

*“Living by faith” “Help my unbelief!”*See service sheet online at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org)

Welcome + Covid reminders David is leading this morning

Opening Scripture &amp; Prayer: Psalm 56

Opening Hymn: MP 1087: Lord, I come before Your throne of Grace

Prayer: Adoration and Praise

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Notices / Testimony / Prayer / Lord's Prayer Open Doors & Fiona Bruce CI  
Judy Cook Cadbury College testing

Main reading: Mark 9:14-29, also Matt 17:14-21, Luke 9:37-4

Hymn: MP 998: Jesus, what a beautiful name

Sermon: “Living by faith” “Help my unbelief!”

Hymn: MP 197: Great God of Wonders - (St Catherine)

Closing Prayer and Benediction: Numbers 6: 24-26

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org).The audio file is [21\\_01\\_31.mp3](#).*Welcome and pray*

You have just had a row with the neighbour, the bank statement shows there is less money in the bank than you thought, family relationships are not good, someone has scratched the car, the washing machine is making a funny noise, the Tom cat you bought is expecting kittens .... and now you've heard that you've tested positive. Is that a mess? Or is that just life? – We know how others cope – or not, but you're a Christian. How should you be? Today we continue with people Jesus met. Here is a man whose son is in great need. What should this father do? - What about you and I with all we face? How should we live? Jesus tells this man to 'believe'. How about you, “do you believe? What does that mean anyway? Is your response like his “Help me in my unbelief.” 3 sect: The mess, The Master, The message. x2

*The mess*

Jesus, Peter, James and John having descended down from the mountain rejoin the other disciples. There is a furore going on **they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.**

Down here - life is a mess. In the midst is a man in distress because of his sick child. Who is not affected by the suffering of children? This sickness is of the worst kind: **it seizes him, throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.** Doctors today would look at the symptoms; the seizures, the throwing to the ground and conclude that the boy has Epilepsy. The word used here is derived from the word for ‘moon’, hence a ‘lunatic’, or to be moon-struck, as epilepsy, of which the Greeks knew nothing, was supposed come and go as did the moon. [Paper article](#)

Worse still he is also demon possessed, he has in him an evil spirit. The father describes him as **possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech.**

This spirit uses the illness to further cripple him. The boy cannot help himself. Parents present your children to God by faithful and fervent prayer.

✚ Parents - we must always pray for our children, not only those weak and cannot, - but much more those wicked and will not pray for themselves.

What parent does not have deep concern for their children? Like the Syro-Phoenician woman who pleaded earnestly for her demon possessed daughter

This child has a multitude of problems, the devil, under God's divine permission, either caused this illness or choses to heighten and aggravate it.

✚ Satan is tormenting him, making it more grievous than it ordinarily is.

✚ Satan always makes things worse, Christ always makes things better

Here is the worst of cases for Satan had entered him when he was still very little. Satan uses physical diseases of the body which do most affect the mind; for it is the mind and the soul that he aims to do mischief to.

How about the helpers? What helpers! the disciples who have been asked to help are not able to. The disciples had run aground, they couldn't do it.

If you rely on others, you will be disappointed. They will not live up to your expectations. So often it feels like you are on your own in this world.

The scribes, who were sworn enemies both to him and them, rub it in.

Picture the scene, crowds of people, all saying different things, the noise, clamour, shouting, arguing, blaming. Chaotic.

■ In India with the man whose leg had been caught on the track and the crowds gathering. Give me some money I will take him to hospital another saying "don't trust him". – until came someone with authority It is messy, the boy is sick and possessed, the crowds arguing and criticising

**How much does this picture the world we live in – and of the lives we live!**

That's the mess - But thank God he sent the master.....

### *The master*

The disciples lift up their eyes, finally there's relief as they see Jesus walking towards them. He had been up a mountain with Peter, James, John.

**As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.** Was there something unusual in his appearance?; - as Moses's *face shone* when he came down from the mountain, Ex 34:30. So perhaps did Christ's face, in some measure shine. Rather than looking tired there appeared in his face a wonderful brightness which *amazed* them.

Remember Moses, when he came down from the mount, found the camp of Israel in great disorder; so does Jesus. **"What are you arguing with them about?" he asked.** All become silent and it falls to the father to explain.

Jesus' response? **"O unbelieving generation,"** all three writers mention this.

**"O unbelieving generation,"**

Jesus will later rebuke the devil now he rebukes the people. Was it a rebuke to the disciples for not being able to drive out the spirit? Jesus didn't say to them it's OK let's ask one of the three who was up the mountain.

Saying **"O unbelieving generation"** suggest a general statement.

