

Lord, We Need Wisdom!

by Thaddeus Barnum

The sermon emphasizes the need for the reviving power of the Holy Spirit to deal with the challenges of our time, and encourages listeners to adopt a posture of powerlessness, coming to Jesus, confessing, and asking for wisdom.

Duration: 29:05

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 9:28-29

Topics: "Wisdom"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the state of the church in 1959 and draws parallels to the present day. He emphasizes the need for the church to realize its inability to handle the problems it faces and to come to the Lord for guidance and strength. The preacher highlights the decline of the church in 1959, attributing it to the rise of television and people's preference for staying at home rather than attending church. He criticizes the church's attempts to resolve the decline through strategic plans and emphasizes the need for the reviving power of the Lord.

Transcript

And honor and praise to you, this entry into your presence through our Lord Jesus Christ. And that you would by your Holy Spirit now come and open your word to our hearts, our minds, our souls. Lord, let your light pierce us, let your power come upon us.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Good morning.

Today I'd like to take special attention to this passage in Mark chapter 9 and verses 28 and 29. And so I ask you to get your Bibles and and look at this passage again, Mark 9, 28 and 29, that we just heard read. I can say to you that I believe that the most urgent need of our day is exactly what we heard from this pulpit last week.

As Rob shared, this necessity of talking about the person and power of the Holy Spirit, this baptism with the Spirit, this Pentecost power, it is based on these conversations that revivals have come down through the church history. And Lord knows we need that kind of revival in our own day. And it's with that in mind that I make my appeal to this text in particular today and draw your attention to it.

Generally we do not come to that need until we face a trouble that's bigger than us. Something that we don't understand, something that we can't handle, can't resolve, and can't treat. And we don't know what to do.

Sometimes it's a personal issue. Sometimes it's those chronic issues that have been attending us for so many years and we can't shake it in our lives or with our family relationships, with our workplace. A trouble bigger than us.

I suggest that's what's happening here in this particular verse in Mark and chapter 9 verses 17 and following. What you have is this moment with the disciples where there is a father presenting his son who is tormented by the devil. And what we find is that the Lord Jesus had given authority to the disciples to preach and to heal and to cast out devils.

But it came to this particular story and they were completely powerless. They were impotent. They didn't know why they could not cast this one out.

Now I say that by saying this. In 1959 a London preacher rose to the pulpit of his church and took this very text. And in it he saw pictures.

He saw the picture of the father with the son tormented by the devil as a picture of the present world that we live in. The meteoric rise of lawlessness and immorality in his day. And he realized that what the father is doing is presenting this, the times that we're living in, to the church.

Pictured as the disciples. Saying, what can you do? And in that day of 1959 the church had become impotent and powerless. Oh, it worked in the past.

They could handle the times in the past, but they couldn't handle the present times. This preacher was suggesting, for example, that in 1959 you had the rise of the TV. You had the wireless and now you had the TV.

And people were spending time at home. Why go to church? Why do anything? Entertainment. It was a world where the church was in declension, in decline.

And so what the church did in quick fix mode is began to do what it could to try to resolve the problem. And the preacher got up and said, isn't that us today? Look at our times. Look at the condition of the church.

We need something else. We need what we heard last week. This reviving power of the Spirit of God.

1959 he preached that sermon. 59 years ago. Now, I want to say that that's what takes us to verse 28.

Verse 28 is essential for us because it describes the fundamental posture of the soul of these disciples. And I want to give it to you in four points. Four specific points that come out of this particular verse.

And it's this. The first is that they came to realize. They came to admit they could not handle the problem.

Number two, they came to the Lord. Let me read it to you. Verse 28.

And when Jesus had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast it out? And so you see they had come to the realization to admit that they could not. Number two, they came to

Jesus. Number three, they confessed to him we could not cast it out.

We were unable. And point number four, they asked the question, why? Why could we not cast it out? Why could we not do this? Which immediately puts us in a teaching place, doesn't it? We want to learn wisdom. Which is exactly the door of discipleship.

