

## JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH AGAIN

Luke 9:37-45

Key Verse: 9:44

*“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”*

Let me begin by asking you a question. What do you think is the most serious problem facing our generation today? Nuclear threat? Terrorism? Racial disharmony? Or the nasty personal attacks and bullying on the social media? In today's passage, Jesus heals a boy who was tortured by an evil spirit. In doing so, Jesus laments over the unbelief of the entire generation. Then he predicts his upcoming death to his disciples again. Let's listen carefully to what Jesus says to us.

**First, a father comes to Jesus with an urgent plea (37-40).**

Look at verse 37. *“The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.”* Jesus came down from the mountain of transfiguration with Peter, James and John. He had been away from the crowd for only one day. Yet they already missed him. Indeed, without Jesus, they were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus was such a good shepherd. He healed many sick people, drove out evil spirits and preached the good news of the kingdom of God. They wanted to be with Jesus all the time. As soon as they saw Jesus coming down from the mountain, they were so happy and ran to meet him. A man in the crowd came forward to Jesus to make an urgent request for his son.

Look at verses 38-39. *A man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.”* A father's joy is to watch his son grow. Even after a hard day at work, he goes to watch his son playing soccer. He is happy to attend his son's school concert even when the orchestra isn't that good. He is especially happy when his son brings home a good report card.

However, this father had more urgent matters on his mind than soccer game or report card. He was desperate. His only son was suffering from demon possession. When the demon came upon the boy, it “seized” him. The boy did not do what he wanted to do; he did what the demon told him to do. It was an ongoing nightmare for him. He never knew when the demon would seize him. He only screamed when it happened. The demon caused him to have convulsions: his muscles contracted, his face contorted, and he rolled on the ground, foaming at the mouth. It was an unbearable thing for any father to watch. In my middle school, a girl student had an epileptic seizure during a class. It was scary to watch when she foamed at the mouth, because most of us didn't know what's going on. I cannot imagine how she felt afterwards.

The boy's problem here was demon possession. We don't know how this tragedy happened to the family. His father must have wanted him to study hard in school and become a man of good influence. Maybe his father made him a nice study room, with a book-case full of classics and his own computer. But suddenly one day his son began to act strangely. He was no longer the sweet son he knew. One moment he was angry, rebellious and destructive. The next moment he seemed lonely and helpless. The father had a spiritual insight to see that his son was possessed by an evil spirit. He didn't know how his son came to be possessed by a demon. Perhaps one day the boy visited a bad website. Perhaps it was a satanic videogame he enjoyed playing that opened a door of his heart for demon. Whatever happened, the boy was now tormented by the evil spirit. He didn't want to be controlled by the demon. He hated what the demon made him do. He wanted to be normal like other boys. But he was helpless. In his helplessness, the boy would cry out for help. His father wanted to help, but he was also helpless. Who could possibly help such helpless father and son?

One day the father heard about Jesus of Nazareth. He heard how Jesus drove out demons from people. He brought his son to Jesus in the hope that he would also heal his son. But Jesus was not there. He had gone up on the mountain with three disciples. So the father begged the remaining disciples to drive out the demon (40). The nine disciples were excited about this opportunity to show what they could do. After all, they had done such work while they were out on their training mission earlier. They were also intensely jealous of the three disciples whom Jesus took to the mountain, and wanted to show they were capable. But when they said to the evil spirit, "Come out of the boy, you evil spirit," nothing happened. In their embarrassment, they repeated the command again and again, but there was no response. It seemed that the evil spirit began to laugh at them. It was a humiliating situation. The disciples joined the father and son for their helplessness.

### **Second, "You unbelieving generation" (41-43a).**

When Jesus heard the story, what was his reaction? Look at verse 41. "*You unbelieving and perverse generation,*" Jesus replied, "*how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.*" Jesus rebuked the entire generation for their unbelief. He didn't say, "I am sorry your son is suffering so much." He didn't say, "I feel your pain." Instead, Jesus said, "You unbelieving and perverse generation." Jesus saw unbelief as their main problem. In Mark's gospel, we find some details that help us understand this. The boy's father did not firmly believe that Jesus could heal his son. He said tentatively, "...if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can"? said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes" (Mk 9:23). The disciples had tried to heal the boy depending on their past experience. They did not pray. They did not acknowledge that the power to drive out demons comes from God. Jesus told them, "This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mk 9:29). In addition, the nine disciples were full of human thinking, because Jesus had not taken them to the mountain. They did not pray because their hearts were preoccupied with competition, jealousy, and complaint. In other words, they failed to help the boy because they had no faith.

We should know that, more than anything, unbelief causes sorrow for our Lord Jesus. When Martha and Mary complained bitterly to him for not coming quickly to heal their brother, Jesus tried to plant resurrection faith in them by saying, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” But they had no real faith. Jesus was deeply troubled by their unbelief. He wept (Jn 11:35). Once Jesus and his disciples were in the middle of the Sea of Galilee when a furious storm came up and threatened to capsize their boat. They were afraid of drowning even though Jesus was right there with them in the boat. Jesus got up and rebuked the wind. The storm died down immediately. Then he rebuked his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mk 4:40).