Moses when he came down the mountain saw the mess the people of Israel who were in with their golden calf, **"When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp.""**

Ex 32:17

Later Moses describes their lack of faith towards their God: **They have acted corruptly towards him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation."** De 32:5

Jesus entered the world in an age of unbelief **"O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?** But Jesus did not walk away, Jesus stays, he does put up with them, for they are lost.

Today Jesus through you his people is not removed from the mess in the world. You stay - as the master did - to hold out hope for the lost.....

Jesus shows compassion **Bring the boy to me."** So they brought him.

This is not just a physical sickness ..v20 **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.**

That sound quite consistent with demon possession as I understand it. ...**the boy's father...** says: **"It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.**

Epilepsy is bad enough but the devil is trying to kill him. Satan is full of hate, where he gains possession and power in a soul he *seeks to devour*, 1Pe 5:8

■ **Suicide, Knife crime, a woman choosing to abort the unborn, addiction**

There is an evil force in this world who comes to **steal and kill and destroy; Jesus.. rebuked the evil spirit.** Christ rebukes the deaf spirit. Though deaf he hears the voice of the son of God. There are many deaf who don't want to hear. They close their ears – even thinking they are safe in their graves - but Jesus warns: **a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out** – that will be for all men and women, B and G Joh 5:29 **"You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."**

Christ's victories over Satan are obtained by the power of his word, **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.**

What a demonstration of Jesus' power over sickness and evil spirits.

But if I can draw your attention back to the section earlier. Jesus wants to first teach the man to trust him - and he is to do it very dramatically.

So they brought the boy to Jesus. V20 Once the spirit had thrown the boy to the ground what happens next?? Jesus rebukes the Spirit and the boy is healed right? No while the boy is squirming around on the ground and everyone is trying to do something Jesus turns to the father. - God will do the same with you he will get your attention - one way or another

**"How long has he been like this?"** Jesus knows everything about the child, he knows what he is going to do but the whole point is that the father, the weak disciples and all of you here this morning - learn to trust him.

The father wants Jesus to help **"But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."** Of course he does **'If you can do something'**

Jesus want the man to have faith in Him so Jesus bounces it back onto him, isn't that annoying, it is annoying for it exposed the cracks

If - "If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Everything is possible for Christ, can I - can I really trust him to do it?

**Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"**

"Lord, I believe; I am fully persuaded both of you, your power - and your pity; but .... **Help me, ... help me overcome.. my unbelief... my unbelief**

Is this the main point? Is it what you and I must today learn from this passage?

### *So thirdly - The message, what is the message?*

The disciples were disappointed. Matthew records the father having said: **"I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."** Mt 17:16 Christ gave his disciples power to cast out devils Mt 10:1,8), and at other times they did it successfully Lu 10:17 yet not this time, not here.

**So after Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"** x2

**'Why?'** As the disciples asked Jesus, so should we come and ask. Lord, what is the lesson for me? When I get up to go shortly what can I take with me? He gives the answer here - and in Matthew's account he expands on it.

The answer is prayer **He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."** Mr 9:14-32 .

— but prayer must be believing prayer, He who comes must believe Jesus said: **If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."** Mt 21:22

When he says **"This kind"** Is there something different with *this* spirit or with *this* possession? – There doesn't appear to be, except that this poor boy was demon possessed *from a child*, meaning the spirit had a strong hold / was firmly lodged.

Are their worse demons? Jesus says so in Mt 12:45. Talking of demons he says: **Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."**

When Christ's disciples had driven out evil spirits had they taken it lightly? Did they need to learn that there are degrees of evil? Evil long lodged in the heart over many years is harder to remove? Or that they needed to be shown how dependent they are on Him, - that without him they could do nothing. Jesus emphasises this in Matthew's account: 17:19-21 and in reply to their question **"Why couldn't we drive it out?"** recalls Jesus **replied, "Because you**

**have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."**

The mustard seed was the smallest of all seeds. In other words if you have the smallest or feeblest faith that is genuine, you can do all things.

### So question No.1: "is my faith genuine?"

The mustard seed grows to be the largest of herbs. If you have the simplest genuine faith, then it can increase, expand, and be strengthened from small beginnings to perform the most difficult undertaking. A living grain of seed, has to potential to bring great results, = Your faith should be *like* that!

Gehazi's was Elisha's servant, yet with Elisha's staff in his hand did could not raise the child to life: Elisha must come himself. Why? because Gehazi was not a man of faith as was Elisha. He was with Elisha, people saw him appear to be about God's business but he was not converted. When it came down to it - there was nothing there.

■ Why do some people ask me to pray for them? I suggest it is because deep down they known that they do not know Christ. X2

Anyone Born Again by the Spirit of Christ has that small seed of faith. Let it grow. True faith means whatever you face you can trust your life to Christ who says **"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."** Joh 14:1

Do you have the courage to trust him with everything? Whatever Christ does he does well. Everything. His message, his love, his sacrifice CROSS was all done fully. To those who look to Him - He always keeps his promises. Trust him. Trust him.

