

I Believe, Help My Unbelief!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 May 2021

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

- [0 : 0 0] Almighty and gracious God, we give thanks once again today that we gather in your presence, that we do so to worship you, to sing praises to your glorious name, to read your word, to call upon you in prayer, and to give some time to the teaching of your word.
- We thank you today, O Lord, that we are privileged once again to come into your presence. Help us to realize that this is where we are, that we are not merely in a building that is set apart for worship, but also come into the courts of the King in heaven.
- We give thanks for the access that we have to you through our Lord Jesus Christ, for the way that he has opened up through his death, so that we can come immediately into your presence through him.
- And we thank you today, O Lord, that he stands always ready to receive us and to represent us at the throne of God. Lord, we thank you today for this day, and we pray that you are blessed to us.
- We know, Lord, that you set apart this day at the beginning of time when you created the universe, and you set apart this day to mark it as a day of rest, for we know that you had completed your work of creation by that time.
- [1 : 1 7] We pray that as we come to mark this day today, Lord, help us, we pray, to do it in recognition of the rest that you have provided for your people, a rest into which you are pleased to usher us and to direct us through your Holy Spirit, the rest that is in Jesus Christ, the peace that you have provided in reconciliation in him.

We thank you today, Lord, for this day that we can come apart from our ordinary course of work, and that we can give time to those things of God that we are not able to give time to so much on other days of the week. We give thanks, O Lord, for this and pray that you would help us continually to value your day. Lord, we regret in your presence to say that we don't appreciate it as we should, and also we come, O Lord, to bring before you the state of our nation and of our society, where your day is so neglected and at times even despised. And we ask, O Lord, that you would deliver us from this, for it is indeed a sign that we have set apart your laws, set apart your standards, and cast off the way in which your Word keeps us in that right track that brings us to glorify your name. Forgive us, Lord, we pray for our sins in regard to this. Forgive us for every way in which we do come short today, because we come before you to confess our sins, to confess that our sin, the root of sin that we have within ourselves is still active and requires the grace of your Spirit to enable us to mortify it. We ask today that you would help us to do so and to take from your Word the encouragement that we require so that our lives may be directed in the right way. Bless us, we pray, as a congregation, as we give thanks for all that you remain to be for us, for all that you continue to be, as well as all that you have shown yourself to be in the past. We thank you for all the help that you have given us over these difficult months that have gone by. And pray, Lord, that you would enable us, whether we are here in person today or participating online, in thankfulness to you, to dedicate ourselves all the more to you, and to be all the more concerned not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together as your Word counsels us. Lord, rather than that, we pray that you would help us to take delight in coming before you and in being together, even as much as we are able at this time. And we pray that these conditions that we face will soon be improved and lifted for us. We thank you, Lord, for the decrease in the number of deaths and infections throughout our land from this virus. And we pray that as the vaccines are further rolled out among us, O Lord, grant that this may continue to be the case, that we may find more and more of normality coming back to us in terms of freedom of movement and of assembly and of coming together. We give thanks, O Lord, for all the help that you are to us through the means that you have provided towards these vaccines and towards the medical professional care that is so evident in our land. Lord, we thank you again for all who carry out their duties so well in our local health service and nationally. We pray that you would bless them and all who at this time have a charge over these matters. We thank you for their dedication, for their concern, and for the organization with which they have gone through with the provision of these vaccines. Bless us, we pray today, in all our other aspirations, O Lord, as we look forward in days to come, by your grace, to be able once more to reach out meaningfully with the gospel into our communities. We pray that that will be blessed in your own preparing of us and by your Spirit's guidance. We ask you blessing, O Lord, for all other gatherings of your church today throughout your land. And we pray that as we have been through a time of election where a new government has been elected in Scotland, we pray for them, O Lord, and whatever our views may be of the outcome,

whether it has been in accordance with our wishes or will or not. We know that it is your will. We know that you are the one who guides and who brings about all that you have planned.