On the other hand, our faith makes Jesus most happy. Once a Gentile woman from the region of Syria came to Jesus and begged him to drive out a demon from her little daughter. Jesus first tested her faith by saying something really harsh. He said, “First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs” (Mk 7:27). Jesus called Jews “children” and her people (Gentiles) “dogs.” It was an insult to her people. Amazingly, her faith in Jesus didn’t waver. “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” She believed in the power and compassion of Jesus that she knew even crumbs of his blessing would be enough to help her daughter. Jesus was deeply impressed by her faith and he was very happy. He said to her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

Indeed, it is such a blessing to live by faith in God. There was an ordinary couple with children who lived a happy life. They were Christians but their faith was lukewarm at best. They were part of unbelieving generation. They did not pay careful attention to God’s word. Then one day, the husband was diagnosed with lung cancer. He was given only six months to live. The family was devastated. To their credit, they began to pray to God sincerely and humbly, repenting their sins. In a time of trial, they turned to God. They dedicated their lives to the Lord. Strangely, however, the husband’s condition did not get worse, even after several months. It turned out that he was misdiagnosed. He didn’t have cancer. Still, the family’s spiritual turnaround was for real. They had used their trial to turn to God and grow in faith. Their lives were changed for good.

Like the people in this passage, we live among unbelieving and perverse generation. Demons go around looking for victims to devour. They make us worship money and pleasure instead of God. We become helpless when we are faced with hardship, instead of turning to God. We make Jesus sad whenever we are unbelieving and full of human thinking. Jesus would rebuke us saying, “You unbelieving generation.” Jesus had a broken heart for them then, and he has a broken heart for us now. May God help us to repent our unbelief and live by faith!

After lamenting over the unbelief of the generation, Jesus told the father to bring his son to him. Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. Demons never give up their victims easily. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father (42). It was wonderful work of God. The

demon could torture the boy no more. To the father, to see his son happy and healthy was the best thing that could ever happen. This father must have wept with joy and gratitude. Jesus saved his son and gave him back to him. The crowd witnessed this event. They were helpless before the demon. But Jesus drove out the demon. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God (43). We must have faith in Jesus—that he can heal any person no matter how serious his or her situation may be.

What else can we learn from Jesus who healed the boy with an evil spirit? Satan tries very hard to plant doubt and negative thinking in our hearts. When we try to help our Bible students by faith, sometimes they seem to become worse. Using his clever schemes, Satan tries to hamper our efforts to live by faith. What should be our attitude when this happens? We learn that we should rebuke the evil spirit in the name of Jesus and obey the word of God more faithfully.

### **Third, Jesus predicts his death a second time (43b-45).**

The people were marveling at what Jesus did. The three disciples must have said to the other disciples, “You guys are very fortunate that we came back.” The nine disciples had to swallow their humiliation, but they were happy that Jesus had healed the poor boy. Jesus’ popularity reached another all-time high. The disciples felt that days of prosperity and success were ahead of them. They looked forward to traveling with Jesus and doing great work of God among many people. They began to sing, “Happy days are here again....”

In the midst of the celebration, Jesus took his disciples aside and spoke to them personally. Let’s read verse 44. “*Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.*” He told them he would “be betrayed into the hands of his enemies” (NLT). Why did Jesus pop their balloons when they tried to celebrate his popularity? On the mountain of transfiguration, God said to the disciples, “Listen to him.” Now Jesus told them to listen to him carefully. It was because they were full of their own ideas and would not listen to Jesus.

Look at verse 44 again. “*Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.*” This was a second time Jesus told them about his suffering and death. This time, however, he did not talk in detail about his death and resurrection, as he had previously (9:21). He simply told them about his betrayal. He wanted them to know that betrayal would be the first thing that would happen to him. One of his own disciples, Judas Iscariot, would betray him, selling him for 30 silver coins (Mt 26:15). Betrayal is the most difficult pain for any human being to endure, because betrayal is not done by enemy; betrayal is done by a loved one. Betrayal is possible where there is love and trust. Jesus, the holy Son of God, was going to be betrayed by his own disciple whom he loved so much.

Three years earlier, Jesus had called the twelve ordinary men to be his disciples. He loved them dearly and trusted them. He knew the weaknesses of each one. He knew Peter had a big mouth. He knew Judas loved money. Yet he loved and trusted them unconditionally. Jesus even knew he would be betrayed by Judas and abandoned by all

of them. Yet he continued to love and trust them to the end (Jn 13:1). Jesus was willing to bear the pain of betrayal and even to die on the cross for their sins and ours.

It was time for them to listen carefully to his words. It was time for them to open their spiritual eyes and see what Jesus was trying to do. It was time to renew their personal commitment to Jesus. How did they respond? Verse 45 says, *“But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.”* It was hidden from them because they were unwilling to accept Jesus’ suffering and death. They were afraid to ask him about it because they didn’t want him to die. Ultimately, their fear came from the fear of death. They didn’t want to give up their earthly dreams. Jesus knew it would be hard for them to accept the painful truth. But Jesus told them in advance for their own sake.

Jesus wanted his disciples to examine their hearts on the way to Jerusalem and accept his suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus wanted them to make personal decisions of faith to commit their lives to him. A decision of faith is an act of the will to choose to obey God even when it involves suffering. A decision of faith can be made only through much struggle in prayer. What Jesus’ disciples really needed was to make a decision of faith on the road to Jerusalem.

Likewise, we really need to make decisions of faith to follow Jesus. We can follow Jesus as part of the crowd for a while. We can enjoy the spiritual atmosphere of Jesus’ ministry and the wonderful work of God as spectators for a while. But we would remain as part of unbelieving generation if we continue that. Each of us must make a personal decision of faith in order to follow Jesus. Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (9:23).

In today’s passage, we learn that we are unbelieving and perverse generation. We must repent our unbelief and listen to Jesus by faith. Jesus was betrayed for our sake. He was crucified in order to save us from our sin and death. May God help us to make personal decisions of faith to follow Jesus to the end!