Like it says it's in our statement on discipleship, we are lifelong learners. We want to know from Jesus, why could we not cast it out? What a wonderful posture of the soul. Here we are, knowing that we're powerless, coming to Jesus, confessing we can't do it on our own, and asking why, learning from him, that we might indeed have the wisdom and the faith and the power to deal with our particular situation.

Now I say all of this and I want to take a break. A little commercial interlude. And I'll tell you why.

I want to be a Matthew, sorry, I want to be a Mark 9 28 man. I want that posture in my life, where when I can't deal with something, I come to the Lord. I want to know wisdom in the community of faith.

I want to know wisdom. But you see, for most of us, we never get to step 1.1. We never admit that we can't handle it. You see, this I call the tenacity of the flesh, what the Bible calls the sinful nature.

This is the fallen condition that we're in. There is a tenacity about us that when we face something we can't handle, we will figure it out. We will throw the kitchen sink at it.

We will do everything we can to figure out what's going on and try to stop it. Some time ago, I was talking to a pastor who was just in a bit of a depressed state. He talked about his church.

And the thing about his church is it's robustly healthy. There's a lot about the church and the people and the elders and the family and the everything about the church just seems healthy. But he knows it's not growing.

It's not piercing into the culture. It's not piercing a culture that's growing darker by the moment. And he doesn't know why.

And he's frustrated by it. He's depressed by it. And so he did what is normative.

I don't have a comment about this, but he did. He called a church consultant to come and begin to evaluate the systems of the church. Come give eyes with me to the situation.

And the church consultant did the church consultant thing. And when it was over, the church consultant said, to be honest, I'm as baffled as you are. I don't know why.

Everything about this church is healthy. And so they met with the leaders, the vestry, the elders, and sure enough, don't you know it, they came up with the five strategic plans for 2018. Five strategic plans of what we're going to do to grow this church.

Oh, if they only had the 928 heart and say, we can't. Lord, we need you. I'm going to send them Rob Sermon from last Sunday.

That's what I'm going to do. Because we've got to come to that place, that posture of the soul, where we cannot anymore. We need the reviving power of the Lord upon us.

That's why in 1959, this preacher was stunned by this declension in the church and the response, look here, if we have more music, if we lighten the preaching of the gospel, if we shorten the service, if we have an evangelistic campaign, we will grow our churches again. And the preacher, even in 59, said, no, we won't. The Holy Spirit does what the flesh cannot do.

See, this is the problem with us. It's the problem often with our personal issues as we deal with the same thing. In our personal life, we are dogged by sinful habits and wrong behaviors and often chronic addictions.

The devil gets a foothold in our personal life. The last thing we want to do is admit it. I know, I know, I get it.

Thursday nights, 5 30, celebrate recovery. Read it in the bulletin. What you're going to find is if you've got hurts and hang-ups and habits, there's a place to go.

No, no, no. I can handle this on my own. I can deal with whatever I'm dealing with on my own.

This is the contrast of the four principles out of 928. Our principles, we can do it, tenacity of the flesh. Point number two is when we lose the battle, we come to acceptance of that foothold, of the devil's foothold in our life.

We begin to accept the bad behavior. We've had it since we were young. We have it now.

We'll have it till we die. We start accepting it. And we find people around us who allow us to accept it, which leads to point three, is the soul becomes depressed by it and resignation sets in.

Resignation. It's the way I am. It's who I am.

It's what I do, which leads fundamentally to a fourth odd point, which is always pride. I don't need anybody's help to deal with the problem in my life. My dear friend, is that you? It's just the sinful nature inside saying, saying tenacity of the flesh.

You can do it. You can handle it. And if you can't acceptance, and if you can't resignation, and if you can't pride, I can still be me.

I don't need help. Dear friends, this is the exact wrong posture. Praise be the Lord for 928, coming to the place of saying, I can't.

I don't know. I realize. I can't cast this devil out of my life.

I can't. I'm powerless. It's been in my life for so long.

When will we rise up and say finally, no more, and come to Jesus, point two, and say to him, it's been in control of my life for too long. I need it dealt with. I, Lord, don't know why I can't cast it out.

I need your wisdom. I need faith, and I need power to end this story in my life. Yes? So we hear in 28, the posture of the soul.

Come with me to 29, and you'll hear the Lord speak to us. Let the Lord speak to us today. Hear his words to the disciples.

They're powerful words. Let me start by saying his opening two words. This kind.

Oh, I love this. This kind. You see what the Lord Jesus is doing with us.

He's looking at this particular son, this particular boy. He's diagnosing this particular case. That's compassion.

That's mercy. That's love. He's listening to this particular story as the great physician diagnosing this particular moment.

No, no. He's not a generalist doctor. You know the generalist doctor.

The kind that comes and sees, doesn't listen, doesn't care, doesn't hear, and just throws the medication at you. Proper diagnosis leads to proper treatment. Bad diagnosis messes us up.

That's a technical term, but it's true, isn't it? You want a good case in point of a generalist physician of the soul? Go to the book of Job. Read about Job's condition. Read about the three doctors that came to give care to his soul.

They were generalists. They didn't listen to his particular case. They threw at this dear man in his suffering generalist comments that did not satisfy, did not cure, and did not heal.

Job actually says it so spot on. Worthless physicians. That's what he calls the three friends.

Worthless physicians. Miserable comforters. Oh, thank you, Jesus.

You hear our story. You hear our cry. And so that's where I come to this moment where I want to suggest to you that when Jesus is this kind, what he is doing is he's administering wisdom.

And that's where, for me, Aralyn was so helpful in my early days of discipleship. She gave a teaching one day, and I'm thinking maybe late 70s, early 80s. We go back.

She did a distinction between knowledge and wisdom in the Bible with the idea here being that knowledge is that body of information. It's the wealth of information, the knowledge that we get. Wisdom is taking of that knowledge and applying it to a particular case.

Wisdom applies the knowledge into the situation. Dear friends, let me say it very succinctly. If you've got a doctor who has got an A plus in med school and has no diagnostic skill at all, run.

I was at a conference one time where a gentleman came up and said, my wife and I are going to a wonderful marriage counselor. He went to this school, and he went to that school. He got this degree.

He's extraordinary. Another person came up and said, but yes, but this man has been divorced three times. A body of knowledge with absolutely no ability to apply.

And some of us got to go to seminary where we had a body of knowledge given to us with people who never even knew personally the saving grace of being born again in Jesus. Oh yes, you can have knowledge without wisdom. But praise be to God, it's wisdom that the Lord wants to give you, me, in our story, in our lives, and in this present culture and time.

This is why I suggest to you that Solomon, at the age of 22, he understood this particular point. When the Lord said to him, what gift can I give you? He said, if I'm going to rule, if I'm going to lead, I need a wise and discerning heart to be able to parse good and evil, to know right from wrong, holy versus profane, clean versus unclean. Yes, yes, I need that discernment and wisdom to apply to lead this people.

Have you ever prayed for that kind of wisdom? The Lord to give it to us as a people. Which is why, as you've got in Solomon's writing, Proverbs 9, verse 10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What is the fear of the Lord? It's the posture of the soul as we see it in Mark 9, 28, coming before Jesus.

Lord, I can't. I've got to confess I can't. I need you.

I need your wisdom. I need faith to believe. I need power for it to change.

And so our Lord says, this kind, this kind, discerning this particular case of this particular boy, this kind, and then immediately he speaks in the negative. This kind cannot come out by anything but. He speaks in the negative of all the things that it cannot be driven out by.

Which is just like a doctor, I might add. You take all these different tests to rule out what it isn't in order to find out what it is. And so what Jesus is teaching us is so clear.

