

Help My Unbelief
Mark 9:14-27
Dr. Dan Doriani

And I want to read God's word to you now.

This is from Mark 9:14-27. Jesus is just coming down from the mountain with his disciples Peter, James, and John, where he's been glorified, transfigured, his glory shining in the world. And this is what it says.

¹⁴ And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. ¹⁶ And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" ¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ 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." ¹⁹ 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." ²⁰ And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²² 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." ²³ And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out^(a) and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ 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." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

I actually worked on this sermon a while ago and last week I had to change it because of my own crying out -- I believe, help my unbelief -- struck because a man I'd worked with for a while, not all that closely, not all that long, but a man I'd worked with in Christian ministry fell. So he had a rough life. A number of things went wrong professionally in his family. He experienced real hardship. He turned to alcohol and it cascaded downward from there. He's out of the ministry. And I fell into a reverie of remembering the people I had worked beside -- People who endorsed my books. People who were on a committee with me, on a team with me. And they're gone because they betrayed their gospel witness. I'm not saying they're not believers. I'm saying they committed serious sins that disqualified them from ministry. And I cried out, Lord, why? Why do Christian leaders so often fail? It's what causes me to say, Lord, I believe. Why don't you preserve your leaders and your people better? That's where I have my -- I believe, help my unbelief crisis.

And then I thought about this church and honestly about the one-year anniversary of the passing of a beloved leader Harry Reeder who finished his life very well and was faithful to the end. And then I thought about this church beyond Harry to consider and remember that for 65 years this church has had lead pastors who are gifted, hardworking, dedicated, godly and intent on a life of faith. I think, of course, of Frank and Harry - first Harry, especially today. But I also remember, and I think of many of you that have had a long procession of assistant pastors and associate pastors and youth directors, in Ministry of Music and Ministry of Women who have been faithful and faithful and faithful. I don't know if you realize what a profound blessing it has been that you have had decades of one faithful leader after another. So, I hope you give thanks along with me as we consider the sorrow of leaders not leading as they should, and the joy of the leaders here.

Mark 9 is about the challenging day in the life of a person, a father who loves his son and he's watched his son suffer for his entire life. And probably he had hopes of his son's healing and hopes were dashed. And now he hears about Jesus, the healer, and he thinks maybe there's hope after all. And he brings his Son to Jesus. Now, as he does, we're in one of those moments of contrast, and the contrast is between great things that are happening in the Gospels and in Mark 9.

Earlier in Mark nine, Jesus walked on water, walked to his disciples in a storm. And Peter, although he faltered, did walk all the way to Jesus on the waves. That's quite an event. And then right after that, Jesus went up on the mountain to pray with his disciples Peter, James and John was transfigured, shining in all of his glory, all of his deity shining through, and as so often happens, the highs lead to lows.

Now, the crowds were here and their families. You heard the first service, but you know the way it is. There are probably some grads that were honored and are honored and will be honored. And you know the way it goes in families. One child has an honor, maybe valedictorian or getting some award for excellence in debating or sports or something and everybody celebrating. And then, the siblings are kind of glad but not exactly glad about all the attention being lavished on brother or sister. And next thing you know, there's verbal fisticuffs breaking out somewhere out back. And mom and dad are playing private investigators because the highs and the lows tend to go together in life.

And so it is here, after the great victory, the letdown, Jesus comes down from the mountain and he sees he sees this, this group of people a mess. People arguing, debating, quarreling. What are they talking about? He asks. And someone runs over and says, okay, here's the story. There's a man who brought his son to Jesus, and Jesus wasn't here. And so they said, well, take him to the disciples. The disciples know how to heal. They've been empowered by Jesus. And they don't do it, that the healing doesn't occur. And nobody, nobody seems to know why. So Jesus asked about the uproar and the father comes forward and he says, teacher, I brought my son to you. Over in Matthew he pleads for mercy, help my son. He says his terrible seizures - he's got an illness. And there's demonic forces that are somehow weaponizing and compounding my

