[14] And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. [15] Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. [16] And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?" [17] Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. [18] And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." [19] He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." [20] Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. [21] So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. [22] And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." [23] Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." [24] Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" [25] When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" [26] Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so 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 had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" [29] So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

Text: Mark 9:14-29 A 11-8-26 Deut. 31:1-8 Ro. 8:28-3 Psalm 91 Psalmody (WS p. 42)
Hymns: 26, 433, 528 (1-3, 13-15), 651

TRUST IN JESUS

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Jesus' transfiguration had just taken place, giving us a glimpse of the perfect peace and joy we'll have with Him in heaven. Immediately afterwards He was confronted with a different reality: the reality of sin and its effects on us. We're told, *"And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them."* The disciples were debating with the scribes, who were enemies of Jesus. The scribes believed that Jesus was a liar and blasphemer for saying that He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God. No doubt they felt that Jesus' disciples' failure to cast out the demon in Jesus' name supported their (the scribes') rejection of Jesus. Are the way we're living and the thoughts we're expressing honoring Jesus and drawing people to Him, or turning people away?

A man there told Jesus, *"Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid."* (How cruel and evil Satan and his demons are to torment that poor boy so.) At first, we might think, "That boy simply had epilepsy." Plenty have claimed that that's all that was. But we're told here and in parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke that the boy's seizures were caused by a demon (Mt. 17;14-19; Lk. 9:37-42). The poor boy was demon-possessed. He could only be cured by having the demon cast out of him.

The man told Jesus, *"I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."* Jesus said, *"O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?" "You"* in both cases is plural in the original. Jesus was condemning the scribes and

anyone else who rejected Him, and He was correcting and admonishing His disciples and the man. The Bible informs us that the disciples had already cast out demons by the power of Jesus (Mk. 6:7, 13; Lk. 9:1; 10:17-19). They should have been able to cast the demon out of the boy, but they failed.

The man's son was brought to Jesus. We're told, *"And when he saw [Jesus], immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth."* The father told Jesus that the boy had that demon *"From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him."* (Again, how cruel and evil Satan and his demons are.)

Sometimes we have, or someone we care about has a problem, maybe a serious problem. This and that are tried, but nothing seems to change the situation for the better. Jesus isn't the last resort. Jesus is the first resort.

The man tells Jesus, *"If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."* The man is talking to Jesus Christ Himself, and he says, *"If You can do anything"*?! Jesus is God, and, as Jesus says in another place, *"With God all things are possible"* (Mt. 19:26). To better understand why this man expressed such doubt to Jesus we need to remember what this man, this father, had been through. His son had been demon-possessed since he was little. As a father, he had to stand helplessly by and watch his son be so cruelly tormented by the demon. Also, he had asked the disciples to cast the demon out of his son, and the disciples couldn't do it. We're told that the man spoke to Jesus *"with tears"* in his eyes. It had all been extremely hard on this poor father.

There are times when we fail to trust in Jesus as we should. We know that Jesus can do anything. We get ourselves into trouble when we dwell on our worries and sorrows and fears instead of taking them to Jesus right away. We're told in the fourth chapter of Philippians, verses six and seven, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

Jesus answers the man, *"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'"* The man did believe in Jesus. He looked to Jesus for help, demonstrating his faith in Jesus. His problem was, he was struggling with doubt. In effect He was saying to Jesus, "Lord, I do believe; help me overcome my doubt." It has been said, "He who never doubted never half believed." If, or should I say, when we're struggling with doubt and weak faith, we need to admit it to ourselves and confess it to Jesus. We need to ask Jesus to forgive us and strengthen our faith. Isaiah 42:3 says about Jesus, *"A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench…."* Even if our faith feels very weak, we come to Jesus, and He won't let our faith die. Romans 10:17 says, *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* As we pray to Jesus and meditate on His Word, He takes away our doubts and makes our faith strong.

Jesus told the demon, *"I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" "Then the spirit … came out of him."* Jesus immediately, completely healed the man's son. With that Jesus showed His power as God, infinite power over the devil and his demons and everything

else. Colossians 1:16-17 says about Jesus, *"By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist"* – that is, Jesus is holding the whole universe together. Only God has such awesome power. Jesus is God. Jesus said so Himself: *"I and My Father are one. … I am the Son of God"* (See John 10:30-38.).

We're told, *"Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.'"* The devil and his demons are cruel and evil. It's not fair to blame God for the evil and suffering in the world. In his first chapter James says, *"Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning"* (Jms. 1:16-17). Jesus says, *"The devil, … was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it"* (Jn. 8:44). Revelation 12:12 says, *"The devil … [has] great wrath,"* or, as another translation puts it, *"the devil … is in a rage."* Peter warns us, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet. 5:8). The devil and his demons are strong, but, as we see from Jesus casting out demons, Jesus is stronger. Trust in Jesus.

We're told that after Jesus had cast the demon out of the man's son, later *"His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?'" "So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'"* As we heard earlier, the disciples had already cast demons out of people. So why did they fail this time? We deduce from their failure and from Jesus' answer that the disciples hadn't trusted in Jesus as they should have. In a parallel account Matthew tells us that Jesus told the disciples that their failure was *"because of your unbelief"* (that is, because of their weakness of faith); *"for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you"* (Mt. 17:20-21). Do you really think that <u>you</u> could tell a mountain to move and it would absolutely, no doubt about it, move? If it was God's will for that mountain to move, it would move. (But I think that God already has the mountains where He wants them.) There are some bigger 'mountains' that God has moved for us. God has moved away the mountain of our human reason, and given us faith in Him. God has moved away the mountain of our human reason and led us to know that when we baptize a child that child is now <u>God's</u> child. God has moved away the mountain of our human reason and led us to know that when we receive the bread and wine in Communion we're also receiving Jesus' body and blood. When we think about it, we believe and know that God is real, that He saves us, and that the Bible and everything it says is God's Word, all because God has moved away the mountain of our human reason and given us faith.

We know that the account of Jesus casting the demon out of the boy is true. We need to apply this truth to ourselves and in our own lives. There was no way that demon could be cast out by human power. Only Jesus' power could do it. Sometimes we face problems and worries and fears and sorrows that we know we can't handle by ourselves. The only way we can face them and deal with them is with Jesus' help. Don't keep your focus on some problem or worry you have and how impossible it looks to you. Look to Jesus, and <u>keep looking to Jesus</u>. *"Our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth"* – Psalm 124:8. **TRUST IN JESUS**. Amen.