And we give thanks, O Lord, that we know this and that you are the one who presides over all the appointments of governments nationally and internationally. We ask, O Lord, today that you would bless those who have been elected, that you will bless them in government and in representing their constituencies and regions. And we pray especially, Lord, for a return to days when your word is valued, when the principles and precepts and laws of your word will be upheld by our government and by those throughout our land of positions of influence and power. O Lord, our God, we come before you and ask that you would restore to us, as your word says, the years the locusts have eaten, which the prophet used to describe the years of neglect and years of turning away from the standards of the Lord. Our desire is, Lord, that you would refresh us by your Spirit. Come and revive ourselves, we pray, as a people who love you and a people who seek your glory and grace in all aspects of our society. We confess, Lord, that we need your reviving grace in ourselves. We pray today that you bless our children. We thank you for them and pray that you would be with them during these difficult times for them as well. Grant that they would be dedicated to you in their own young age and that you would grant to them, Lord, the grace that will sanctify their young lives. We ask today that you bless any of them who may be ill at this time. We pray especially for Jessica Louise in hospital in

Glasgow. Grant to her, Lord, your own healing touch. We pray that the measures taken for her, her young infant life, would be blessed by you and that she would be not only kept but restored to health and to strength. We pray for her parents and grandparents. Grant, Lord, that you would give them of your comfort at this time and assurance that as you are their God, so you will provide for them. And we pray that as we confess all of these needs before you, that you would help us today through your word to realize that we can lay all our anxieties upon you and know that they are on a sure foundation in yourself. And so receive us, we pray now, and continue with us. Hear us and pardon our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, children, we've been looking for a few weeks now at people's opinions of opinions of Jesus. We've looked at what Peter thought of Jesus, what others thought of

[8 : 29] Jesus. And today I want to look at what Paul, the Apostle Paul, thought of Jesus. Now you can find that, of course, in many parts of Paul's epistles and in the book of Acts as well. But today just to look at one verse from the letter he wrote to the Philippians, and it's in chapter 1, verse 21, where Paul said, For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Now, Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter.

It was a very, very difficult time for him. But it was really interesting to see how he wrote to the Philippians mentioning the fact that he was in prison, though they knew that anyway. But what's really interesting is that when he wrote this letter from prison, he saw prison as a way by which he would still make Jesus known to people. And we know that from what he says, some people within the whole household of Caesar, as he calls it, had actually been influenced by the gospel through his witness. And although that was difficult for him to be in prison, he wasn't in any way rebellious against God for having brought that about. He didn't say that he felt sorry for himself. He didn't say to God, why have you done this to me? Why am I not able to go about with the gospel as I used to? And so for us as adults and children today, it's something that we have to remember, that whatever difficulties we may have in our lives, instead of complaining against God or asking God questions as to whether this should or should not be the case. We should bring that, as Paul did, to see that, we should be able to see that, as Paul did, as ways by which we can still continue to serve Jesus, to speak about Jesus, and to commend

Jesus to others. Just like Paul said here, for me to live is Christ, to die is gain. In other words, Paul was saying that life in all parts of his life, everything in his life was about Jesus. Everything in his life was about serving Jesus, witnessing to Jesus, telling others about Jesus. And for you today, as young people, that is also the case. Whatever difficulties there are in your life, you'll learn as you go along that it's in those circumstances too. And we'll see that from our study today of the miracle we're going to be looking at in Mark's gospel, that whatever difficulties we have, when we bring them to Jesus, that's where we find the strength as we place our trust in Jesus. Now, he did say here also, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Paul didn't just say that living was all about Jesus. He also said that when it came to die, he knew that that was going to be about Jesus as well. His trust in Jesus was not just for the life that he lived, but for the death that he knew would one day come to him, whenever that would be. And that's also important for ourselves. He says here, death will be gain to me. Because he says in the verse next to this that for him to depart and to be with Christ is far better.