son's illness. He has seizures, but he doesn't just fall down. When he falls down, he falls into a fire. He falls in the water. He falls in the most destructive way possible. There's a demon trying to destroy my son. It's been going on his entire life. And he says two things. He says, I brought my son to you. That's verse 17, and I brought him to your disciples. Now, what he means is this - one when my son and I finally had hope again, I brought my son to you, and you weren't here. And so I presented him to your disciples. They're your agents. They're your, can I use the word plenipotentiary here – meaning you've given them all your power. We don't know what went wrong. Our hopes are dashed. They were not able. It's not foolishness. It's true. The representatives of Christ should be kind of like Christ. They should have a Christ form. A Christ shaped life. That's one reason why today we remember a pastor, Harry Reeder, who had a Christ-formed, Christ-shaped life. Also, we've had many other pastors and we give thanks for that. That's the way it's supposed to be. We're supposed to represent Christ in this world, in his beauty, in his goodness. It is his kindness and his wisdom. And it doesn't always happen that way. Can I just pause and meditate on this? Because it's big issue in our culture today.

There are there probably three ways a pastor can fail or seem to fail as people. One is by just being a human. And so, you know, pull back the curtain a little bit. Sometimes when pastors are complaining, which they do once in a while, they will say, you know, I can't believe this person has been mad at me for ten years because I didn't answer their phone call while my wife was giving birth to our first child. That I had a fever of 105. It is true I didn't get the list to them on time. I had a fever of 105. All right, so pastors are human. The small main problem is that pastors sin, Christian leaders sin, elders and deacons and Sunday school teachers sin. And sometimes it's terrible. Sometimes it's major sin betrayals, misusing money, breaking vows. And it's a tragedy. And our only hope is that people will remember and give us some of the grace that Christ gives us.

The church is a hospital, and we don't want to stay in a hospital forever, but we land in hospitals and we need to recover. That's what the church is. It's a school where we learn and it's also a hospital where we recover. And so even a leader, we hate it but even leaders sin and we hope they recover. And then there's another category. And that is when leaders fail. I'm going to call it culpably, but maybe not sinfully. And that happens when a leader is in a tough spot and they don't quite know what to do, and the decision is called for. Now there's a crisis. Right now we have to do something. We don't know what to do. And we're going to do the best we can but we make a mistake. We don't mean to make a mistake, but we make a mistake.

I'm going to tell about the most recent time I did this. Not long ago at all. In fact, about a week ago we were having a family gathering for Mother's Day. And, you know, the family's there and I have a grandson who is pretty athletic. He's seven years old, and he likes to play every sport known to humanity and that includes soccer. And he likes to pretend he's a goalie and he likes to have people try to score. And so somebody else in the family is kicking goals or trying to kick goals against him. You know, there's just a wall and you gotta hit it between the two angels. And this family member played soccer and he's trying to score on my grandson and he's not

succeeding. My grandson is blocking one shot after another. He's only seven! And so this relative of mine starts kicking harder and it seems like everybody should see what's happening. I mean, this wonderful young man is just kind of getting excited because he played soccer, is kicking harder and harder a ball rockets over my grandson's head. I'm thinking, you know, that's like a bullet pass. I mean he hit that hard and his dad's right there and his mom's right there and they're seeing this. They're seeing the ball going harder and harder. And I'm getting worried. And I'm thinking I see this happening. The parents see it happening. I don't want to step on their toes. You know, I don't want to usurp the role of mom and dad, and mom and dad aren't doing anything. And then one more kick comes, and sure enough, my grandson blocks the shot and he gets hurt. Not badly but hurt. Hurt enough to cry. And I saw it coming and I didn't say anything because I thought his dad saw it and his dad said he wasn't paying attention. I'm thinking to myself - those are sonic booms going off. How could you not hear that? That's not what I said 😊. What I said was, I am so sorry. I saw it coming. I should have stopped it. I thought you saw. They said we didn't see it. We didn't see. We all make mistakes like that. I felt terrible, I felt guilty, I don't think I sinned. It's hard to be sure. I just made a bad judgment. We all make bad judgments. The disciples of Jesus make bad judgments. We fail. The disciples failed. We don't know exactly why they failed.

