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St. Mark 9:14-29:

It's Always About Eternal life Through Faith in Christ

- I. The Goal of an Unbelieving World
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- III. The Love of God

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 N. Oakland Avenue
Decatur Illinois 62526

St. Mark 9:14-29

Dear Friends in Christ,

Around twelve years ago, a fellow by the name of Jeffrey T. Kuhner wrote an article for the Washington Times entitled "God is dead to many younger Americans." He wrote:

The younger generation is becoming Godless. Increasing numbers of Americans under the age of 30 are skeptical about the existence about the existence of God. This will have profound repercussions upon our society, fostering moral disintegration and the eventual death of our Judeo-Christian civilization. Traditional America is dying. In its place a new liberal barbarism is being born. (That is, an unpleasant and cruel behavior.)

I would argue and say that the new *liberal barbarism*, was born in the 1960's. A good number of us here were there. It has taken around 60 years to mature. It's birth was the hippie movement defined as "a counterculture built on drugs, rock music, sexual liberalism, and communal living." And I would definitely say, an attitude of demand and willingness to force issues; liberal barbarism.

The growing *dumbing down* of churches in order to appeal to societal wants has a certain force working behind the scene - Satan. It's what the Lord had Paul write: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded their minds, to keep them from seeing the light of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor.4:3,4)."

Some might wonder what the *dumbing down of churches* means. When a church will not confess that Christ is the one and only payment for sin, and the one and only way into eternal life; will not confess that the Scripture is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of God...well, what is it? It's not a Christian church. For the true church . . .

IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

I. The Goal of an Unbelieving World.

And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them and immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him (vv.14,15).

"When they came to the disciples." "They" are Jesus, Peter, James and John who had just returned from the Transfiguration of Jesus; the moment when Peter, James and John were given a glimpse of the glory of God in the flesh and heaven. They arrived in time to see "a great crowd around" the other disciples. And Jesus, Peter, James, and John saw the "scribes arguing with them." We're told:

And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" And someone from the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute...So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able (vv.16-18)."

The argument was rooted in the fact that the disciples could not cast a demon out of a child. The argument was based on the fact that much of the crowd had witnessed Jesus casting out demons. The Scribes, on the other hand, were really after discrediting Jesus.

Of our text, commentator Harold Wicke gives these excellent insights worthy and deserving of our hearing:

The symptoms described here are so similar to what we know as epilepsy that many commentators, who in their own hearts deny the possibility of demon possession and even reject the existence of Satan and his evil

angels, say that this was actually a case of epilepsy. They claim that Mark...reflected the mood and beliefs of his time which, according to them, falsely ascribed many illnesses to demon possession. However, since what Mark wrote is "God breathed" according to 2 Timothy 3:16, such commentators are saying that God doesn't know what he's saying or that he accommodated himself to the beliefs of that day. We cannot accept either of these judgements... (And we don't! Liberal theology always travel in this perverted direction.)

We can't ignore the words Jesus spoke to those who did and do everything to degrade Him: "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word (Jn.8:43)." Of this world, Jesus words are "...I testify about it that its works are evil (Jn.7:7b)." The reasons the world does works are because it makes people feel good, or look good; because they're expected, or they manipulate people; not because the world wants to express praise and thanksgiving for God's love in Christ. And look where the world's works have taken, and are taking, and will take...us.

But look at what else takes place . . .

II. If You Have Enough Faith?

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. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood...But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can!" All things are possible for one who believes (vv.20-23, selected portions)."

A person has to be hardened in unbelief to deny the presence and force of the demonic. And with that, there's this twisting of what Jesus said that has wormed its way into the church, radio, television; it's based on the words, "All things are possible for one who believes." It's the twisting that gave birth to the theology of, "If you have enough faith God will grant what you want."

I would like for you to listen to this footnote from one of my Bibles from 54 years ago: It begins with, "This statement of Jesus ('All things are possible for one who believes') has been misconstrued by well-meaning believers who accept it as an unqualified promise." I would add that it has been misconstrued by false prophets who have been flooding the church and television for years. The footnote went on to say:

Believing faith must be based on evidence of the will of God. That which is asked for personal desires or passions (James 4:3), is asked amiss and therefore cannot be asked in faith...For a believer to ask God...to restore his youth when he is old hardly falls within the purview of this promise. Nor does it imply that deliverance from death (and I would, any other worldly desire) is always God's will either, since other Scripture indicates that it is appointed for men to die once (Heb.9:27). (Harper Study Bible, Revised Standard version, Zondervan Publishing House, second edition, 1972, p.1510.)

III. The Love of God.

And that brings us to the love of God:

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" 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." 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." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him, and he arose (vv.24-27)."

I pray this is clear with us. There really are demons. There really was - and there really is to this day - demon possession. There really is Satan; the monster of monsters, the chief snake and murderer, and the father of lies. His desire is to drag everyone into hell; you, me, our children into the despair and depths of hell fire. Paul encourages us: "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers (demons), against the authorities (demonic), against the cosmic powers over the present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Satan and his evil angels) (Eph.6:11,12)."

Christ said, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day (Jn.6:40)." Believes what? You know: That Christ willingly went to the Cross to take the punishment for our sin. We know; believe that His blood has washed away our sin and we will have eternal life. We will receive the resurrected body on the Last Day!

This is Rally Day for us; the day we come together to examine our growth in and support of knowledge in God' Word, the power for salvation. This is the day of renewed commitments to Sunday School, adult Bible studies, Mid-week School and Wednesday morning Bible Study. **It's Always About Eternal Life Through Faith Christ.** We hope and pray we see everyone in studies.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott