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More Than a Miracle; Matt 17:14-21
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Introduction – We’ve often observed studying through the miracles of Jesus in Matthew’s gospel that God is never doing just one thing at a time. He’s never just performing one miracle, but in that miracle He is doing far more. He works that way in our lives as well. When He blesses, He’s using that blessing in untold ways. When He allows suffering, He’s using that suffering in untold ways. God is never doing just one thing.

And that’s the sense of today’s passage when you read it, isn’t it? The focus is actually not on the miracle, even though we are talking about a miracle. This boy was so captured by evil and dark powers that he often lost control of himself. Evil was wreaking havoc in his body and raising fear and doubt among all who came into contact with him. BTW – that’s what evil does. It destroys. It causes fear. It creates doubt. That’s the work of evil.

This particular demon had such a powerful grip on this young man that no one could help him – not even the disciples. If you remember back in ch10, Jesus sent the disciples on a mission throughout Israel, and gave them authority to cast out demons. So it’s not as though this was new territory for the disciples or that they were not equipped to minister in this way. Yet, still they couldn’t budge it.

Jesus, however, simply rebukes the demon, and it leaves. As Luther penned in A Mighty Fortress, one word shall fell him. The demon left and the boy was healed instantly. Instantly. This is an amazing miracle. Divine intervention. The very work of God in the life of this young man. And yet the focus is not on this astounding miracle. God is always doing more than just one thing.

- I. A Suffering Son
 - a. This son was experiencing great physical distress that resulted in great physical harm, but the physical nature of his distress was only the symptom. The root of the problem and his suffering was spiritual. He wasn’t sick; he was under the control of darkness. His father says, “he suffers terribly.”

- b. There's nothing more heartbreaking for a parent than to see a child suffer, and even more so, to see that child suffer terribly.
 - i. It's one thing though to see your child suffer; it's quite another to see them suffering and not be able to do anything about it.
 - ii. This father had pursued every avenue available to him. He had even approached the disciples of Christ. But no matter what he tried, he could find no relief, no answer, for his son's suffering.
 - 1. But there was one more thing he could do. He could come to Jesus. He could go straight to the source.
 - 2. He humbly prayed to Jesus. Note his posture (kneeling). Hear his words (Lord, have mercy).
 - iii. This is a common thread in the fabric of life. We find ourselves at times at the end of our strength and resources. We try this and that, we go here and there in a frantic search to find answers. And when all else proves incapable, we find Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus tells this weary father to bring his son to Him. Bring Him to Jesus. And in a breath, the Son was healed.
- c. Imagine the relief and joy of this father to see his son healed. To know that God had done a work that would never be undone.
- d. God is always doing more than one thing. And of the many things God was doing on this occasion, it seems to me, at least one thing He was doing was instructing parents. Oh how much we learn moms and dads and grandparents from this passage.
- e. A Word to Parents – 4 things we must do.
 - i. We must be aware of the spiritual needs of our children. We must see past the physical. Everything this boy was experiencing was physical, but his problem was spiritual.
 - 1. Our children are spiritual beings by nature and are always under the influence of spiritual forces, whether that be dark or light, evil or good, Satan or God.
 - 2. We stay on top of grades and social involvement and extra-curricular activities. But are we tuned in to what's going on in their hearts.
 - 3. Make no mistake about it, the Enemy's plan for our children is the same plan he had for this son – to capture him and then destroy him.

4. That may not happen so much by possession in our day, but that doesn't mean it's not happening. Satan has many devices to deceive and charm and entice. The prince of this world utilizes everything at his disposal in this world to trap and enslave. He uses false teachings, deceptive ideologies, star power influence, peer persuasion, pride of heart, desires of the flesh, approval of others, he uses any and everything.
 5. And when he gets a grip on a heart, he will lead it down the path of terrible suffering. We must be aware of the spiritual condition of our children.
- ii. We, ourselves, must come to Jesus. Our lives must display the worth and treasure of Jesus! Our convictions, our lifestyle, our words, our actions must exemplify that nothing in this world is better than knowing God through His Son Jesus Christ.
 1. How are we doing in that area parents? What is our number one pursuit in life? What is our aim? What is our ambition? Who do we love most? How would our children answer that question about us if they knew we were not listening?
 - iii. We must be humbly, fervently asking God for His mercy in the lives and hearts of our children.
 1. How often do we pray for the salvation and sanctification and keeping and holiness of our own children? Some of the greatest Christian men and women throughout history had one thing in common – mothers who spent hours in prayer for their souls!
 2. Moms and Dads, do we get on our knees like this father and pray with all our might for our child?
 - iv. Bring them to Jesus. Bring them to Jesus.
 1. Teach them the gospel. Don't just seek to correct their behavior. Go beyond their behavior and get to the heart. Talk about sin. Confess our sin. Speak of the Savior and our need for Him. Teach them that sin means to steal, kill, and destroy, but God means to give them life!

2. Show them that pursuing this world and its pleasures will never satisfy, but Christ, Christ will complete them and fulfill them and save them.
 3. Find a gospel-loving, Scripture-loving, Christ-loving, missions-loving congregation, and bring them to church. It's true, bringing them to church isn't everything they need spiritually, but not bringing them to church will harm them spiritually!
- v. Parents, let's follow the example of this father and find the joy and relief he found when he brought his son to Jesus.

II. An Ineffective Ministry

a. A Word to the Church

- i. The father said your disciples could not heal my son. The disciples embarrassed at their ineffectiveness, asked Jesus privately, why could we not cast it out? Jesus said:

b. Because of your little faith. If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed...

- i. Now mustard seed is pretty little, so how little was the faith of the disciples if they didn't even have faith the size of mustard seed?!
- ii. It seems to me that ineffective ministry requires a quality of faith, not a quantity of faith. That's what Jesus means by saying they only need faith like a grain of mustard seed. It's not the amount of faith; it's the kind of faith.
- iii. Little is referring to content, not amount. There's not much there. There's no substance. A lot of spiritual talk but no meat. A lot of fluff but no power. It only takes a grain of robust faith.
- iv. Maybe the disciples were filled with doubt or fear when they saw the violent aggression of the boy. Maybe they were depending on their own spiritual stamina which proved extremely weak and insufficient.
- v. The kind of faith they needed to pursue gospel ministry was a faith that totally depended on God and totally trusted in His power and was fully submitted to His will. The kind of faith that believes in God despite what you see around you.

- vi. That's the kind of faith Abraham had when he was 100 years old, and God told him, "I'm going to give you a son and make you the father of nations. Look at the stars, if you can count them, you can count your offspring. I will do it." And he, despite everything, believed God!
- c. For Grassy Pond Baptist Church to be effective in gospel ministry, we need that kind of faith. Pragmatism won't do. Spiritual fluff won't do. If we are going to build a 5 million dollar building to reach people, if we are going to win people to Christ throughout this community and county and world, if we are going to see our own families saved, if we are going to shine the light in the ever-growing darkness around us, we are going to need a lot of mustard-grain faith that will move mountains.
- d. We know when Jesus said "nothing will be impossible for you," He didn't mean, if you can think it, you can have it. No, He meant – that boy – that was impossible for you. You were ineffective. But you didn't have to be.
- e. Have faith in God. He's on His throne. Have faith in God. He watches over His own. He cannot fail. He must prevail. Have faith in God. Have faith in God!

Conclusion – A word to parents about raising children, and word to the church about effective ministry.