

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Senior Pastor Titus Green
October 1, 2023
Bringing People To Jesus
Mark 9:14-32

Since this morning and next Sunday are about living on mission with Jesus, I want to quickly remind us of what the mission of Jesus is all about.

Mark 10:45 - ...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus came to this world on a mission to serve people by giving His life as a ransom. The word “ransom” means “the price of release.” The bible teaches that, from the moment Adam and Eve sinned against God, mankind has been held captive under the curse of sin. And Jesus came to pay the price that would release, or rescue, people from that captivity to sin. And how did Jesus pay that price? He gave His life. He died on the cross in our place so that anyone who would trust in Him could be forgiven of their sin and set free by Christ’s resurrection power to live a brand-new kind of life – an abundant life, a resurrection life, an eternal life.

That was the mission Jesus came to this world to fulfill and that is the mission Jesus invites us to be part of today, a mission to make the good news about Jesus known to the people of this world – across the street to our neighbors and around the world to the nations.

And our text is a great reminder of why living on mission with Jesus is so important.

Mark 9:14–29 (ESV)

14 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.”

In our last passage of study, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to a mountain where His appearance was changed to reveal His glory as the eternal Son of God. Our passage for today

begins with them joining the other disciples who hadn't been on the mount of transfiguration. Verse 14 says ***Jesus found them in a big crowd, arguing with some religious leaders.***

Mark doesn't record the details of the argument, but verse 18 says it had something to do with the fact that the disciples weren't able to cast out a demon from a young boy. The father tried to bring his son to Jesus to be healed, but Jesus was up on the mountain. So, the disciples attempted to cast the demon out themselves. But they couldn't do it. At some point, the religious leaders got involved but they couldn't cast out the demonic spirit, either.

Finally, Jesus arrives on the scene. After hearing from the various people gathered around the child, Jesus has a short conversation with the father. Finally, the father turns to Jesus and says, "If you can do anything, please have compassion on us."

You can hear the exasperation in his voice. His child is held captive to the powers of darkness, and no one has been able to help his boy. The religious leaders couldn't do it. The disciples couldn't do it.

Look at Jesus' response in verse 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!"

All things are possible for one who believes. This is one of the most ripped-out-of-context verses in the entire bible. People make it seem like Jesus is saying all we have to do is believe in order to make something happen. As if faith is the only thing necessary for a person to achieve the impossible. "If you just believe, you can do anything. You can be anything you want to be and do anything you want to do. You can dunk a basketball or run a mile in under 4 minutes or become a millionaire. All you have to do is believe." That's not what Jesus is saying. Jesus is responding to the man's statement. The guy had just said, "Jesus, if you can do anything about this...". What is in question is the power and ability of Jesus. This is about who Jesus is and what Jesus can do. And Jesus is saying, "There's no if about it. I can do what is impossible for everyone else. And you can experience my power to do the impossible if you will believe in me."

Jesus isn't calling us to have faith in faith. Jesus is calling us to have faith in Him – to trust Him and depend on Him and believe everything He says is true.

And I love how the dad responds. "I believe. Help my unbelief." There's an entire sermon just in that phrase. He believes. That's why he brought his son to Jesus in the first place. He believes. And he also struggles to believe. His faith isn't that he has perfect faith in the Savior. His faith is that He has a perfect Savior. So, he asks Jesus to help him in the areas where he struggles to believe. And Jesus has compassion for people like that. Then, Jesus heals the boy by casting out the demonic spirit.

And that's one of the primary thoughts we find in this text. Jesus can rescue people from the power of spiritual darkness.

This story vividly illustrates the truth that Jesus can rescue people from the power of spiritual darkness. But there's really another word that we need to add to that summary to make it the big idea for this text. What word is that? ONLY.