Jesus says later on -- Because you had a little faith, he says, because you didn't pray. Maybe they assumed, you know, we've officiated a lot of healings by now. Maybe they were not as zealous as they could have been. Maybe they were distracted. It didn't work out. You know, life is hard sometimes. Leaders let us down and they let this man down. And so the man is shaken and Jesus laments, as he sees it, he says, oh faithless, unbelieving generation, how long shall I bear with you? How long will I be with you? How much? How much more do I have to put up with you? We almost hear him saying, you know, I'm going to leave this world before too long. How long do I have to be with you? Do you hear Jesus getting exasperated? Do you hear it? Does it bother you that Jesus got exasperated? Can you imagine that there is such a thing as Holy exasperation?

A man named Bobby Warfield, 110 years ago, said Jesus had every godly human emotion. He had every human emotion and in a godly way. Now, some people say sometimes that you should never get angry. There's a series of movies called Star Wars that has a line about this. Have you ever heard about these movies? Star Wars has these creatures called Jedi Knights, and there's a code for Jedi Knights and they can go over to the dark side or stay on the right side in case you didn't know. I'm just summarizing for you. And one of the things they say is that anger is the path to the dark side. It's not true. Star Wars is not correct. Do not get your theology or your philosophy of life from Star Wars.

There is such a thing as godless anger and such a thing is godly anger. There are proper times to get angry about sin and injustice and hatred and unkindness. And the Bible actually says, be angry and do not sin, which means it's possible to be angry senselessly. It's not easy for us.

Let me say it a different way. In the book of Ecclesiastes it says, there is a time to weep and a time to mourn, a time to laugh, a time to dance. There's a place for every emotion. If I can just talk about that a little bit more. There's a man named Robert Roberts who's a Christian theologian and leader and a wonderful man, and he wrote a book about emotions and he said when we say things like, don't be so emotional, we're actually probably off and not recognizing that God made humans with emotions and emotions are fundamentally good, and they're a proper part of life. And our emotions arise when we care passionately, about something. Our emotions are the way we appraise events, the way we construe what's happening around us. He uses this illustration. He said, imagine that somebody comes rushing at you with a sword. Imagine you're in a terrible dark city (Atlanta, for example, and you're supposed to laugh at that. I'm not actually against Atlanta. I don't really mean that Atlanta's a horrible city, but you're in it or you're in New York or some crime ridden city like Saint Louis) and somebody comes charging you with a sword, you know, in an alley. And they're angry and they're large and you're terrified. You run, you're afraid. But imagine that someone comes rushing at you with a sword. And instead of being on a lonely street in a far away city, you're an actor and you're on stage and you're thrilled because this is your big scene. This is your battle scene. You're in a Shakespearean play and this is it. You're not frightened at all. Or imagine that you're at a picnic and your four-year-old nephew comes charging you with a sword made of foam rubber, and you're amused because of the way you read the situation or emotions or how we read things.

Now, the book of Proverbs says, *above all else, guard your heart, for from it come the wellsprings of life*. That is to say, your actions, your thoughts, and also your emotions come from your heart. Emotions come over us, but they not merely come over us --they come out of our heart, out of our passions, our desires and our interest.

Suppose, for example, and this is a good Sunday for this, because college sports aren't going on. But suppose, for example, that you're a fan of one of those big schools, Alabama and Auburn, and your wonderful school, the school you root for, the school you live and die for loses and they lose because some large young man, maybe six foot nine, a basketball player, maybe six foot two and 282 pounds, and a football player makes some mistakes. Some ball dribbles out of their hands. They try to catch it and they just can't quite do it and they fumble it and it goes out of bounds. Or it's a turnover of some kind and your team has lost. I have heard from serious minded people that attendance at this church goes down after Alabama loses a significant football game, especially if it involves, you know, tragic accidents by large 19 year olds. I hear that people are so distraught that Alabama or Auburn lost a game based on the performance of a total stranger. Yeah, I say to somebody you should care about the win or loss of a game a little like you care about people living in Mongolia. That kind of care. Someone has defective fingertips and people can't get out of bed till 1 p.m. the next day. I'm just going to tell you something. If you can't come to church because Alabama or Auburn lose a football game, your emotions are out of order. You care too much about a small thing. Unless you're the football coach there, that would be different 😊.