That's what he says to ourselves as well, to you children as well, because going to be with Jesus in heaven is far, far better than anything you can have in this life.

And yet it's in this life that we must prepare to actually go to be with Jesus in heaven. So make that your own motto in life today, if you like, or your own principle or words that you apply to your life. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Now let's say the Lord's Prayer together. We're going to pray as we usually do the Lord's Prayer.

[12 : 31] Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Now reading of scripture today is from Mark chapter 9.

Mark chapter 9, and reading from verse 14. We're going to be reading here about another miracle. We've been looking at, as you know, for a number of weeks, the miracles of Jesus. And we have a few left that we, God willing, will look at, including this one today. So Mark chapter 9, and at verse 14.

This is picking up what Mark is saying after the incident that happened on the Mount of Transfiguration. It's usually called when Jesus was transfigured. That's in the first part of the chapter. And Peter, James, and John that were with him, here they came down. When they came to the disciples, the other disciples that is, the nine that they had left behind, when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed, and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, what are you arguing about with them? And someone from the crowd answered him, teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. 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. 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. And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy. He fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.

[14 : 51] And Jesus asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus said to him, if you can, all things are possible for one who believes. Immediately the father of a child cried out and said, I believe, help my unbelief.

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. 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. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer. We pray that God will bless again to us this reading of his word, to which we'll now turn for a few moments to look at this passage and this miracle of healing, this boy. We've mentioned a number of times in the course of the years that there is a strong similarity between Moses and Christ, not just in terms of their persons, but especially in the way in which they were placed by God at the head of a people in order to carry out certain work that God required them to do. Moses was a leader of the people, as you know, but he was also a mediator or an intercessor for the people. There are many times you find recorded in the Old

Testament and Exodus especially where Moses came between the Lord and the people to pray for the people, especially after the likes of the golden calf incident where they had gone astray so badly.

And Moses came and he pleaded with God on their behalf. He was acting as a mediator between himself or the people and God. And at other times, as he came down from the mountain, for example, he brought words from God to the people. That's what mediatorship is. You represent both sides, whether it's an argument or whatever, and Moses was a mediator or intercessor in that respect. And Moses also was many times complaining of the people's own unbelief and their unwillingness to accept the Word of God, to accept the commands of God. So he was faced with a very unwilling and faithless, unbelieving people.

And when you compare that with Jesus, Jesus, of course, was the same. He faced a very unwilling people, as we see from this passage. And Jesus is, of course, the mediator for his people. He came to represent us to God and to bring God to us, and to do so in a way by which he fully represented God to us and fully brings us to God. And when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, you remember what met him?

[18 : 24] He was met with an idolatrous party where the people had gone to worship the calf that they had made Aaron to fashion for them out of the fire. This is what they were doing. They were cavorting around this calf.

They were engaging in this pagan practice. They had lost all sight of their allegiance or their responsibilities before God, even morally speaking, let alone spiritually. And of course, Moses, when he came down, he broke the two large tablets of stone. Well, however large they were, we don't know, but the tablets on which the commandments had been written by the finger of God, and he smashed them. He put them together, smashed them. Most people think that was in anger, or many people think it was in anger.

Maybe there was an incident of anger, an element of anger, but what is really important about what he did is that that represented what the people had done. They had actually broken the law of God.

