



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

53 – A Thrice Told Story

Announcements:

1/9 @6:30 -

*Men's Discipleship
Question 5*

1/11 @7:00 -

Prayer

1/12 @6:30 -

Grace Group

1/15 @8:30 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: What is your favorite story from the life of Jesus (some miracle, teaching or parable that speaks to you the most)?

One thing that is worth noting about this story of the demon possessed boy being healed is that in all three synoptic gospels it is shared, *and* in all three it is in the exact same place, namely after the transfiguration. One thing that many commentators do is try and find what is called a “harmony of the Gospels”. Seeing how they relate, how they all fit together and how we can determine a hard and fast order of events. But today, I would like to take a little bit of a different tack. I would like to look at the different narratives and see what is slightly different about each one. For each Gospel writer had a slightly different goal in mind and a different emphasis was brought out. It is in this diversity that we can see the full beauty of what is occurring at this miracle of Jesus. Since we have already seen the telling from Matthew, we will skip it at first and look to the Gospel of Mark to begin.

READ: Mark 9:14-29

Mark is the shortest of all the Gospels in terms of number of words, but here he has by far the longest telling of this particular story. He gives many details and thoughts that are not present in the other tellings. Bearing in mind that this is a big passage, and we could do an entire study on it, the biggest difference between Mark and the other narratives is that no other writer chooses to give us the direct interaction with Jesus and the demon possessed boy's father. I would argue that it is here that the emphasis of Mark is seen most clearly. The boy's father famously tells Jesus “I believe; Help my unbelief”. What Mark wants us to understand is that it is the *object* of our faith that matters. It is the transfigured Lord! After Jesus shines with glory, the temptation might be to think that all the issues with faith are solved, but we all know that is not always the case. We can believe, and still need help with our unbelief. It is true of this father, it is true of the disciples (evidenced by their inability to cast out this demon) and it is surely true of us. So look to the savior, with what faith is in you cry out, “I believe, Lord help my unbelief” and see the power of God working on our behalf.

DISCUSS: Why would this reminder be especially important after a scene like the Transfiguration? What is the interaction between faith and the events going on around us?

READ: Luke 9:37-43

Luke has the shortest and most concise telling of this story. What is most fascinating when comparing the three stories is what is *missing* from Luke's telling of this. There is none of the ending conversation between the disciples and Jesus. Luke doesn't see the need to answer the question: “Why couldn't the disciples do what Jesus could?” I would argue it is because Luke has a different angle to what he is trying to convey. Whereas Matthew and Mark the focus is on faith, Luke wants us to remember the majesty of the savior who was just transfigured. As evidence look at what Luke writes (that neither of the other two tell us): “All were astonished at the majesty of God.” I believe this ties to Luke's quest to “compile a narrative” that gives “certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:1-4). He wants to show who Jesus is clearly and simply. So the transfiguration showed the majesty of God, but so does this, he has power and authority, so if you weren't there to see the transfiguration you can still see his power, just like these people did.

DISCUSS: How can the idea of Luke telling us who Jesus is help strengthen our faith? Why are these multiple angles of one story important?

READ: Matthew 17:14-20

We can end by remembering the final thought from Sunday, which is that Jesus took this opportunity to teach his disciples. Matthew has the longest and most detailed telling of this last particular portion (probably because he was there!). So what is Matthew's focus? I would argue that he wants us to understand the role of faith. It is not by strength and power, and definitely not because the disciples are some great guys with some sort of super power that they can do these things, but rather through even the smallest of faith. But the problem is that these men come from a "faithless and twisted generation" and they themselves have "little faith". What they need to learn is that it is not anything they can do that will change the world, but rather their faith. Remembering that this is the beginning of the walk to the cross, and that immediately after this passage Jesus again foretells of his death shows us how important faith is. For Jesus is not necessarily the Messiah they wanted, but with eyes of faith they can see him for who he is: the Christ the Son of the living God!

DISCUSS: What does it mean to live by faith and not by sight? How can we learn to live like this?