

Picture of Deliverance

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Deliverance

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Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, today we confess that our eyes are so easily distracted, Lord, our attention is so easily garnered and, Lord, we admit before we even open your word that even as we have sung these words of truth today, that oftentimes our mind goes to other places, our thoughts go other places. Lord, help us today to have our eyes focused on you and you alone. May we hear truth not just from your word but directly from you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning as you're being seated, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Mark 9. The gospel of Mark, the second book of the New Testament, chapter 9, somewhere right there in the middle, and for those of you that are new to us, maybe you're guests or visitors or maybe you haven't been here in a while, we are walking through the gospel of Mark. It is the shortest of the four gospels. It's probably the most action-packed of the four gospels, but one of the things that we're seeing in the gospel of Mark is that it has this kind of theme running all throughout that Jesus Christ is the one who is able and capable of delivering us. Now we use that word "deliverance" and it kind of makes us a little unnerved because of kind of the context that goes along with that, so allow me to remind us what the word simply means, it means to be set free, it means to take whatever is holding you back and have it release, in some cases it can mean to be removed from a detrimental situation and placed in a desirable situation.

As we've been walking through the gospel of Mark, we've noticed a whole lot of different people and whole lot of different circumstances and it has shown us that every one of us at some level and in some capacity needs Jesus to set us free. Well, today in Mark 9, we kind of have one of those worst case scenarios. We're going to meet a young man today whose condition is as bad as anybody you'll ever meet, and though we're going to look at the passage and hear me clearly from the beginning, I believe it happened the way that it happened, the manner that it happened, exactly as it happened, we're going to allow his story to kind of be a picture for all of us of what it means to be delivered. But before we go to chapter 9, I want to take kind of a survey, so to speak. Normally I would ask you a rhetorical question which means I need you to kind of nod or agree but not necessarily involve you physically responding. Today I'm going to go Bapti-Costal and ask you

actually to respond, okay? Now I'm not going to ask you anything embarrassing but I'm just curious what your answer would be to two specific questions. Now if you don't participate, this illustration loses all of its effectiveness, all right?

So in a moment, I'm going to ask you to raise your hand. Not yet, that's why I called it Bapti-Costal, we're going to put our hands in the air, it's okay. Two questions. First question is this, when we talk about that time, that moment that we realized we had a sin condition and we asked Jesus Christ to save us, okay, I want you to think about when that happened in your life. Now I'm going to draw a line of distinction here. Statistically speaking, and I understand when you're dealing with statistics you've got a lot of wiggle room there, statistically speaking the majority of people in our culture who ask Jesus to save them are under the age of 18 when they do so. So if today you were not yet 19, so you were 18 years of age or younger when you asked Jesus to save you, just raise your hand for me. Got a lot of hands in the air. All right, you can put them down. Thank you very much. Second question based on the first one is when that took place. Now I know you're thinking, "Well, you already asked us. It's before we were 19 years of age." Did you know that the average believer in Jesus Christ by the time they've been saved three years they do not have any close friends or acquaintances that are lost? That makes sense, right? Because what happens when we call on Jesus to save us? We naturally, we start getting plugged in with other believers, we start going to Bible studies, we start going to prayer meetings, we start choosing who we're going to hang out with, maybe a little more wisely than we did in days past, and three or four years roll by and the next thing we know we don't have anybody in our inner circle who is lost.

So I'm going to ask you another question, that time that you asked Jesus to save you, if it was more than three years ago, raise your hand. Almost the same amount of hands went up. Thank you very much. Why is that important? Because for the majority of us in this room and maybe even online, most of us have forgotten what it's like to be lost. Most of us have forgotten the emotions of despair and hopelessness. Most of us, that's a time in our life where we want to put so far in the rearview mirror we don't even want to conjure up the thought of it anymore. And I get that but tonight there are going to be thousands of people who gather right across the street who are going to be lost, and today I want to revisit what does that really look like because tonight we have the privilege of sharing with them what Jesus did in your life. And here in Mark 9, we have a picture for us. Now don't get me wrong, this kid was demon-possessed and Jesus delivered him. I don't want to discount that but I want to use him as an illustration or a picture of what it looks like to be lost and what Jesus does and can do to our lostness.