They had actually been guilty of a terrible sin against God in their apostasy, in the rebellion, in their idolatry. And as Moses broke these tablets, it became clear to the people that this is what they had done. Now, Jesus, when they come down here, himself and the three disciples, they immediately met with this young boy who's possessed with a spirit or a demon, called a spirit in this passage. And its possession has taken virtual control of this, virtually taken control of this young lad. And so, as Moses came down as the mediator of God's people then, as the leader of God's people, here is Jesus as the head of God's people, as the one who's come into the world to be our Savior. And when he, with these three disciples, descends from the Mount of the Transfiguration, from the glory that was shown there to belong to him, this is what they are plunged into. They come back into, if you like, into the real world, a world that's filled with the misery and the cares of fallen human beings. And that's where they actually are taught now they need to have their ministry. Now, that's very true of ourselves, isn't it? Today, we're blessed today to be here in relative quiet. And we have times when we can come near to God ourselves and spend time alone with him, or spend time with other people in prayer with him. And just like these disciples, we would perhaps sometimes prefer that that's how it remained. This is what Peter said to Jesus on the

Mount. Lord, it is so good for us to be here. Let's make three tabernacles, three booths. Let's make this a resting place, a time, a place where we can stay. And of course, that was not possible. And sometimes we would prefer just if we were able to stay with God in the quietness and in the warmth of his fellowship. But God is saying to us, that's not what I've given you to do in the world, although that's important. You have to come down from the Mount. You have to get into the disorder of the world with your discipleship. That's where I want your discipleship to be seen, to be noticed, to be active. Down there in the valley, not on the mountaintop, where you're alone with God, where you see something of the glory of Christ, where you spend time meditating upon that. Wonderful though that is, necessary though that is, he's saying, this is where your ministry is. This is where your discipleship is. In the uncleanness, in the rebelliousness, in the sinfulness of a disordered, chaotic world. That's where we're going back to, friends. That's where we carry our discipleship and our witness to Jesus. So, two things from the passage after a fairly long introduction. But first of all, we see our human inability and where to take it, and verses 14 to 20. And then we have Christ's ability in relation to our faith, verses 21 to 29.

[22 : 40] So, first of all, we see our human inability and where we need to take that. When they came down, as we said, there's a great commotion here. They saw a great crowd around the disciples that remained and scribes, these authorities, these religious people, these leaders, they were arguing with them.

And immediately all the crowd, when they saw Jesus, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, what are you arguing about with them?

Why are you arguing with these disciples of mine? What are you actually arguing? You scribes, what are you arguing about with these disciples? Seems to be what the text actually means.

Someone from the crowd answered him, teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit and makes him mute, and so on. The scribes, what were they actually talking about? Why was there this great commotion, this arguing with his nine disciples? Well, think of keys in verses 17 to 18.

There's someone from the crowd saying to him, teacher, I brought my son to him. And especially when he says, I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able. And it appears that these scribes, who were so self-righteous in themselves, of course, they were arguing with his disciples in such a way that probably questioned their credentials, as if they were saying to them, well, you couldn't cast out this spirit that's affecting this boy so badly. Why are you calling yourselves disciples of Jesus? Where is your master anyway? All of these kind of things, they would probably be finding reasons why they would question the authenticity or the credentials of these disciples. But you notice what the father of the boy did. It was almost as if that was irrelevant to him. He immediately came forward. Someone from the crowd. He's not even named. And you know, that's such an encouragement for us always in the Bible. When you find an incident where there's nobody named, just someone from the crowd. In other words, God is saying to you, as you read this, put yourself in that situation. Just put your own name into the text and come near to Jesus that way with your needs and with your problems. So here it is. He, this anonymous father, he came to Jesus and, teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. In other words, you take from that, as this father, this desperate father who looked for a cure for his son, who was in such desperate need, as you see from the detail in the passage, he takes advantage of this situation to come to Jesus personally. He had gone to the disciples thinking they might help him. They failed to help him. And he was disappointed with that, obviously. But now he brings it to Jesus. For all the disappointments in your life, for all the people that may have let you down, for all the things you expected to happen that didn't happen, what do you do with them? Do you just close your mind to that?