Big Idea: Only Jesus can Rescue people from the power of Spiritual Darkness

That's being highlighted in this text. No one could save this boy but Jesus. The boy couldn't save himself. The father couldn't save the boy. The spiritual leaders couldn't save the boy. The disciples couldn't save the boy. There is only one hero in this story who can rescue people from the power of Spiritual Darkness: His name is Jesus. That means there is no message that is more important for people to hear.

You see, the greatest problem in the world today is that sin has placed every man, woman, and child under the power of spiritual darkness.

Ephesians 2:1–3

2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Because we are born into sin, the people of this world are held captive to the powers of spiritual darkness.

Listen church, do not be deceived.

- The problem with our world isn't a political problem – which means the solution to our problems isn't a political solution.
- The problem with our world isn't a social problem – which means the solution to our problems isn't social justice.
- The problem with our world isn't a physical or financial problem – which means the solution to our problems isn't in meeting the felt needs of humanity.
- The problem with our world isn't an intellectual problem – which means the solution to our problems isn't education.

Those things all have their good and rightful place, but none of them are the solution to the deepest problem in our world today. The problem with our world today is that people have sinned against God and are held captive to the prince of the power of spiritual darkness.

That's why we need Jesus. And we don't just need Him, we have Him because God so loved the world that He gave us His Son. He came on a mission to set people free. He gave His life at the cross to ransom us. To pay the price that would provide for the forgiveness of sin and the freedom to live an abundant, eternal life in Him. He is the only hope of every man, woman, and child.

That's why the mission matters. There are 600,000 people who live in Brevard County. There are 20 million people who live in the state of Florida. There are 330 million people who live in the United States. There are nearly 8 billion people on planet earth. Most of them are captive to the spiritual darkness of this present age. And there is only one person who can rescue them from the power of spiritual darkness: His name is Jesus.

Our mission to make Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations matters because only Jesus can rescue. Only Jesus can save.

And this is as good a time as any for me to address the fact that some of you may have entered this room as a captive to spiritual darkness. In a room this size, there are most likely people who are lost and hopeless. Friend, that's why Jesus came. He came to rescue you. He came to provide forgiveness of your sins and to restore you to the abundant life that's found only in Him.

If you've never turned to Jesus in faith, I want to invite you to do that today. Eternal life is possible if you will believe Jesus to be your Lord and Savior and place your faith and trust in Him.

Only Jesus can rescue people from the power of spiritual darkness. That's the primary lesson we learn from our text this morning. But it's not the only thing we learn from our text about our mission.

In the time we have left, I want to show you two practical ways that we can take part in Christ's mission to rescue people from spiritual darkness.

1. Bring People to Jesus

17 And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you..."

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.

Don't overlook this. How did this boy who needed the saving power of Jesus encounter the saving power of Jesus? People brought him to Jesus. This is a crucial part of the story. God has ordained that the way people will encounter the saving power of Jesus is through the lives of people who live to bring other people to Him. It's everywhere in the Gospels. Let me give you just a few examples...

Matthew 4:24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them.

Matthew 8:16 - That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.

Matthew 12:22 - Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.

Mark 1:32-34 - That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.

Mark 2: 3-5 - And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Do you see the pattern? God has ordained that the way people will encounter the power of Jesus is through people who bring others to Jesus. That's our mission. That's your mission. Jesus doesn't just want to do a work of His mighty power in your life, He wants to do a work of His mighty power through your life as you bring other people to Jesus. And that isn't supposed to make you feel guilty, it's supposed to make you feel invigorated. Jesus wants to give you a front-row seat to watch Him miraculously work in the lives of people around you.

And I want to encourage you to step into that invitation from Jesus. Consider coming back tonight at 4 to hear how you can be involved with our local mission ministries. The goal of each one is to bring people to Jesus through practical acts of service:

- The goal of House of Hope isn't to feed every hungry person in Central Brevard, it's to bring people to Jesus.
- The goal of Agape Women's Center isn't to keep women from choosing abortion or help women escape a life of sexual slavery, it's to bring people to Jesus.
- The goal of Canaveral Port Ministry isn't to meet the felt needs of seafarers that enter Port Canaveral, it's to bring people to Jesus.
- The goal of Merritt Island Christian School isn't to provide a safe and healthy place for children to receive a good education, it's to bring people to Jesus.

