

The Journey to the Cross, Part 2

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[0 : 00] Last week we read of the transfiguration where Jesus' appearance was changed and he shone with the glory of God up on the mountain.

And now we read what happens as he comes down the mountain. We're going to read from verse 14 to verse 29. So let's hear God's word together.

When they came to the other disciples, so Jesus was up the mountain with three of his closest disciples, so there's nine left. When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.

As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

What are you arguing with them about? he asked. A man in the crowd answered, teacher, I brought you my son who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech.

Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.

[1 : 11] Oh, unbelieving generation, Jesus replied. How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me? So they brought him.

When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, how long has he been like this? From childhood, he answered. It 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. When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. You deaf and mute spirit, he said.

[2 : 12] I command you, come out of him and never enter him again. The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said he's dead.

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet and he stood up. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, why couldn't we drive it out?

He replied, this kind can come out only by prayer. Amen. This is God's word. Now, before we turn back passage that we read in Mark chapter 9.

And let's see what it can teach us. About the importance of trusting Jesus in the face of evil and suffering.

I think by God's providence, we are here in this passage. I guess for so many of us, our lives are marked by times of pain and suffering.

[3 : 23] And it's God's gift to us when we are reminded of his care and his love for us while we suffer. Today's story, as we read it, we see a family, a father and his son, and their life is marked by dreadful pain and suffering.

We see evil spirits that have taken possession of him, rendering him deaf and mute, where he's being thrown to the ground, where this evil spirit seeks to destroy the image of God in the life of this young boy.

It's a picture for us of the reality of pain and suffering that we all in different ways experience. Either this is something we know in our past or something that we will know in our future.

It's something that we are living with right now. There are so many different factors. Sometimes it's illness. Sometimes it's anxieties for family members.

Sometimes it's because we've been the victim of sin against us. But how do we deal with that?

What do we do with our pain?

[4 : 37] And does Christianity, does Jesus offer hope? In a sense, we're being invited to consider the problem of evil.

But we're not doing it from a textbook. This isn't a philosophy class. This is the problem of pain and evil through tears and anguish and distress.

Just as we begin, I was reminded of a poem written by Edward Shilito shortly after the end of the First World War in 1919.

He wrote a poem called Jesus of the Scars. Let me just read the last verse of that poem for us. As we begin this morning in there, he writes, The other gods were strong, but you were weak.

They rode. You did stumble to a throne. But to our wounds, only God's wounds can speak. And not a god has wounds, but you alone.

[5 : 50] Shilito was reflecting on national and worldwide pain and distress. And he's saying, here's the unique thing about the good news of Christianity.

That God in Christ Jesus both suffers with and suffers for his people. So there is hope beyond pain and suffering in Jesus.

And that's my hope for today. That for all of us, whether we're Christians or not Christians, that we'd understand and hold on to that hope. That we'd see the Jesus of the scars as the one that we can take our tears and our pain and confusion to.

And we can trust him. So to our text. The first thing that I want us to notice is that Jesus comes down into a world of evil and suffering.

So as I said before the reading last week, we thought about the fact that Jesus had been up a mountain with James and Peter and John. And there his appearance had changed and he'd shone with all the glory of God.

[6 : 59] And he heard the voice from heaven. The disciples had heard the voice from heaven. This is my son and I love him. Listen to him. And so that's Jesus. He is the king of glory as we thought about last week.

But what happens in verse 14? Well, in fact, from verse 9 onwards, Jesus doesn't stay up the mountain in his glory. He comes down the mountain.

He comes down and he enters this scene. He arrives to find the disciples. Verse 14. And there's a large crowd and the teachers of the law.

And they're arguing. And then he hears the story of suffering. So it gives us a great picture, a great reminder that one thing that's true of Jesus is he comes down into a world of pain and suffering.

And he comes down so as to redeem it. So as to bring change. It mirrors the storyline of the Bible. So often when you read the Old Testament, indeed the New Testament, you find the God of love and mercy coming down to comfort, to rescue, to help his people.

[8 : 05] And we see that's true of the slaves. The Israelite slaves in Egypt. They cry out to God. And God has compassion. And he remembers his covenant. And he sends Moses and he rescues them.

At the time of the judges, even when the people wander away from God, even when they really mess up and they're facing oppression, when they turn back to God and they cry out to him, he sends them judges and he delivers them.

So he shows mercy and love to the nation. But he also does that to suffering individuals as well. And we're going to sing Psalm 23 at the close of our sermon.

And that reminds us of Jesus, the shepherd who comes to be near us. Even in the dark valleys, he is the God who promises to be with us.