So Mark 9, we're going to begin in verse 14 and let me remind you that Jesus and Peter and James and John have been on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was a holy moment. I mean, it was so good that Peter said, "Man, let's build three churches up here. Let's just always be in church." Remember what Jesus said? "No, we have to go down to the mountain, the bottom side." What did they find? They found a young man in complete despair. Beginning in verse 14 it says,

14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. 16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? 17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; 18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. 19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. 20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. 21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. 28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting. 30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. 31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. 32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

Now hopefully we can all come into agreement today, I mean, this kid's in a bad position. I mean, you can hardly describe a person's life more out of control and more destructive than this. He's going about his day just minding his own business and all of a sudden that which is within him is flailing him into the water, flailing him into the fire. He's foaming at the mouth and nobody knows what to do. Today, I want to see this young man as a picture, a representation of humanity and who we actually are.

So let's begin with who the kid is. Go back into verse 17. Notice what the dad says, he has a dumb spirit. He's not able to speak. Now we've got to give dad a little bit of credit here, he recognized that my son's condition is not physical. It may manifest itself physically, it may have an outward physical expression but his problem is spiritual. There's something internally wrong. Now two things I want you to pay attention to about that. The first is this, his dad as well-meaning as he was, did not understand how bad his

son's condition was because he said it's a dumb spirit. Remember what Jesus said when he delivered him? A dumb and deaf spirit. Jesus said this condition as bad as you think it is, it's even worse than you think it is. You know that humanity no matter what our age, no matter what our stage, we all have a spiritual sickness, the Bible calls it sin, for all of us have missed the mark, all of us have come short. In fact, in Ephesians 2:1-2 it says though that we were dead in our sins and our trespasses, we walked according to the spirit of disobedience which dwelled within us. When we talk about humanity's inherited sin condition, according to 1 Corinthians 15 it goes all the way back to Adam, back to our parents, our grandparents, their grandparents, all the way back to our original parents that we have this spiritual problem with us known as sin, and that sickness, that disease that we possess, it manifests itself outwardly, does it not? What happened in this young man's life? It brought death. It brought destruction. It brought havoc. It brought chaos.

All of humanity no matter how we dress it on the outside has a spiritual sickness on the inside called sin. Why is that important? Because tonight when people gather on our campus, you are not going to be able to judge their salvation yes or no based on how they're dressed. You're not going to be able to judge it based on their physical appearance because sin is not necessarily tied to how we dress or the way we look. Our sin condition, that which is within us that's tearing us up from the inside, it's a spiritual condition that, yes, will manifest itself physically but inherently it is a spiritual problem.

The second thing I want you to notice about this young man, go to verse 22, is the when. Incredibly insightful information the Bible gives us. He asked his father, "How long ago since this came unto him?" He said, "Of a child." Those last three words, "of a child," are so critical because he didn't say since he was born. Now in John 9, we have a man who was blind since birth. Remember people questioned was it his sin, his parents' sin, who did this? Jesus said, "That wasn't because of sin but so you would see the glory of God." This is a problem, it's spiritual, it is messing things up, it's death, it's destruction he said of a child. Can I draw the picture for you? I want you to imagine this man and his wife. Here they were expecting this child, and as most expectant parents, I'm sure they were excited. They had dreams. They had ambitions. They had gone through all the preparation to make everything the way they would hope it would be. The child was born and for all intents and purposes everything was fine, everything was going the way they'd hoped it to go until one day, someday, something happened. This child that they had prayed for, this child they had hoped for, this child that everything seemed like everything was going just as they had planned out, something happened and he was no longer the kid they knew before. Something took place and he was different.

You know, when we speak about our sin condition, you go back in the book of Deuteronomy 1, the Israelites are making their way out of Egypt to the Promised Land. I mean, they'd been there for over 400 years, over 10 generations here they are in captivity and slavery, and through Moses the Lord miraculously delivers them. They go through the Red Sea. They get to what we know as the wilderness and you would think it would be great but it wasn't. They started griping and whining and moaning, "Man, if you brought us here to die, why didn't you leave us in Egypt? At least we had three meals a day there, why here?" Remember what God says to them? He brings Moses, he gathers

everybody up, he says, "All right, here's the game plan. We're going to the Promised Land but not with y'all. Every one of you who've doubted and questioned and didn't believe, you're going to die right here in the desert." But at the end of verse 39 in Deuteronomy 1 there's this very important phrase, he says, "Those who did not yet understand the difference between good and evil, you may go."