We should care deeply about the right things. We should be angry about the right things. Jesus was angry at sin. Jesus was disappointed in his disciples because they should have been doing better, and it exasperates him because he's been with them for more than a year by now. Robert Roberts says it this way in his book about emotions. He said, when you're too upset, you have to ask the question, are the right things at the center of my life?

Because the emotional person I'm quoting now is weak, not because he has emotions, but because he has poor ones or a limited repertoire. His concerns, the concerns as emotions go back to our momentary primitive is immature and badly ordered. He lacks personal integration, not because he feels, but because he feels strongly about the wrong things. Brothers and sisters care about the right things. Get your emotions going about the right things. Jesus is emotional. He's frustrated. There's such a thing as godly frustration and exasperation because his disciples should be doing better. And I'm not saying he looks to us and sees frustration, but he wants us to do better. And he sometimes looks at us and says, these are my children. He loves us. He always loves us. Unfailing, unending love. These, my children, should be doing better. So don't say, don't be so emotional. Say to yourself, let's get our emotions in order and they should come out of a right heart.

Well, back to the story. Jesus sees the scene, hears the father's dismay, and he says, bring the boy to me. And when it happens, the spirit, the evil spirit comes over him. He goes into a fresh convulsion. He's rolling around on the ground, and Jesus and the father are watching him rolling around, foaming at the mouth, becoming rigid, almost like a doctor surveying a scene or watching a patient who's in real trouble, maybe bleeding profusely, but he's not rushing because he has to know what the problem is. So with physicians, so with Jesus the Great Physician, what do we have here. The father says this has been going on his whole life, from childhood. This demon has cast him into fire and cast him into water. And the father is shaking because the disciples failed to come through. And so he says, but Jesus, if you can do anything, if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus hears those words, he hears those words. If you can. Now in the original language, there's a way to sort of bracket words out. You put a definite article in front of the whole phrase, the I heard the if you can that came out of your mouth. What do you mean, if you can? Everything is possible for one who believes nothing is impossible with God. Jesus is the great Redeemer. What do you mean? If you can?

Now the truth of the matter is people do ask the question and they ask it sincerely. Why has God not done anything? And they begin to have questions. This can be personal, such as my son's been sick his whole life or some longstanding personal crisis. God, why don't you do anything? We also feel that on a larger scale right? Why did God allow World War I, World War II, the Holocaust, the wars that are going on today? Why does God permit tyrants to kill people in their own lands by the millions? This happened in Russia and China and other places. God, why don't you intervene?

Answers to these questions.

One answer is human agency is real. God lets people actually do things that have consequences. He doesn't stop people from doing what they intend to do. It's also true that God sometimes lets humanity go. In the book of Romans several times it says God gave them over. You insist on rebelling. I permit you to rebel. Sometimes God takes an evil deed and turns it for good. As Genesis 15:50 said, you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. But don't misunderstand. I'm not trying to solve the problem of evil right now. This is not an answer to questions posed in the book [Atheism for Dummies](#) or that website. You can find things that make Christianity look bad. There's a real question brought by a real man why? Why are your disciples not healing my son? There's a woman named Marilyn Robinson who's a wonderful novelist, wins awards. She's also a very dedicated Christian and a sort of a lay theologian. In her books, the most famous of which is called [Gilead](#) explore matters of faith. It's about two pastors and their lifelong friendship. It's a wonderful book, and in that book, one of the characters says, if you have doubts, let them be real. Let them be honest. Doubts, not the questions that are in vogue at the moment. Let them be your questions. Serious questions, but genuine seekers. It's good advice if you're saying, I believe, help my unbelief. If that's truly what you're saying, then say it to God. Wait for the answer. Does God always answer our prayers? He does not always answer them as you wish and we don't always know why. But we can still say, Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. Who says things like that? Who says, I believe, help my unbelief? Real people. When I heard about my friend who had to leave the ministry because he got into alcohol and one thing followed another I was shaken because this happens too many times and sometimes you're shaken. And so we say, Lord, I need your help. My hopes are dashed as this father's hopes were dashed, I had begun to hope again. Your disciples couldn't help. I believe, help me unbelief. And he takes that. The beauty is, he takes it to Jesus. He says to Jesus, I believe, help my unbelief. In essence Jesus says I'm going to handle that but right now I'm going to rebuke that that evil spirit, and I'm going to heal this disease. And so he commands the demon, leave him the demon convulses the boy one more time. The people, think he's dead. Jesus helps him get up. He's better now. And now we can address the question. What does it mean? I believe, help my unbelief.

