

Chapter 17

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14When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, 15"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16"I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." 17And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." 18And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.

19Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" 20And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Last week we had a wonderful time looking at the transfiguration of Jesus. The proof, once for all time that Jesus is God of very God and that His promise to come in Glory and re-take this world from Satan is true. Men saw that Glory. It was a preview of the glory of His return. A picture of the glory He has in heaven now, at the right hand of His Father.

And Peter, oh, Peter, he wants to stall up there on the mountain. He wants to prolong that glory. But, Jesus knows they have to go back

down to the valley below.

And what we see in this passage is that contrast. The glory of the mountaintop where God is present and Moses and Elijah are alive in glory and talking with Jesus. What an incredible high! Like a sneak preview of heaven!

And Peter has his great idea about the booths. Let's hang out. It's cool up here. You smell the pine trees. It's like heaven. But the master says, we have to go back down to the world. Satan's world. Satan's messy messy world.

Try to get in Peter's head for just a moment. Jesus came preaching, what? The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Peter's been hearing that for 2 1/2 years.

Then there's the incident where Jesus asks who do men say that I am? Who do YOU say that I am? And Peter has his great breakthrough.

Thou art the Christ! The Son of the Living God! And Jesus says the whole thing about flesh and blood not revealing that, but God revealed that to you Peter.

And then He says that curious thing about some of you who are standing here are going to SEE the kingdom. And then they're up on the mountain and they wake up and there's Jesus, shining like the sun, and Moses, and Elijah.

Put yourself in Peter's place. What would You think?

This is it! The Kingdom's arrived! Just like Jesus said it would about a week ago. We got to see it first. This kingdom thing is going to happen! It's here! Jesus is going to set it up and me and James and John are going to be #1 #2 and #3 in the kingdom. This is so cool.

And you're walking down the mountain to make it happen, or at least watch Jesus make it happen, and Jesus just says the most bizarre things.

9As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

You can just see the air go out of Peter. Like a balloon. Deflated.

What do you mean? Don't tell anyone. Everyone's going to see! Your Glory! And what do you mean risen from the dead. How are you going to be King if you're dead.

I can just imagine the confusion. One thing he does know. You don't grab Jesus by the elbow and chew Him out about talking about being dead. That didn't go well last time. But I'm thinking Peter is on a rollercoaster here.

Massive high. Get to see the King in His Glory. The kingdom's about to be released. And now this. What the heck???

How does this work? A dead king? Don't tell anyone? Until I'm resurrected? What does that mean. From the dead! How does that work? Massive low.

Mark tells us; *10They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.*

Total dismay and confusion. They're talking with each other. Grasping for ideas. Any idea besides losing Jesus to some kind of death. There are no dead kings.

Maybe it's got something to do with Elijah! Maybe He has to go to the world of the dead and get Elijah, somehow. Maybe that's what it's about. Yeah, the prophet said Elijah would come first. Maybe a chariot of fire will pick up Jesus and He'll go to where Elijah is and the 2 of them will come back in the fiery chariot?? Maybe that's the resurrection of the dead?

10And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

Do you ever do that? You're trying to figure something out. Reading your bible and scratching your head and saying to yourself, how does this all fit together. Do you ask Jesus? Like these guys just did?

He's available you know. His Holy Spirit will come and help if you ask Him. *10And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"*

But, be ready to not get the answer you thought made sense of it. Pretty sure this answer from Jesus wasn't the one they were hoping for.

We can't prove it, but I'm pretty sure, based on how they phrase their question; Why then do the scribes . . . that they're working on a solution that eliminates the death thing.

One of our limiting factors; now think about this with me, one of our limiting factors is the whole time space continuum that we're locked into. It's all way know. Time is linear. Pre-history, event, post-history. That's all we've got.

Not so with God. He lives outside of time. Time is non-linear to God. Our brains are too small to figure it out. Peter finally gives up and says, you know, with God, a thousand years is like one day, and one day is like a thousand years. Peter begins to think out of this box that we're locked into.

But not this day. Not yet. Jesus is going to answer their question. They're going to be as confused as ever. For now. We ask for help. God does it in His way, on His time schedule.

11And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; 12but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished.

Elijah is coming. But he already came. But he's coming. But he was already here. If you're Peter, that's just got to make your head explode, right.

Jesus answers the question. But it won't fit into our time space box.

Yes, he's coming. That's what Malachi the prophet said. The last written revelation in God's book, from His prophets. Elijah comes and restores all things.

12but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

Not the answer they were hoping for. We're back to Son of Man suffering and dieing like Elijah did.

13Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was Elijah. They killed him. Jesus says the same group is going to do the same thing to Him. But Elijah is going to come. Again. Somehow. And restore all things. And the Son of Man is going to suffer like Elijah, John the Baptist, and die. And He keeps talking about being raised from the dead.

Following Jesus isn't easy. We want to stay on the mountain top. We want good things to come. We want the Glory. And the rest. The victory.

And Jesus keeps saying, not today. Today we head down the mountain, back into the confusion. That's where Jesus is going, and we can't for the life of us figure out why. What's going on. Nothing's making sense.

And they walk right smack dab into a scene that's the polar opposite of the Glory at the peak. It's like you come down off the glorious ski hill and sit in a traffic jam with horns blaring. Back in the city. Welcome home. And you think to yourself, why? Why did I have to come back here. Depression replaces the soaring spirit of the glory.

And they really walk right smack into it. I want you to see the contrast

that Matthew gives us here. From a glimpse of all the Glory of the Reign of Jesus the King, ruling in shining glory, to the exact polar opposite.

They walk into Satan's world. In full force. Demons. Brutal evil. Spirits who are brutalizing a child. A broken hearted father. He's at his wits ends. The disciples can't fix it and the ruling establishment of Israel are fighting with the disciples. It's a ruccous. Satan at his best. Which is his worst. Mass confusion

This is a hornets nest. You've heard of the old saying, while the cats away, the mice will play. Not supposed to mix up metaphors. That's what's going on here. Jesus is up on the mountain and 3 of the disciples are immersed in glory. Like we've never seen or experienced here before glory. Incredible indescribable glory.

Down in the valley, Satan is stirring up hornets.

Do you see the parallel. With Moses and the children of Israel. It's so obvious! Moses goes up on the mountain to receive the law, and the Glory of the Lord passes by him. Meanwhile, down in the valley below, Satan's got the children of Israel making a golden calf and engaging in spiritual and physical orgy.

You remember, from Exodus 32;

15Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other. 16The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets. 17Now when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a sound of war in the camp."

18But he said,

*"It is not the sound of the cry of triumph,
Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat;
But the sound of singing I hear."*

We could launch into a sermon on modern music in the church, but we'll save that for another day.

When I was about 5, my mom and brother will remember this, we were in the high Sierras up in the aspen trees up in the mountains behind Lee Vining, and we were playing, making forts down in a little ravine not far from where my dad was relaxing on a porch enjoying the morning sun and some coffee.

There was just 3 or 4 of us kids. Somebody kicked over a hornets nest. We didn't know what to do. My dad shouted 'RUN!' but he was there almost as fast as he said it and was scooping up kids and running away from those hornets.

Trouble coming at you from all directions. That's what's waiting for Jesus in the valley at the bottom of the mountain.

This is a picture of Satan's kingdom vss. God's kingdom. God's kingdom is glory and beauty and rest. Order and purity and perfection. Satans kingdom is chaos and evil. Deranged people doing deranged things. The depths of humanity wallowing in all of the degradation of the fall.

Disciples are arguing with religious experts and the demons are having a heyday. A father is broken hearted. His son is a mad man trying to destroy himself. Chaos and wickedness and evil. Everything upside down from what God originally created.

Mark gives us insight in his account that Matthew doesn't tell us.

In Mark 9:14 - 16 it says; *When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. 15Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. 16And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?"*

9 disciples who belong to Jesus, and Jesus leaves the room for a time, and what we have here is Satan getting at the disciples. These 9 men are

vulnerable. Jesus is up on top of a mountain. We don't know what the argument was about, but we can imagine...

Ex. 32:1 *Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."*

Moses is up on the mountain, Satan starts in. Jesus is up on the mountain, Satan looking for an inroad. Maybe the scribes were using the failure of the disciples to dis-mantle faith in Jesus. Something like that. That's my guess.

Also, in Mark's account, notice where Jesus goes first. Damage control. With His disciples.

14When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with **them**. 15Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. 16And He asked **them**, "What are you discussing with **them**?"

Gotta keep track of the pro-nouns. Jesus wants His disciples to tell Him, what was the discussion about. What was said. The scribes belong to Satan. What did they say. Damage control. Some day Jesus will be gone from them. These lessons are important. What false information went out, and how did you deal with it?

Back to Matthew's account now. Vs. 14*When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.*

A man comes worshipping. He falls down before Jesus, pleading. And the word he uses is most interesting. *Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a **lunatic*** seléniazomai (sel-ay-nee-ad'-zom-ahee)

Some of the translations say epileptic. And we understand that

scientifically. Sort of. But the original word meant, moon struck. Moon struck means you are out of your own senses and the moon has power over you.

We jokingly use that today about some young man who has left his senses behind because of some young lady. He's moon struck over her. But in this time, it meant his normal functional connection of his senses was lost and he had no control over what he was doing.

The greek word has in it the root word for moon. Luna. And we get our word; lunatic from this word. Some of the translations actually use that word. Lunatic. He's a crazy person. Out of his mind.

for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. Mark, again, goes into great detail that this is an evil spirit indwelling this boy who is trying to destroy him by causing him to go into fire and water, both of which could cause death.

16 "I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him."

