NIV) has been around at least since Adam and Eve were in the perfect garden. Men have heard Satan’s lies often enough that they want to believe them, and reject what the true and only God tells us in his written words, the Bible.

Is it any wonder that this father should have been skeptical, doubting, and not believe that Jesus could heal his child? After all, Jesus’ apostles were unable to heal the child.

But Jesus did heal the child and by the grace and power of God, the man comes to his senses and realizes that he doesn’t have all the truth about Jesus’ power in his heart and life. He repents of his doubting and asks Jesus to help, to improve, to strengthen his faith.

He had approached Jesus with the word “If”. That word shows doubt, Jesus’ response is ***“If you can?” said Jesus. ‘Everything is possible for him who believes.’***

Then come the man’s words of repentance: ***“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”*** He is saying ‘I believe now. I don’t have enough faith. I want more faith.’ So there is this major change in his life.

He admits his inability to even look to Jesus for help. He was hoping that Jesus could heal, but he hadn’t been sure, and then realized he didn’t or hadn’t believed.

For this man, it took a miracle he could see right then to confirm and strengthen his faith.

We are reminded of Thomas, who was not among Jesus’ followers on the night of his resurrection and thus did not see him at that time. He had said ***“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”*** John 20:25 (NIV) When he did have opportunity to see Jesus a week later, ***“Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”*** John 20:29 (NIV)

Even today many claim that they need some kind of proof that God exists, or that God can do what he claimed in the Bible, or that Jesus is really the Son of God. They have become so accustomed to the doubt and unbelief of people surrounding them that they claim they can’t believe unless they see something like a miracle.

Can’t you just hear Jesus’ lament even today: ***“O unbelieving generation!”*** Can you imagine how much more Jesus would weep over the unbelief in the world today!

The man in our text physically saw Jesus perform a miracle of healing, and this surely strengthened his faith.

But we have the Word of God, the Bible, to strengthen our faith – everything from Genesis to Revelation. This man didn’t have the New Testament yet. The only Scriptures he would have had were Genesis to Malachi. But they contained all that people needed to know to be saved eternally, to believe in the coming Savior. In a sense we might say the New Testament was frosting on the cake, although it is really much more. It details the actual life of Jesus and tells about his followers in the years after Jesus left earth to ascend to heaven.

Scripture is filled with words encouraging us to trust in God, to believe in God. Here is just one example from the Old Testament: ***“Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.”*** Isaiah 26:4 (NIV)

And here is just one example from the New Testament in Jesus’ own words to his disciples on the same night he was betrayed: ***“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”*** John 14:1 (NIV)

Can you imagine yourself in the place of this man who said ***“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief”***?

If your child had been so miraculously healed from such a terrible disease and illness, wouldn't you be astounded? But doesn't that happen frequently even today? We often simply take for granted and think that the medicine or the doctor or the hospital does the healing, and forget that it is God who is doing it all along.

We tend to forget many of the blessings God gives us here on earth. It is only when we hear about people in hospitals on respirators, helping them take every breath, that we realize what a gift and blessing from God every breath we take really is. (Pause and take a deep breath!)

Wouldn't we want to thank the healer from the bottom of our hearts and with all our being?

And wouldn't we want an even stronger faith?

In every illness we look to God for healing, and almost expect that he will heal us of all our earthly diseases so that we can live another day on earth. But remember that we are just strangers and temporary residents here on earth.

We tend to forget what God tells us in Isaiah: ***“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*** Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

If we don't heal as soon as we expect it, or even don't heal, do we want to blame God? Weak faith dare not be blamed if we don't heal. God's ways are far above our ways. And God even gives faith. It ***“comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*** Romans 10:17 (NIV)

Surely there have been times when we have wanted more faith, or a stronger faith. We daily plead to Jesus: ***“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.”***

But we can remember that Jesus has healed. Jesus has healed our child, all our children, and us from an eternally fatal disease, one that would throw us into the fires of hell, not just the fires we see destroying forests and houses here on earth. We need only believe that to be saved eternally. And God gives all the faith necessary to save us. We often just want more faith to see our way through each day here on earth.

Remember Jesus' words: ***“Everything is possible for him who believes.”***

Is God going to give us our every earthly demand or request? As a child I may think the greatest thing God can give me is more Legos or a new doll or a new Xbox or a new bicycle or a new fishing rod or a new baseball glove.

As an adult I may think the greatest thing God can give me is more – well, you name the earthly things you think you want and may think that you 'need'.

But God gives us more important things. Things like forgiveness of sins, a clean conscience, the assurance of a perfect, sinless life in heaven.

God has the power to give us all those earthly things I just named – and more! But are they really, really important? Just remember that God gives us everything he wants us to have. ***“Everything is possible for him who believes.”*** And God isn't going to give us what is harmful for us. We manage to do enough of that by ourselves.

And we do believe, by the grace and work of the Holy Ghost. We want more faith. We want stronger faith.

And God, who knows all things, sees all things, and has all power will give us everything he wants us to have! Amen.