

Children's sermon (crooked)

I understand that there are some people in this world who are uncomfortable with that picture. Do you know anyone like that?

(Control) is a very interesting commodity. While it implies that when you have it, you will be better off than any old billionaire....and that you will, in the end, be happy.

I have had some (very) interesting experiences with certain people who so need to have a sense of control, that they will scuttle any idea or plan to get something done....because....it is no longer under their control.

Of the most frustrating emotions that we may encounter in our life...I think the desire to be in control is the most difficult. In fact, psychologists have an entire (lexicon) for psychological disorders that are based in the desire to be in control.

(This) scene from Mark's Gospel is one that is replete with the matter of control: who has it, and who doesn't.

Immediately (after) the Transfiguration on the mountain, when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, witnessed by Peter, James and John, and confirmed by God...this is my boy.... (Jesus) finds a rather large crowd engaging the other 9 disciples with criticisms and challenges. Can you imagine that in 2018?

From this point on in Mark's Gospel Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem to die. On that morning as they were coming down from the mountain, I wonder if maybe Jesus had still a bit of that glow that he experienced on the mountain? As they approached the crowd, the people were drawn to Jesus. ("What's) the fuss?" he asked.

What would you say? "Well, Jesus, first (there's the) Pharisees and teachers of the Law who are all about having control over the people. They are dead set against anything that you and your disciples do. They don't much like you, and they are trying to discredit you." Yah, legalists are like that. They want to use the structure of traditions to solidify control over the people. And the funny thing is that ever since Jesus showed up on the landscape, they have felt their power and influence drifting away!

Who else? (The nine) disciples over there had tried to show their power and control to heal a boy who has epilepsy. And how did that go? Well, not so good. They used the right words, but the spirit in the boy just sort of laughed at them. They are feeling pretty vulnerable right now, and they are really anxious about what Jesus will say to them when all these people leave.

Anyone else? (The father) of the boy. Ever since the boy was young, he has struggled with...how did his dad put it....a mute spirit that caused him to become silent, and stiffen up, and fall over in seizures. He has no control over that spirit, even though he loves his son more than life itself.

"Jesus, I brought my boy to you because I believe you can heal him. Your disciples tried"...can't you just see the 9 disciples standing over there with their heads bowed low....failures. They tried to rid the boy of the spirit, but they were not able to control it. No one could. And so Jesus has become the father's.... last.... hope.

(Why is) that? Why is it that when people have tried everything else....that in their desperation they turn.....to Jesus. Isn't it strange, that even though we say we believe in the power of mercy and grace.....that in reality we try absolutely every other avenue that appears before us?

Do you do that? Of course we do. We figure we are smart enough, or strong enough, or diligent enough, or even faithful enough to cast out that spirit of darkness.....but, we aren't successful.

Is it any wonder that when God does not come through with some wish or desire we have expressed...that some will quickly leave the church, or turn their back on God, or deny any faith whatsoever! It happens.

Did you hear what the boy's dad said? (Jesus) said, "I got this...." and the dad (says)....."I believe Lord"....and then a three word confession:

("Help) my unbelief." Help my unbelief. Help my inflated sense of power and control, because in this situation there isn't much I can do. Only you Jesus...

Help my unbelief, because I have seen so many needs here, but I don't feel I have enough time, or energy, or interest, or willingness to give my all. Help my unbelief....because I love this boy, or I love this community.....but I don't have a foundation deep enough to stand with confidence and hope. Help my unbelief, so that I may be the presence of Jesus to someone who may need Him. Help my unbelief.

And the one truth that stands out when those words become your creed: help my unbelief.....do you see the breadth or depth of control there? You don't do you. Indeed!

See, this scene has a (clear strand) of humility woven into it. Beyond the limits of faith and strength....these people could not rescue this boy. Beyond the limits of traditions and control....these people could not rescue this boy. Beyond the reality of illnesses and our own personal shortcoming these people, we, could not rescue the boy.

But.....(Jesus) has brought us this mercy. And (Jesus) has brought us this grace. And Jesus (has) brought us this love here on this earth. In its truth we stand created from stardust, united in our limitations, and hope-filled with the word of healing that comes to us.....(your) sins.....are.....forgiven.

And what makes this all the more ironic is this.....if we were so completely free in our decisions and our actions....if we are in fact....in control of our lives....wouldn't you (expect) a greater expression of grace and goodness and a far less incident of sinful, unjust, dishonest, and selfish actions? Could be.....(right?)

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