[25 : 41] Well, we bring them to Jesus, don't we? That's what this passage is teaching us in that point. The father of the boy uses this situation to access Jesus. It doesn't matter what situation you have in your life today. Something, perhaps, that has disappointed you. Something that you feel bad about. Something that someone has done to you, or you've done to someone else. Something in God's providence you didn't expect. Some disappointment. Some whatever it is. Here is what the passage is saying to us today. Use it as a means of accessing Jesus. Use it as a means of coming directly to himself. You don't need anybody to give you permission to do that. You don't need to ask the minister or the cook session. Jesus is there waiting for you. And you know, every situation is one that he has already read and knows about. He knows all about what's happening here before this man says anything. And it's not, as he goes on to ask him about it, it's not because he doesn't actually know anything about the situation. But as we'll see, he wants to bring out in the conversation the needs of this boy and then show how adequate he himself, Jesus, is to meet them. So there's the commotion. This seems to be what the dispute is about. But the father uses the whole thing, the whole situation to access Jesus, to get there for himself. And Christ's response to that is interesting. Verse 19, he answered them, O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? And it seems that he's speaking there to the crowd there, to those who are the scribes as well as those of the crowd who have reached that point, and also the disciples. He's not leaving the disciples out of it because obviously they have failed in casting out this demon. And we'll see in a minute at the end of the chapter what Jesus has to say about that as well. But isn't this very typical of ourselves as well, where Jesus is saying, why are you so slow to believe me?

Why are you so slow to accept what I have to say? Why are you so slow to give yourself over to me? To trust me? To entrust your life to me? To give yourself into my hand? To willingly accept me as your Lord, as your Savior? To believe everything that I've said about myself and about yourself?

And so he's really saying here, some annoyance, he's showing some annoyance there, an element of annoyance with their unbelief. And that applies to ourselves as well. But notice then what he goes on to say, how long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me. Bring him to me. And these are powerful words. They're words that really bring out, if you like, the rationale of the gospel. Because you'll find them again and again used in terms of how important it is, not only for us to bring ourselves to Jesus, but to bring others to Jesus as well. Go to John's gospel. You'll see it there, chapter 1, verse 42 of Andrew. When Andrew had actually come to realize that this indeed was Jesus, this was the Messiah. This was the Savior. What did he do? He ran and told Simon, his brother, we have found the Messiah. Come and see for yourself. And then shortly after that, Philip, when he found that this indeed was Jesus, he went and told Nathanael, and he brought him to Jesus. What's evangelism? What is testifying to Jesus? What is our Christian witness to be about? It's about this, of bringing people to

Jesus. How wonderful it is that we can gather together again physically in this building, even though we're not able to fill it as we would like. And coming to church in that sense of it is good.

Of course it's good. It's wonderful. It's a great, almost exhilarating moment after all of these months away. But remember this, the church itself won't save you. The minister himself won't save you.

[30 : 12] Coming to church itself won't save you. It's only Jesus that can do that. And here is the gospel's rationale built into these few words, bring him to me. When you actually go to testify of your faith or to bring the testimony you have in your life to the way Jesus has come into your own life and saved you, when you're actually saying that to somebody, this is really what you've got in mind, isn't it?

You're not talking about yourself so much as talking about yourself with a view to bringing that person to Christ. Really, this is what the great mandate of Matthew's gospel is, the mandate we usually so often use in terms of making disciples. Go into all the world. All authority has been given to me, Jesus is saying, in heaven and in earth. Therefore, go and make disciples. That's our business, making disciples. He makes converts. He makes saved people out of the unsaved. But we are commanded and required to make disciples, to bring people to Jesus. That's the rationale of the gospel, the rationale of evangelism, the rationale of outreach. Bring him here to me. He said the same with the loaves and the fish in the miracle as we saw of the feeding of the 5,000. He first of all asks, how much food do you have? What do you have here in terms of provision? And they said, well, all we've got here is five loaves and some small fish. What did he say? Bring them here to me. What did he do?

He took them up and he blessed them and it fed the multitude. You know, sometimes we just lose sight of that great point, don't we? I, as well as yourselves. That when you place yourself in the hands of Jesus, you have no idea what the outcome is going to be, except that it's going to be a blessed one.