It means that when we say things like that, Jesus answers, because we don't have to have perfect faith. Listen, I've said this before in my year with you. I'll say it again -- our standing before God does not depend on the quality of our faith. It depends on the object of our faith -- that is Jesus. We are not saved by having faith. We're saved by having faith in Jesus the Redeemer. So, when Jesus hears the words, I believe, help my unbelief, he says, good enough. I'm not asking you to have perfect faith. I'm asking you to have faith in me, and that can change things.

I don't know if you've been watching our culture and little trends. I'm sure you have. We've watched different things. I've been watching the idea in our culture of telling your story. There's a great emphasis on people telling their story and this is not a bad thing. Can be good. Certainly, but I do notice when people tell their story, they tend to emphasize their heartaches and the woes that came their way. I had a childhood disease. They may say I have a minority status of

some kind, and my parents divorced when I was seven. Whatever the story, maybe I had a cruel coach. Somebody fired me from a job, my first and best job, for no reason. People tend to tell their story in a sort of a dead-end kind of way. I listen to Taylor Swift sometimes, and she sings about bad boyfriends. She sings about bad boyfriends a lot, actually. But there's something about her that I want to point out. She's had a bunch of bad boyfriends, but she's doing all right. You know, she's a billionaire. She's going all over the world. And there's something I think I'm not sure about this, but I think one of the attractions to Taylor Swift is she's had so many bad boyfriends, but she's still pretty healthy about it. She's still doing well. She doesn't let the bad things destroy her life. There's something positive in that for us now. I should have warned you that you were going to be called upon. I'm going to invite you to read a responsive reading with me. And this is the moment we're going to put on a screen, because the Bible wants us to be realistic about the troubles we have in life, but not to be overwhelmed by them. In other words, Taylor Swift is on to something.

It's from Psalm 129: 1-4 and it's a word spoken to Israel. And I'm going to say, You're Israel and I'm going to be the person leading. And if you are willing to join in, don't do it if you don't want to, if you don't have a desire. This is a Psalm that somebody gave to me when I was in a time of distress. One of my, a slightly older friends in the faith said, Dan, you need to spend time in Psalm 129 and I said, good call, and this is what it says...

"Greatly^{1a} have they afflicted me from my youth"—
let Israel now say—

²"Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth,
yet they have not prevailed against me.

³The plowers plowed upon my back;
they made long their furrows."

⁴The LORD is righteous;
he has cut the cords of the wicked.

Have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me. Now this is me. This is the person who starts it. The plowers plowed upon my back. They made their furrows long -- pause for a second. The plows plowed upon my back. They made their furrows long means you are really hurt. If somebody takes a plow up and down your back, you have been torn to pieces. You are never going to recover completely. There will always be scars. If someone took a plow to your muscles and sinews and tendons and your skin -- the plow. But I invite you to join me. The plow was plowed upon my back. They made their furrows long together. The Lord is righteous. He has cut the cords of the wicked.

You know what that saying? It is saying - look, I've had adversity in my life, but it doesn't dominate my life. It doesn't control me. There is no question they have greatly affected me, but they have not prevailed. Why have they not prevailed? Because the Lord is righteous, and he cuts the cords. That is, the forces that bind us, the things that tie us down and make us weak - He has cut those cords so that my life can actually move forward.

So it was with that father. It's a real hardship to watch your child desperately sick for his or her entire life, and he was shaken by it.

While I was writing this sermon, a man called me up and he said, Dan, I'm calling you on the 12th anniversary of my sobriety. I was with him when his life fell apart. He had gotten into alcohol, and it led to drugs. Drugs led to a lot of bad decisions professionally. He lost everything. He lost his wife. He lost his job. He was banned from his field of enterprise for the rest of his life. He lost everything and he prayed. He said, Lord, change me, save me. And he calls me every year to say, hey, Dan, just want you to know you were with me at the worst moment and God changed my life. My life changed, but God changed my life. I've been sober for 12 years. I couldn't be happier. I have rebuilt my life by God's grace. This is something that actually happened.