Now why is that important? Because this story is a picture for us because every one of us no matter what your friends or foes may say to you, every one of us came into this world as a very cute baby. You do know the phrase "there are no ugly babies," right? We all came here cute and every one of us was the hope and dreams of our parents and this and that, but then it happened one day, oh it happened. You see, I've helped raise three of them and I know when it happens. This cute little thing that's a bundle of joy all of a sudden rears up and goes, "No!" You're like, "What was that?" You know, people question do you really think humanity was born with a disobedient spirit? Then why is the first word humanity says "no"? Because we want to disobey even the very people who feed us and clothe us and take care of us.

But here's a distinction I want to draw. You see, a 2 and a 3 year old, oftentimes they know the difference between right and wrong because it's punishment or reward. They get it. But you know, there comes a point in everybody's life where the light bulb comes on and we realize it's not just about right and wrong but there's something wrong with me, that my behavior, that even though I excuse it and even though I try to cover it, something's not right. Now if I were to speak theologically with you, we call that the age of accountability. There comes this time and I can't give an exact age on it because everybody is different but there comes a point in everybody's life where all of a sudden this light bulb comes on and we realize, "I've got a problem." So what do we do? Same thing Adam and Eve did, we try to cover it up, we try to mask it, we try to deny it, we try to make all these excuses. You see, tonight there's going to be a whole lot of people on our campus who have a spiritual disease called sin and the overwhelming majority of them are much like this boy, they've crossed that threshold. It's no longer about being a cute little baby who, hey, we just expect that until they know more. Now all of a sudden it's a willful, purposeful, cognitive, rebellious spirit.

The next question we've got to ask is, "Well, how is this going to play out?" Go to verse 22. It's interesting how the story continues. It says, "And oftentimes it cast him into the fire and into the waters to destroy him." That which was in this young man had no other purpose, no other desire, no other intent than to destroy him, and I find it interesting the two descriptions that are used of how it tried: there was fire and there was water and yet those are the two elements we find in the Bible where God brings judgment on our sin. Think about it. In the book of Genesis 6, according to the Bible all of humanity, every thought was nothing but wickedness all the day long. So what did God do? God had a man by the name of Noah start building a boat and for 120 years, according to the book of Hebrews, he was a preacher of righteousness. Now think about that imagery for just a moment. You live in a place where it's never rained, you've never seen rain, no need for a boat and an old man is building a boat. Now before you think I've insulted Noah, he was 500 years old when he started building that boat. If anybody qualifies as an old man, can

we give it to him? Old man is building this boat and what does he keep telling them? If you don't change your ways, if you don't repent, if you don't call it what it is, God's going to judge you. What happened? 120 years go by and how many people get on the boat? Eight. The door shuts and judgment comes with water.

You know, at the end of your Bible in the book of Revelation there's another judgment, the difference is it's not water, it's fire. In fact, the Bible prophesies it in 2 Peter 3, it's realized in Revelation 20. It says there's coming this day where all of humanity will stand before God and his throne. It says all the heaven, all the earth are cast away in a great ball of fire. I find it interesting that that spirit, that malicious spirit that was within him continued to try to destroy him by casting him into the fire and into the water.

What is it a picture of? How does it play out for somebody who continues in their sin condition? How does it play out? Well, according to the Bible in Hebrews 9:27, we're all going to die and face the judgment. In that passage in Revelation 20 that we just alluded to, it says humanity stands and the books are opened up, the Bible calls it the books of works. Why is that critical? Because all of us at that point if we're still in our sin condition, we are judged in comparison to perfection and we already know we don't meet that because internally there's something inside us that says we've got a problem.

So think about this picture. We've got a young man who has this spiritual condition, we would call it sin if we look at it from a picturesque perspective. From a young child there was a point in his life where it became realized by everybody and if nothing changes, judgment is sure and looming. So what needs to happen? Look at verse 24, "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Now can I call your attention to some pretty obvious observations? What did not happen? He did not start going to church. He did not start doing this. He didn't stop doing that. You see, that's humanity's natural response, if I realize I've got a problem, our first immediate response is I'm going to start doing something to alleviate the problem. Here's the problem with doing that, is it doesn't matter what you're trying to alleviate, we know we can't pull it off. And I can prove it. In just a few weeks, the advertisements are going to begin for year-long gym memberships. True, isn't it? Why? Because when it comes to that holiday season, we begin at Thanksgiving, we end at New Year's Eve, and I mean, we just go to town and what do we say? "Oh, I've got to do something. I've got to get on a treadmill. I've got to get on the weights. I've got to do this. I've got to do that."