**You have everything to lose if you don't – and everything to gain if you do!**

### So question No.2: "If my faith is genuine do I nurture it?"

Jesus is probably pointing to a mountain nearby. He is not talking about earthworks; no. but to say if you have such faith, you can accomplish the most difficult undertakings — things that at first would appear impossible.

Mountains are often interpreted as representing huge obstacles. I wonder if to a Jew the mountain represented God's presence. -Faith moves God to act.

This kind of faith is only produced by earnest prayer. This faith is kept vigorous only by much prayer, earnest prayer. Hence the mention of fasting.

Fasting puts an edge upon prayer; it is evidence of my humbling myself before God which is necessary in prayer. Fasting is a means of putting to

death bad habits and that the flesh, the physical, give way to serve the spiritual. That the body is in check to serve the soul. Abstinence from food and other things prepare the mind, leaving it free to commune with God.

✦ Fasting and prayer are the proper means for the bringing down of Satan's power against us, and the fetching in of divine power to our help.

So questions No.3: "What is Christ saying to me about my faith?"

One commentator said these disciples could not drive out the demon because they were not prepared, Jesus was away so they had been at ease, eating, socializing. You cannot suddenly switch from a worldly mindset, you cannot pray earnestly when you have been watching TV or on S. media.

■ I can think of one man I have known for many years. He is Born Again and it is clear that he has 'saving faith'. But he doesn't seem to have 'growing faith' Nor does he display 'active faith'. The longing of the Holy Spirit within a believer is to activate, to mobilise that person to do things, to attempt things, to push forward - trusting that Christ can, x2.

■ In a family there may be many children but not all are like the father So too in God's family. What do I believe? I know that God is real, fine. I know that Christ died on the cross for me, fine. I know I am saved, fine, I know that he is always with me, fine. *Is that it? x2*

Let us be serious about our relationship with him. This means being earnest in prayer. When we come together to prayer at the church this is the time to seek Christ face for the advancing of His Kingdom. So often we hear a single pray 'thank you for saving me', 'thank you that you are always with me', 'help so and so'. What about what he wants to do through you? What about all those things he wants you to do for Him to thus reveal His Glory?

Will you pray as this father prayed, a prayer for more – Lord I want more **"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"** "I want to trust you for more..."

Christ promises us all: **Hunger and thirst for righteousness and you WILL be filled. 'knock and the door will be opened to you'.** Let's seek him earnestly.

We are so brow beaten by our society, so wrong footed that our confidence in Christ and his word has all but gone. That is why increasingly in God's wisdom we face trials – why? Because they really help me pray! They force me back onto him, to trust him for everything, yes everything - as I should.

Christ said to this man as he says to you, it is possible. **"Everything is possible for him who believes."** For a true believer who knows his Lord,

knows his will - and trust him in it - as he points to your mountain **Nothing will be impossible for you."** Those disciples had to learn to trust.

finale

In this world you will have trouble. Here in this scenario is a picture of every problem. The physical - illness epilepsy, The spiritual - demonic activity and in this case possession, those cursed fallen angels active in this cursed fallen world. Add to this my own darkness and unbelief.

What is it for you? What are you going through? Do you feel trapped?

■ Many flats have this inflammable cladding on the outside. One a poor woman struggling with the bills – and the extra charges she gave up. - she handed the keys back to the mortgage provider – and walked away.

It is easy to want to walk away, give up, where's the way out? It's hopeless! But for a Christian - our God is able, so we don't give up, "Trust him!"

Up the mountain it was different, Jesus was clearly revealed in his glorious state for the disciples to see him as he is eternally. That is how Christ is now. Ok we would all like to live 'up the mountain' You can't - not yet - but you can by faith.

To do that we need to enter the inner sanctuary, to press into Christ and find him, seek him earnestly and in truth - and you will find him.

■ So that trouble or distress you are going through, the failure, the fear where there seems no way through – there is with Him –praise God

With Christ is clarity - without him is confusion. Things appear differently when you draw close to God - than they are when you are far from God.

Down here life is a mess, but Jesus descended down here to share in it, and yet to conquer it. And how? By always trusting his father, that his father had the power and was in control. That God is every Christian's good father.

**"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."** Joh 16:33

Jesus shows us how to live victoriously in it, the Bible says **the righteous will live by faith.** And how? By always trusting the father, that the father has the power and is in control. That is the victorious life of faith. Paul who had more troubles than most summed it up: **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.** Ga 2:20. **I live by faith in the Son of God.** Let us go and do likewise. Amen \_\_END