And there's a question for every one of us here today, for the children, for the adults, for myself, for the elders, for the deacons.

Is my life today firmly, willingly on my own part in the hands of Jesus? Am I bringing myself to him again today, even though I can say I did that years ago? I need to do this every day. I need to bring myself to him to experience anew for myself his sufficiency for me, his power in me, his presence with me. And if you haven't yet come to that point, is this not urging you today, this word of God, this wonderful passage, is it not really saying to you, place yourself in my hands, Jesus is saying.

[33 : 06] Let me take control of your life. Let me be your Lord. Don't just rely on something less than that. Don't rely on belonging to a good congregation, though that is so important. Don't rely on having friends that help you as Christians. Don't rely on anything less than being in the hands of Jesus himself. That's what, as we'll see in a minute, he goes on to say even in more detail. And before we move on to that, notice then what happens. They brought the boy to him, and when the spirit saw him, this demon within the boy, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And then Jesus asked his father, how long has he been like this?

There's the mindset of evil. As soon as the boy is brought near to Jesus, this spirit that lives in him just goes into a chaotic resistance to Jesus. Demons know Jesus. They know who he is.

And the devil and his helpers are determined to counter Jesus and his gospel. And you know that from your own experience as a Christian, the moment you come to Jesus and come to place your trust in him and come to confess him openly especially, you'll find the resistance, the resistance from the dark side that uses different ways and different agents to get to you and to resist you and to stand in the way of your progress. And of course, you're glad as a Christian that it's not you who's in control of your own life, that Jesus has the mastery even of these more than human powers and authorities in the heavenly heights as Paul describes them. And you see that in verse 29 there.

I refer to that earlier when they went into the house after this was over. His disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer. You see, the detailed knowledge that Jesus has of the demonic realm, he knew that there was a difference even between one devil and another, one spirit and another, that there were some who needed something more than others to drive them out.

And while it's showing the failure of the disciples to be, and Matthew indeed says this in his version of the event that it's because of your unbelief that Jesus said, what he's saying here in Mark's account of it is, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.

[35 : 57] And the disciples still had to learn so much about the necessity of prayer and the continuousness of prayer in their own lives. And they had probably approached this really when they were asked by the father of this boy to help him. It appears that they had not immediately thought about prayer at all, that they had just in some way tried to deal with the situation in their own strength. And of course they had failed. And Jesus is now saying to them, this kind can't be driven out by anything but prayer.

But then you see, in the life of Jesus himself, that's there in abundance. There is no failure on his part to deal with this evil spirit.

Not only because he is the son of God in the flesh, but because he is also himself fully involved in prayer with the father, drawing strength for his own ministry from the Holy Spirit by which he's now able to deal with this demon.

So there's our inability. And there's the inability of the disciples, an inability coming from unbelief, an inability coming from a prayerlessness or a lack of prayer, an inability that's brought to Jesus as we ourselves must also.

Because only he can help us with that inability. Secondly, Christ's ability in relation to our faith. Verses 21 to 29.

[37 : 24] Verse 21. Jesus asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood. 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. Why is Jesus asking him all this? He knows this already. It appears that there's even something of a delay.

And maybe this father was by this stage really thinking, why doesn't he just get on with it? Why doesn't he just continue through to actually helping us with this? But you see, Jesus wants the father to describe the condition of this boy and the things that have been happening to him and his experience with that so that it'll highlight the greatness of need that Jesus faces and that this boy has.

And so that leads to the emphasis on faith and the need for faith. And here's the father saying, well, if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.

And what does Jesus do? He says, if you can. And notice there's an exclamation mark there, the way it's translated here in the ESV. It's somewhat difficult to bring out exactly what the meaning of the words is.

[38 : 44] But, you know, it's like yourself when somebody says something to you and you're just more or less repeated back with an exclamation mark or with an emphasis so that it's a good way of translating it.