So it's the storyline of the Bible and it's the story of Jesus. And we're told that Jesus is our Emmanuel. He is God with us. And Jesus as God, he leaves the glory of heaven to become a humble servant.

[9 : 06] As we thought about last week, he leaves the glory of heaven in order to suffer, to face rejection and to taste death. It's what he's been teaching his disciples about.

Chapter 8, verse 31. Mind you of those words. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

So Jesus, he's promising he's going to rise again. Now that Jesus has risen, what's he doing?

We're told in the book of Hebrews that Jesus becomes our high priest. He's not just any high priest, he's a faithful and he's a sympathetic high priest.

Why? Because he's walked in our shoes. He cares. He understands. And our text is going to show us that. Every philosophy, every religious system, every individual in this world needs to deal with in some way with the problem of evil.

Lots of different religions and different philosophies have their answer to the problem of evil. Only Christianity says in response to a sin and evil and suffering did God enter in.

[10:26] Jesus comes and he identifies with us in our suffering. Jesus is the God who suffers with us and for us.

And through his death and resurrection, he alone gives hope beyond pain and suffering and even hope beyond death itself.

Christianity has a unique answer to the problem of evil. One of the things that that reminds us of is that when we suffer, if we're the people of God, we don't suffer alone.

And we should not suffer alone. It's often a strapline for charity helplines. If we're suffering from an addiction or suffering and you need to call somebody, often you can feel like you're the only person who's going through that.

And you can feel very lonely and isolated. And so the charities will often have that reminder. You know, you don't suffer alone. You're not alone. You're not the only one who is going through this.

[11:32] There is somebody who you can talk to, who can help and who understands. And in so doing, they're seeking to restore hope. And that's one of the things that's important for us as a church, I think, that we are to both listen to and talk about suffering.

That we are to seek to extend understanding and sympathy and love in the name of Jesus. But when we say to people, you don't need to suffer alone, ultimately we're saying because there is Jesus, our Emmanuel, God with us, and he understands.

Because he knows pain and suffering by personal experience. And so we are discovering that we can trust Jesus.

We can trust him with our tears. We can trust him with our questions. Why is this happening? I mean, we can trust him with our anger about a situation for ourselves or for others.

Because Jesus is God with us. And he's walked in our shoes. He suffers with us and for us. And so we can run to him. We can call out to him. We can pray to him.

[12:48] Because Jesus comes down into a world of evil and suffering. The next thing to remind ourselves of from this passage is that faith trusts Jesus in a world of evil and suffering.

So we have this situation that Jesus is confronting in verses 14 to 18. There's this big argument that he comes down to.

There is a father who is deeply concerned for his son. He wants to find help. So he brings the boy to Jesus. But Jesus is up the mountain.

So he asks the disciples to help. And it turns out on this occasion they are unable to help. And Jesus is wondering why there's the argument.

There's the teachers of the law. And they're weighing in. And they're trying to use this to say, well, you shouldn't trust Jesus because he doesn't really have power. Let's hear the man's words. Let's to remind us of the reality of the pain and suffering of this family.

[13:54] Verse 16, Jesus says, what are you arguing with them about? And a man in the crowd answered, teacher, I brought you my son who's possessed by a spirit that's robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground.

He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not. So here's the big question for the father, for the son, for the crowd.

Is there any hope for this child in his suffering? And what we see is that Mark draws our attention to three different responses to the pain and the suffering.

Jesus explicitly says that two groups of people are unbelieving. Verse 19, an unbelieving generation. Jesus replied, how long shall I stay with you? We'll think about who they are.

And we'll see that their response does nothing about the hurt and the pain. But we'll see the father who trusts Jesus, who has faith in his helplessness.

[14:55] That sometimes that faith is strong. Other times that faith wavers and is weak. But the love and the power of God comes because the father has dependent trust on Jesus. So as we think about the attitude that three different groups have in the face of evil and suffering, perhaps we can reflect, do I see my story in theirs?

First of all, let me draw attention to the cynical teachers of the law. Now we've seen the teachers of the law throughout Mark's gospel. They don't believe Jesus is the son of God.

They don't believe that he has authority. Therefore, they don't believe he has the power to do anything. They're looking for a way to score points against Jesus because their disciples, his disciples have failed.

But whatever else we can say, we know this. That because they don't trust in Jesus, these teachers of the law have done and can do nothing to deal with the problem of pain and suffering that this family is experiencing.

They're cynical about Jesus. They don't trust Jesus. So they bring nothing of value and help. And I think that's an important thing for us to reflect on. Maybe especially if you're not a Christian here today, that we're thinking about the unique hope that Jesus alone offers in your suffering, in your tears.