Luke's version of this story is in Luke 9, and lest we forget where we're at in this time frame, Luke begins that chapter with this vs. *1 And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.*

The disciples had gone out alone and witnessed some of this power at their own hands. And when they came again together, there was rejoicing at the power of God by their hands.

But now, something is amiss. This demon is laughing at these disciples. The scribes are arguing with them. The man is dis-appointed in them. Everywhere Jesus turns, Satan has the upper hand.

17 And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me."

For some reason this shocks us. This tone. These words. The

longsuffering Jesus, at the end of His sympathy.

We expect Him to say, Oh! You poor poor man, suffering with your son who is getting the tar beat out of him by a wicked spirit. Poor man, poor disciples, poor boy, poor pharisees. We're all just victims of Satan. Poor us.

After the mountaintop, the valley, and the hornets, and the chaos and the sorrow is too much.

Who did Jesus say these words to? Everybody present. Satan. The demons. The man. The boy. The disciples. The pharisees. Everybody.

The fall into sin at the garden, has caused this. The word Jesus uses is perverted. It means upside down from how it should be. Polar opposite.

In Satan's fallen world, justice has become injustice, truth has become lies, belief has become unbelief, joy has become sorrow, wellness has become disease, boys have become girls, girls have become boys, the creation has become an accident, the acts of God have become chance.

Satan turns everything inside out and upside down. Everything is perverted.

After the glorious mountain top, Jesus walks into this hornets nest, and He unloads with a little truth.

We look around our world today and wonder the exact same thing for the exact same reason. How long, God? How long will you put up with all of the perversion? Because it's getting out of hand. Right is wrong, and wrong is right.

If I look at blatant evil and tell the world, God's book says this is evil, the world responds and says, Hater. Hate speech! Beware of this person. He's the one who is evil. That is what the word that Jesus used means. Perverted generation.

18And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.

Jesus rebuked who? The demon! He spoke directly to the demon.

Mk. 9:25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." 26After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" 27But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.

This demon's got to put on one last display of defiance. He throws the boy into convulsions and cries out. And when he leaves the poor lad is silenced so much that the crowd thought perhaps the demon killed him. Is he dead?

and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.

Jesus takes him by the hand and lifts him up and restores him to his father.

Peter thought the kingdom was imminent. Jesus came down from the mountain to a hornets nest and said, How long?

2,000 years have passed and we say, How long? How much longer. How perverted will this world get and God will leave His chosen ones in it's midst? The perversions are coming at us at warp speed now. Things are changing SO fast. What will we see before He comes for us?

19Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" 20And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

My mother had an aunt who was not right in the head. She was committed to an assylum that gave her shock treatments for years. My

grandmother's sister.

My grandmother would attempt a rescue from time to time. My mother recalls her aunt riding in the car and saying, Oh, look, the angels are flying next to our car.

And I recall once when she was visiting at my grandmothers house that she became agitated and walked round and round the house for hours, talking to the air.

Was it a case of demon possession? It certainly sounds like it. Classic. But we've lost this ability, in the church, to identify and deal with demonism like Jesus did. Even to speak frankly about this, as if it is a reality, like I'm doing this morning, is suspect. A bit weird.

And you could build a case that God for His own reasons has moved us where we're at today on this issue. You look at the long history of the true saints and it isn't littered with stories of the church's victory over the world of demons. Not in a direct sense, like Jesus, who talks to them.

IN Acts, the seven sons of Sceva, the demons say, Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are you??

Demons and people who deal directly with them, mano a mano, so to speak, are relegated to the apostolic era. Part of the miracle phase that establishes the church.

Hollywood loves the idea, of course. Priests with smoke performing exorcisms of demons who invariably speak with a screechy voice that is different from the person's voice box. They love to creep us out. Make our skin crawl and make the hair on your neck stand up.

In the historic main stream church, the real guys, the puritans and the preachers who had mighty use by God, demons are relegated to prayer.

19Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" 20And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard

seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Remember the parable of the mustard seed? It's just a mustard seed. Tiniest seed common to this land and these people.

It has to go into the ground and die, before it becomes a tree.

The faith Jesus is taking about here is connected to death and resurrection.

We put the mustard seed in a resin ball and make a necklace out of it. We wear it around. That's our faith. That's why we aren't seeing miracles happening. Little faith.

Things don't happen because our faith is tiny. It hasn't gone into the ground and died and become a tree. We carry our tiny faith around with us. Protected.

We pray for things, mostly, that are possible. Where are the people who are praying for impossible things. Let's pray for things that are impossible for us to accomplish.

So many people in Tonopah get saved that we have to go see if we can buy the empty school next to the Mormon church to have some place to put them all. Ministries grow out of a little group in the middle of nowhere Nevada that impact the entire globe.

Pray that God will do things with this church that any sane person would look at and say, That's God who did that. Those folks had no inherent power to do that. Only God could make that happen.