I think here Jesus said to him, if you can, is that really the point at issue? That's what he's getting at. Is this really the important question? Whether I can or not? Whether my ability is able to deal with this or not?

Jesus is throwing his attention to the fact that the problem is not actually Jesus' ability and the extent of Jesus' ability is not if he can or whether he can.

The problem is, are you prepared to believe? Are you prepared to trust in me? Are you prepared to entrust this to me fully? That is what he's drawing this man's attention to.

And that's still the question. It goes back to what we said earlier. Are we prepared to put ourselves wholly in the hands of Jesus? Jesus? Just pause for a minute and think about that.

[39 : 49] It's not a matter of having great faith. It's not a matter of actually having faith that's so strong that you feel you have now really advanced as a Christian or as a human being.

What this is really saying is have you and have I entrusted our life, given it over to Jesus? Even with all that we know is still defective in our lives and still, as we'll see in a minute, a matter of our unbelief as well as faith.

But what he's saying through that is that here he comes to ask Jesus if you can do anything. And Jesus is saying, it's not a matter of what I can do.

But you need to believe. You need to trust in me. You need to put yourself in my hands. And here's the man then saying, Lord, he's saying, I confess.

Immediately, the father of the child cried out and said, I believe, help my unbelief. And the words cried out are words that are, it's a very strong expression there. It's really, it's the same as used of Jesus on the cross.

[41 : 05] He cried out with a loud voice just near to the time when he was finally about to expire. And here is this man, it's the same word that Mark is using.

This man came and said, I believe. He's really just strongly saying this to Jesus. Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief. He wasn't coming as an unbeliever, but he was concerned at the extent to which his unbelief was still active in his heart.

And so he cries out to Jesus. And that is such an important feature of the passage. Because it's not that this man wasn't a believer.

It's not that he needed to have great faith for Jesus to help him. His very recognition of his unbelief shows that he's a believer.

And today you might be here saying, I wish my faith was strong. I wish my faith was much stronger. You might be here today saying, I've got so many doubts. I just wish I could get rid of these doubts.

[42 : 09] I wish I could just get rid of this element of unbelief in my life with regard to my relationship with God, with my regard to his word and the promises of his word.

I find so much unbelief still in my heart and still active in my heart. Well, you cannot have that without being a believer. a person who's totally an unbeliever, someone who does not have faith at all, someone who's not saved.

Spiritually dead people don't come to Jesus to confess their unbelief. They don't come to Jesus to confess their unbelief in a way that wants help with it, like this man is.

Lord, I believe. He shouts out, he cries out, help my unbelief. In other words, there is there evidence of his being a believer. He has faith.

He knows the Lord is the source of his faith and because he knows the Lord is the source of his faith, he knows the Lord is the only one that can help him develop it further. I believe.

[43 : 12] Help my unbelief. Is that the cry of your own heart? Are you today, as I am so often, concerned about my unbelief? Concerned about the level of doubt in my soul, concerned about how often I just don't seem to respond to God's word with the active, vibrant faith that it requires and it deserves?

Well, where do I take that? Do I just go on complaining about my unbelief and just leave it at that? Of course not. I do what this man does, I hope, and I hope you do as well.

Because all of us have a measure of unbelief. But where do you take it? Where is the help you need for it? It's in Christ himself. I believe. I'm not an unbeliever, he's saying.

I believe. But help my unbelief. Help me progress with my belief. Help me move my faith on. Help me move my faith forward. Help me deal with this situation with an increased faith.

That's what you and I require as our life goes on. If we have a complaint over our unbelief, over our lack of faith, only Jesus can help us.

[44 : 27] He's the source of faith. He's the source of help for our faith. He's the one who helps develop our faith. He's the one that we go to with it.

And today, it's not that you need great faith, though great faith is good. I'm not sure if there's anyone in this building would say of themselves, I've got great faith. Probably not.