[16:17] And it's an invitation to consider him, to listen to his claims, to put your trust in him.

Perhaps it's also an opportunity to talk to a Christian friend, talk about their experience of knowing God's peace and God's presence while they were suffering.

Because that's so often the story of God's people. That we suffer, we experience trouble, but at the same time we experience God drawing near.

We experience peace and comfort even while we suffer. So we've got cynical teachers of the law.

We've also got complacent disciples. The disciples, it's important to recognize that earlier on, these disciples have been given authority by Jesus.

We need to flip back to Mark chapter 6 and verse 7. Here is Jesus commissioning his disciples.

Mark chapter 6, verse 7.

Calling the 12 to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. So the very thing they're being asked to do, they've been given authority over. Verse 13.

[17:29] They've had success in the past. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. So in their past, they have been able to drive out demons because they've been given that authority from Jesus.

But here, they were unable. And that causes them to ask the question at the end of our reading.

Verse 28 of chapter 9. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, Why couldn't we drive it out?

He replied, This kind can come out only by prayer. It seems like the problem is that they're trusting in past success.

Trusting in the fact that God's given, Jesus has given them a job to do. They're not completely dependent on God in prayer. There's a warning for us as Christians.

Not to rest on past hope, past success. Maybe we had a victory against a particular sin yesterday.

But that doesn't mean we need God's grace and help and to pray for victory over that sin today.

[18:40] And that maybe we experienced suffering with hope and with joy yesterday. But that doesn't mean the next time suffering comes, we might fall into bitterness and fear.

We need to continue to pray and to trust. Because the disciples are showing us, without total dependence on Jesus, without total dependence on God in prayer, they and we cannot deal with the pain, the evil, and the suffering.

But by contrast, we have a father. We have a father who is dependent on Jesus. Verse 17, the very fact that he brings his son to Jesus is evidence that he believes Jesus can do something to help.

And so Jesus has a conversation with the father, having seen the terrible suffering of the boy.

In verse 20, we see the evil spirit throwing him into another convulsion. The father in verse 21 says that he's been like that from a childhood.

[19:53] It's often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. And we see in this moment, as he's before Jesus, his faith is weak.

But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us. But nevertheless, his faith is real. And his faith is in a strong savior.

When Jesus says, everything is possible for him who believes, immediately, verse 24, the boy's father exclaimed, I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.

Faith wavers, but his faith is in a strong savior. And so he believes and he holds on to that. In all of this, the identity of Jesus is key.

When Jesus says, everything is possible for him who believes, he's saying, everything is possible for him who believes in me, who believes that I am the son of God, that I am the savior of the world, that I have the power to enter in and to redeem this situation.

[21 : 00] He's not calling the man to have faith in his faith. He's calling the man to have continued faith in the Lord Jesus. To help us illustrate, perhaps, imagine two people in a doctor's surgery and they're sitting beside each other.

They've got the same condition and they're both waiting to go in to meet their GP. One person has complete confidence in the doctor on the other side of the door, has complete confidence in the ability of a doctor and medication to bring a cure and to bring relief.

Well, the person beside, not so sure, kind of put off the visit for a while because they weren't absolutely convinced that the doctor would be able to help. But as soon as both of them step into the doctor's surgery, what's important at that point?

It's not so much what they think of the doctor, it's the doctor and his medicine that matters. It's trusting themselves into the doctor's care.

And that's where faith is so important. Faith is saying, sometimes my trust is strong, sometimes it's weak, but always I want to trust myself to the care of Jesus.

[22 : 23] And we see why this is such good news in the man's experience. Verse 25, when Jesus saw that crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit.

I command you, come out of him and never enter them again. The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. It makes sense to put our faith in Jesus because Jesus is a strong savior. And notice that Jesus didn't say to the man, well, come back when your faith is strong and perfect, when you don't have any doubts or fears. I'll deal with you then. No, he responds to his weak and wavering faith with his strong power and loving grace.

It's reminding us it's all about Jesus. He's the hero. He's the savior. We're invited to put our faith in him and not in ourselves. You know, he sang that him, he will hold me fast.

When I feel my faith will fail, he will hold me fast. This is trusting the everlasting arms of God to hold on to us and not to let us go.

[23 : 33] This is faith in Jesus who described himself as a doctor for sinners. He's not someone who turns patience away. He's not someone who says, well, come back when your faith is perfect.

He takes us in our weakness, in our doubts, so long as our faith is in him. I dropped Sebastian on his head yesterday.

My little boy. We have a routine that we've done probably hundreds of times, but it involves him putting his feet on the floor after a quick spin. Yesterday, for some reason, he didn't bother with the leg thing, so instead he clunked on the pavement.