So what do they do? They entice us. "We'll give you a discount if you sign up for 12 months automatic draft." They know that we won't be back after March. It's over. Because we have this innate disobedient spirit that every time we try to do something it just always fails. Sometimes we try to be religious, sometimes we say, "I'll go to church. I'll read my Bible. Surely that will fix this." But what happens? We get distracted, the next thing we know we're back to where we were.

But then there's the other side of the equation, sometimes we say, "Well, I'm just going to stop doing some stuff." Can I use the same equation or illustration? How many times

have you made this statement to yourself, "I'm going to eat everything I want tonight but tomorrow it's a new day, I'm going to do something different"? The reason you're laughing is because you've done it. You've said, "This is gonna be my last big gluttonous buffet. This is gonna be my last one." After tonight, a week later you're at CC's Pizza going to town. Why? Because we have a disobedient spirit. We can't do the things we wish we could do and we can't stop the things we wish we could stop. Even the Apostle Paul says it in Romans 7, he said, "Man, if I could do it on my own, I would have done it. If I could have stopped it, I would, but I can't."

So what happens? He says in verse 24, "I believe," and I love the next thing, "help my unbelief." You say, "Why do you think that's so important?" Because I hear a man saying, "I've been told if I just believe it's enough but there's really a part of me that says is that really all there is to it if I just believe?" Now the Bible says in Romans 10 whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, not whoever joins a church, who start going to church or who stops doing this or that. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, and then a couple of verses earlier, it says if we believe in our heart and confess with our mouth, we'll be saved. Isn't that interesting that we have a whole society of spiritual lostness. We can't observe it from the outside, only from the inside, that continues to try to fix the problem, continues to try to stop the consequences, and the one thing that needs to happen is they need to believe on Jesus Christ.

With all of the programs, all the activities, all the opportunities that this world affords each and every one of us, none of them can do what belief will do which leads to the last question: why? Why can we have hope? Why can we say there is hope for us? Notice verse 30, "And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day." Why is it that you and I can say we have hope? Why is it that we can say we don't have to live lives of despair? Why is it that we can say, you know, one day when I stand before God, I don't have to go into the lake of fire forever, I actually can have the opportunity to go to a place the Bible describes and says is heaven because according to these three verses, Jesus Christ said the only way this is going to happen is if I go and die the death you deserve and I raise from the grave.

Now I want you to notice the way it's worded, the Son of man is delivered. Now that's interesting because if you and I were writing the story, according to chapter 9, we would say the Son of man will be delivered because from the very beginning of his ministry there was always these guys that were taking vows saying we're not going to eat until he's dead. By the way, they broke their own vows because they started eating because they didn't kill him. I mean, all of this mess is going on and so it's not about that there was some secret plot at that very moment because then he says they shall and they shall. In other words, remember back in Exodus 3, Moses is there ready to deliver the Israelites from Egypt and he says, "God, okay, I'm going to go and I'm going to do this deal but I don't even know your name, and when they're going to ask who sent me, I kind of need a reference here. So who are you?" He said, "I Am That I Am." Not I was and will be, I am that I am. And so when he says the Son of man is delivered, it's as if Jesus Christ is

saying that which is going to happen just a little ways down the line, it's as if it had already taken place.

And what did he say had to happen? He had to go to the cross. You see, the Bible says without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Our spiritual sin problem can't be solved unless pure innocent blood is shed. What happened on the cross? Pure innocent blood was shed. But he didn't stay dead, according to this he said, "And he will rise again." Why is it that we can have hope? Why is it that we can know where we spend eternity? Why is it that we can have all these answers? It's because on the other side of this planet there is a tomb that is empty. That's why. Because he rose from the grave, we can be forgiven, we can be saved, and our sin problem can be solved because we can't fix it ourselves by starting something or stopping something.