I certainly wouldn't say it of myself. But what you need in an ongoing way is true faith. Genuine faith.

And where you've got true faith, genuine faith that trusts in Jesus, that has come to place your life in His hand, that recognizes the elements of unbelief that still lurk in your heart, that's the faith that's going to develop.

That's the faith that's appealing to Jesus to help with increase, with growth, with further development. And that's such an important thing for you and I to recognize. And here is Christ's action finally.

[45 : 29] He came and rebuked the unclean spirit, saying, You mutant, deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never entering him again. 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. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. Only Jesus could command this evil spirit, and that evil spirit respond as it did.

Because he is the one who has come into the world to show his mastery over all powers, including the power of the devil. And through his death, that is what he ultimately achieved, his death and resurrection.

But you see here, the boys, they took the boy by the hand and lifted him up. It's always such a wonderful emphasis, such a wonderful detail in these passages.

We've seen it already with the daughter of Jairus. He took her by the hand after taking her back from the dead. Now, this boy wasn't dead. He had just, through the seriousness of his convulsion, lapsed into a faint of some kind.

[46 : 41] But it's always wonderful, isn't it, when you read in these passages Jesus taking them by the hand. Because it's a picture of the active involvement of Christ in his life, in his healing, in his restoration.

And isn't it that way in your own life, too, as a Christian? Isn't it Christ personally active in your life that you're so thankful for? He didn't heal you from a distance.

He didn't save you. He didn't heal you by way of just using another agency other than himself personally coming into your life. Though the Holy Spirit, of course, is active in that.

No, he's personally engaged in that, personally involved in that. And when you come to pray, Jesus takes you by the hand. He's still actively involved in your life.

That's why that active relationship personally with him is so, so important. And for this boy, it would mean reintegration into his family and into society.

[47 : 44] Indeed, he was somebody who couldn't do very much with his problem as it was. But once he's freed from the effects and from the influence of that unclean spirit, as Mark calls it, his life is completely changed.

Not only his own life personally benefiting from it, but he's now been made useful. That's what salvation is. It's not just something that involves you being personally saved individually.

It's that salvation, personal salvation, brings us into a usefulness for God, a usefulness in his kingdom and in his cause, a reintegration, if you like, not only with Jesus himself, with God, but also into the active ministry of his church, the active discipleship of his people.

Bring him to me. And when they brought him to Jesus, the result was, the outcome was inevitable. Jesus' power deals with the situation and brings the boy to his feet and back to the normality of life.

May God bless these words to us. We're going to conclude our service today singing in Psalm 71. That's in the Sing Psalms version of Psalm 71.

[49 : 21] Again, this is a recorded praise. and verses 1 to 8. In you, O Lord, I've taken refuge.

Protect me ever from disgrace. Rescue and save me in your justice. Turn to me as I seek your face. To the tune, Boonili, in you, O Lord, I've taken refuge.

Amen. In you, O Lord, O Lord, I've taken refuge.

Protect me ever from disgrace. Rescue and save me in your justice.

Turn to me as I see your face. Be my strong and my sure refuge, to which I always may resort.

[50 : 33] give the command to help and save me, because you are my love and voice.

from wicked hands, my God, O save me, from cruel hands, from violence.

chaplain and the Lord. mites.

I delight upon you. You are the guide of all my grace.

Out of my mother's womb you brought me. To you I ever will give grace.

[51 : 54] To many I am a cause of wonder. But you are still my refuge strong.

My mouth is filled with adoration. Raising your splendor all day long.

After the benediction please can I ask you to abide by the regulations. In other words social distancing of two metres as you leave the building. And whichever exit you are leaving from.

Please use the sanitiser that is placed at the exit on your way out. And if you can just wait on those who are at each of the doors. Here and upstairs. Please wait for directions from them as you leave.

Let's stand for the benediction now. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God the Father. And the communion of the Holy Spirit. Be with you now and always.

[53 : 01] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.