It felt horrible. But here's the thing. Having been failed miserably by his dad, how did he deal with the pain? His first instinct was cry and then run to me, and then to curl up in my arms and find comfort that kids do when they have pain and when they have suffering.

I am not a perfect dad, clearly, but still there is that instinct. I can trust this one to care for me in my pain.

[24 : 48] How much more ought we to trust in Jesus, to trust in our everlasting father when we have pain, when we suffer?

He has arms that will never let us go. He has a love that is everlasting. We see from our father in the story that all of us are a mixture, if we're Christians of faith and doubt, who doesn't resonate with verse 24, I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.

And the amazing thing is Jesus is gentle with us when we're in that place. He is patient with us when we're in that place. It would be a wonderful prayer for us to make our own.

I do believe, help my unbelief. I do believe that you can save my friends and my family, that you can bring transformation when all I see at the moment is apathy and disinterest.

But help my unbelief. I do believe that you are able to bring good out of pain, but in the moment all I feel is darkness.

[26 : 12] Help my unbelief. I do believe that you can help me fight against this sin that's causing me so much distress.

Help my unbelief. Faith trusts Jesus in a world of evil and suffering.

The last thing that Mark draws our attention to is this fact. Jesus' death and resurrection promises hope beyond evil and suffering.

Mark is very deliberate, I think, in the way that he writes in verse 26 and 27. Let's read those verses again. Here is language that deliberately calls to mind dying and rising.

It's what Jesus has begun to teach his disciples about. He has come to be the dying and rising savior, to deal with sin, to bring hope and healing to the world, to his people.

[27 : 43] And so these two, the teaching and the story are brought together to remind us that because Jesus has died and risen and is now ascended in glory and victory, he is able to offer hope beyond evil and pain, suffering, even beyond death itself.

The resurrection of Jesus stands as God's promise to the world. That when God raised Jesus, God was saying to us, I can breathe new life where there is death.

That it's God's way of saying, I have defeated the great enemies of sin and death for you. It's an invitation again to trust in God because of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And what happened in the life of Jesus, the Bible says one day Jesus will do that for the whole creation. One day Jesus will come back at the second coming and he'll make everything new. There'll be a new heaven and a new earth. It'll be perfectly restored. And not only that, all the people who trust in Jesus will also enjoy this resurrection to new creation life, to enjoy new creation with him.

[29 : 14] One of the things that the Bible brings to us is a promise of the world we all want. Because it doesn't matter who we are, what experience has been today, all of us would love to live in a world where there was no sin, where there was no pain, where there was no evil or suffering, and where there was no death.

And Jesus, through his death and his resurrection and his return at the end of time, promises to give to those who have faith in Jesus the world we all want.

He dies to win a decisive battle against our sin, leading to death. He takes our guilt. He takes our shame.

He takes the punishment that should be ours. And he bears that for us to wash us clean, to bring us to God. So that battle against sin is won.

There is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And then we're told of the second coming. Jesus will come back again, and that total victory will be secured.

[30 : 28] Then sin and death will be done away with forever for the people of God. We will enjoy his love and his peace and his joy in his presence for all eternity.

All pain and suffering, long gone and forgotten. If we'll be our trust in him. I have a friend who does a lot of running. And I remember he talked about an ultra marathon that he did in the highlands across a lot of high altitude.

It was pretty testing. And he said for the last few miles, he was kept going by two thoughts. He was kept going by the fact that soon he'd be at the finish line and he wouldn't be far away from home. And his mum's home cooked dinner. That kept him going home and a meal. And our lives, different kind of suffering, but our lives are marked by suffering now in various ways.

Jesus is the one who both walks with us now and also makes rich promises for them.

[31 : 35] He promises to bring us home to be with himself. And he promises at a great feast, at a great banquet. So many of the pictures of life in heaven is of a feast.

At a wonderful meal of celebration and joy. Jesus says, trust in me, there is hope beyond pain and suffering and tears.

Faith in a suffering and a strong saviour brings hope for now and for eternity. We all will suffer.

We all will find that we need help and we need hope. Will we trust this Jesus? The one who came down for us to bear the scars for us.

Will we cry, help me, to him. We all will find that we can be taken jap Melissa andpoja. Isaiah 5 – nestaya. Muslim Attaling with you who's body until kilometre.

[32 : 35] Listen, you can walk to him. We will have to soothe him, but do you find some good Risk of Stories or Target. Will we come back as well? Will we make peace? Let us know. We can discuss that We should stop the exceeded p Rechts the goal of the audience.

Let us know about pain, which is our. Like a dog, it's been a lamp that has ABOUT surveying us.