You see, what we have is this young child in a desperate situation but, oh, what a picture of all of us. You see, we all have this sin condition that's internal. There's been this point in our life where now all of a sudden we're actually accountable and responsible for it and if something doesn't happen dramatically, according to the Bible we're going to be judged and ultimately end up in a place the Bible calls the lake of fire. But if we believe on the one who paid the price, and if we believe on the one who rose from the grave, we shall be saved.

Tonight, we have the opportunity as a family of faith to gather with a large portion of our community. We're going to have a lot of folks here that you cannot judge their sin condition based on their outward appearance. There are going to be people lost as a goose with a smile on their face. There are going to be people who are going to be next to you in heaven that are frowning. Y'all didn't laugh at that because it's true. In other words, you're not going to be able to tell who is lost and who is not because it's an inward problem.

You know, some years ago, when I say some years ago think a century and a half, there's a very famous evangelist by the name of D. L. Moody. D. L. Moody had a friend that was in a very urban environment who was struggling. He was a pastor and he was struggling because he said, "You know, Pastor Moody, we preach the gospel, we go and do all these things, we just don't see people getting saved. We just don't see the life change that we hoped and prayed for. Would you come and help me out a little bit?" So he obliged and he went to where this man was, and the apartment he lived in was kind of on the second or third floor, kind of overlooked a busy road there in that urban environment. D. L. Moody with the wisdom of the ages said, "Sir, tell me what you see." He said, "Okay, well, I see a businessman moving pretty quick. He's probably late for a meeting. I see a mom and a carriage over here and she's probably frustrated her baby's crying. I see this husband and wife, I think they're having some kind of fight." And he just started to describe the whole scene and D. L. Moody said, "See, you've diagnosed your own problem." He said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Can I tell you what I see? I see a man and I wonder is he going to heaven or hell? I see a woman and I ask is she going to heaven or hell?" Tonight, you're going to see a whole lot of people with a whole lot of appearances, you're going to see a whole lot of people with all kinds of aspects, can I

challenge you that when you step into the Fall Festival tonight, your visual is, "God, are they saved or are they lost? Are they headed to heaven or are they headed to hell?" Because the outward appearance may not give you any idea. And begin to pray for them because tonight they may come lost but they're going to have the opportunity to leave saved because they're going to have the chance to believe.

Most of us have forgotten what that looks like, most of us have forgotten what it means to wake up or go to bed in complete despair and without hope. We've forgotten what it feels like, what it looks like. Tonight, we have the opportunity to see death turn into life.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, we talked a lot about tonight, can I share with you something that's really exciting is that you don't have to wait six hours to be saved. You know, maybe you're that person today, maybe you're here in person, maybe you're watching online, maybe you're listening on the radio, maybe you're one of those person that say, "You know what? I'm just like that little boy. I've got a sin condition. I've got a problem and I need to believe." You don't have to wait to the Fall Festival tonight, right now the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. I want to challenge you just to do so. It's not about saying the right words. It's not about saying the wrong words. It's not about jumping through hoops or checking off boxes, it's just about doing what Romans 10:13 says, just call out.

If you're that person today, can I encourage you even though you don't have to say what I would say exactly as I say it, would your heart's cry go a little something like this? "God, today I realize I've got a problem, I've got a sin problem, God. I've tried to cover it up. I've tried to dismiss it. I've tried to mask it. I've tried to excuse it. But God, today I know what lies ahead if something doesn't change and, God, I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin condition. God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came here to earth on my behalf. God, I believe he lived a sinless life on my behalf. More importantly, God, I believe, I believe when Jesus Christ allowed himself to be nailed to the cross, he was bearing the punishment and the sin that I rightfully deserve. And God, I believe that three days later when he rose from the grave, he made it possible, he made it feasible for my sin to be forgiven, for my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the issues, problems, struggles of life but there's one thing I know, I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today who had that heart cry toward God. We want to celebrate with you. In fact, in a moment I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and sing together. Let me just encourage you just to step out and step forward. We've got folks here who want to celebrate with you. It's not a place of condemnation, it's a place of celebration. We want to hear your story. We want to pray with you and we want to pray for you.

Lord Jesus, today as we come to this time in our service, thank you that no matter where we've been, what we've done, or whom we've been with, that you're still in the forgiving

and the saving business. Help us, O God, today to allow all the other voices to be drowned out and may yours be the only one we respond to. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

If you would stand with me as our team lead us, whatever decision we'll be right here at the front.