Now, I've talked about Taylor Swift, I've talked about Alabama football, Bebe Warfield and Robert Roberts. But I'll give a name you probably all know. And that's the name John Calvin, John Calvin, if you're a visitor today, glad to have you. Calvin is very well loved and respected in Presbyterian circles, and he was respected at an early age. At the age of 26, he wrote a book, the first edition very short compared to the others of a book called The Institutes, and he was almost instantly somewhat famous in French and Reformed circles in the Protestant church at the time. He was offered a job in a city called Strasbourg. but he had to take a detour through Geneva, which is another city and they just lost their pastor. And somebody said, I'm simplifying a bit here because it's a hundred page story, but the basic idea is this... they said, we don't have a pastor. Let's get John Calvin. He wrote that wonderful book, The Institutes, and Calvin was willing. They got somebody alongside him named William Farrell. And they led the church. Calvin was 26 years old and completely untrained for this kind of thing. And he started making mistakes, and he started to clash with his elders. And he said, these people can't take communion. And the elders said, well, that's a joint decision. You don't get to decide that by yourself. He said, if I don't get to decide it by myself, none of you can have communion either. In fact, nobody at the whole church can have communion. And they said, you're fired. And he said, okay. They said, you got a week to get out of town. He said, I only need two days by. But there was a problem. The problem was, where's he going to go? Because everybody knew. This is a very talented young man who has had some problems. He kind of clashed with people a lot during his first couple of years. Where's he going to go? Well, he can go to Strasbourg where he got that invitation, where he's going in the first place. The only problem was he'd written a letter to the leader of the church at Strasbourg, who was one of the most important, if not the most important Christian leader in Europe at the time, except for Martin Luther. Number two, probably in the whole European scene. And he'd written a ten-page letter to boozier telling him all the things you've done wrong. He's as a 27-year-old, talking to a 55 year old, saying, I'm so tired of the pious shuffling of yours. That doesn't sound very good. He criticized one of his books that had recently been published. Calvin said, you know, the book is so thickly settled with blemishes the best remedy would be a single sweeping erasure. And for ten pages, he wrote, like that. They didn't know what to do. He's godly, he's pious, he's learned. He's hard working.

He just has bad judgment. What are we going to do with them? Bucer said. I'll take him. I'll put him under my wing. We'll have a little chat about what he wrote to me, which became public. Calvin made terrible mistakes.

At the age of 28, probably most of us could say I made terrible mistakes at the age of 28. Remember some things you did in your 20s you hope everybody else forgot about? How about when you're 38, 48, 58, 68, 78? We make mistakes. Nobody's perfect. But it's not the quality of our faith. It's the object of our faith. We really want to be godly men and women. We do. We want to have a Christ-formed life like the best people we know. And when we fall short, we're still adopted into the family of God. God still loves us and rebukes us and corrects us, even as Jesus corrected his disciples.

The disciples said, what went wrong? Why couldn't we heal this boy? And Jesus said, because you didn't pray. Because you got mechanical, because you thought you had it under control. These are spiritual matters. You can't just show up and say you're healed. That's what he says in Mark and over in Matthew. He says, because you have such a little faith, not because of no faith, but because little faith in it has consequences. A poor and a weak and mechanical faith has consequences. But everything is possible for the one who believes, not for the person who believes perfectly, but for the one who believes and believes enough to say, *I believe, help my unbelief*. Jesus says, good enough, good enough, and you can go through this world and see your life get better in your work, your family, your politics, your self-discipline, your relationships, your you name it. With faith, by God's power, all things are possible. When we say, I have a hard time believing that, Lord, help my unbelief, Jesus says, yes, everything is possible for one who believes.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly father, we thank you for this rich and challenging, surprising part of your word. Disciples failing, Jesus exasperated but also encouraging. We pray, Lord, that we would hear the core that everything is possible with you. Everything is possible to the one who believes. And Lord, if our faith is weak, we ask that you would make us stronger. And we also say, Lord, thank you for honoring even a weak faith, because you are strong. Give us grateful hearts, hearts that are shaped by the gospel. We pray every day in Jesus' name, Amen.