And Jesus may be stirring you to step into one of those ministries so you can be part of bringing people to Jesus in this community.

I also want to encourage you to adopt a strategy we call "Who's Your One?" It's a simple way to be intentional about the people in our lives who are far from God but close to us. In the foyer, we have a display set up as a visual reminder of that mission. On that display, we hang a little medallion that has the number "1" on it. Each of those 1s represents a person that someone in our church is seeking to bring to Jesus.

So, who's your one? If you don't have someone in mind, would you begin praying for God to put someone in your heart so that you could begin living on a mission to share Jesus with them?

Under those number "1s," there are little red crosses. Those crosses represent gospel conversations where people have been able to tell their ones about Jesus. When someone comes to faith in Jesus, we hang a medallion with a heart on it to represent a heart that has been saved by Jesus.

As you leave today, I want to encourage you to walk by the "Who's your One?" display. Let it be a reminder that Jesus wants to use your life to bring someone to Jesus. How will they believe in Jesus unless they know and how will they know if no one tells them?

Now, let me show you the other thing our text teaches us about how we engage in the mission of Jesus.

2. Pray for Jesus to Rescue People

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."

After Jesus rescued the little boy from the power of spiritual darkness, the disciples are left scratching their heads. They don't understand why they couldn't do it. And Jesus says that it's only through prayer that the power of spiritual darkness can be broken. Don't overcomplicate this.

The disciples are wondering why they couldn't do it. Do you see the problem? Why can't WE do it. And, basically, Jesus responds by saying "If you are wondering why you can't do it, it's because...you can't do it. Only I can do it. So, ask me to do it. Pray."

And this is an essential lesson for us as we live on mission. We can't save anyone. We can't save our family or our friends or our classmates or our neighbors. Only Jesus can save. So, Jesus says, "Ask me to save. Pray."

If there is one practical thing, I hope will change about our lives this morning, it's that we would begin passionately and consistently praying for Jesus to save people. I plan on sharing more about this next week as it concerns praying for the nations, but what would it look like this morning if you began praying regularly and fervently for people to be saved where you live, work, learn, and play?

The power to live on mission is only experienced by people who know they don't have the power to save and ask Jesus to do what only Jesus can do.

I got an awesome message last week from a friend of mine named Rick Call (wife Lucianne). Rick was part of our first "Who's Your One?" strategy about 6 or 7 years ago. Back then, we called it "Who's Your Five?" Rick began praying for 5 people in his life who needed Jesus. All these years, Rick has been asking Jesus to save his 5 and asking Jesus to show him how he could be part of bringing them to Jesus. Jesus put it in his heart to sit down and write a letter to several of his 5, telling them about Jesus and how much he hoped they would trust in Him.

Let me read you the text I got from Rick last week...

Pastor Titus, ... I wanted to share an update with you on my 5 people you asked us to pray for years ago. Just last week one of my 5 got saved. He was one I would have never dreamed possible. When he told me that, I opened up [my journal] and showed him where I had been praying...for over 5 years for him to be saved. Another of my...5 was saved last year after I sent him a letter that he needed to be saved. Wow, I just want you to know that Jesus is still in the saving business. It gives me more joy than riches that God continues to work behind the scenes [through] our prayer life. It was nothing that I did [and] I give him all the credit. I love Him today Pastor...and I wanted to share this with you. I wish [Ohio State] would play a good team but congrats on the wins.

You can disregard that last part, Rick is still working out some bad theology. How awesome is Jesus? He hears and answers our prayers! He still rescues and saves...and He uses our prayers as part of His saving work in the lives of others.

What would it look like if you renewed your commitment to pray for the people in your life who are far from God but close to you? Only Jesus can rescue people from the power of spiritual darkness. So, bring people to Jesus and pray to Jesus for people.