It cannot be driven out by the tenacity of the flesh. It cannot be driven out by you accepting it and embracing it and welcoming it. It cannot be driven out by resignation or pride.

No, no. This kind. You see, we're dealing with something in this text that Jesus is very aware of.

And that is this, that the devil comes to us in different strengths. There are certain demons who are privates in the army. Clearly the disciples were able to handle the privates.

But the lieutenants and the generals and the three-star generals clearly are different. There's a different hold on this boy. There's a strength of the demonic power.

A chronic strength in this boy. It's been with him since childhood. Something's got... Jesus asked the father the question, how long, in verse 21, how long has this been happening to him? He's diagnosing this kind.

And that's why I say to you, his response in the positive is so strong. This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer. And some of your Bibles add fasting.

Prayer. What does that mean? It means 928. Prayer begins with coming to Jesus.

Coming to Jesus. Coming to admit we can't. Coming to Jesus.

Prayer begins asking Him for the wisdom that we need to handle the situation that we're in. Coming to Jesus to get the wisdom, to get the faith, to get the power to deal with our story, our situation, in our time. That's what they need.

That's what we need. And Jesus is always the right one to come when we need wisdom because the Bible says He is our wisdom. First Corinthians 130, but by His doing you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification.

He is our wisdom. He is the one that conquered all the authorities of evil upon the cross. He triumphed over them.

Colossians 2 15, He disarmed the rulers and authorities. He made a public display of them. He triumphed over them through the cross.

And then what did He do? He sent the Holy Spirit upon us to guide us into all truth. Oh dear friends, we do not need to slumber in the areas that we are chronically inhibited by the devil getting a foothold in our life. There is wisdom for us.

How is it applied? It starts here. It starts by being in the body of Christ. Jesus is telling us that we come to Him as a people.

He's speaking to His disciples. We come in the people of God. Which is why I would suggest to you that Jesus said where two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst.

This is why I would suggest to you that Proverbs teaches us in the abundance of counselors there is victory. In the abundance of counselors there is safety. We come into the community of faith.

I must say to you when we arrived here in 1997, this is the message that Chuck Murphy preached from this pulpit so many times. I will say the words and many of you could even fill in the blank. It is a premise of the Bible and he said it over and over and over to us.

God speaks to His people through His people. God speaks to His people through His people. Which is why every time we had leadership meetings that we would hear the last thing that as he would say was bubbling up and the leaders, the elders would come together to pray, to seek the Lord, to ask Him for wisdom, to ask Him for faith, and to ask Him for power.

God speaks to His people through His people. People of God, number one. Number two, you're steeped in the Word of God.

How can we apply wisdom if we don't have the knowledge of the scriptures? Every revival has always had a resurgence of putting the scriptures, the authority of the Bible back at its central place. We live in a culture that tears it down but when the Spirit of God starts moving among us, He raises it up and the Bible becomes real and we have mamas and papas who have spent time in the Word. They have hungered.

The Word of God is in them. The Word of God just oozes out of them. My friends, we are a people that belong to the scriptures.

The working of being in the body of Christ and with the knowledge of the scriptures at the center leads us to point number three, the movement of the Holy Spirit upon us. This is what we heard last Sunday. This baptism of the Holy Spirit, this working of the Holy Spirit, what does He do? He comes to empower us and when He does, He opens up the Word of God to us in order to apply to the people of God the wisdom that we need to live in our present day.

The Spirit of God moving upon the Word of God in the community of God giving us wisdom and faith and power. These principles were known all the way back in the Old Testament. Back in the days when people came like you and me, we had troubles in life that were too big for us and so they would come to Moses who knew the Word, who had the Spirit of God upon them.

But so many people came, he couldn't handle the crowd of people. So what happened? Well, you'll find this in Exodus 18, you'll find it in Deuteronomy 1, but you'll particularly find it in Numbers chapter 11 where 70 elders are gathered together. Elders who knew the Word.

Elders who are wise and discerning. And what happened? The Spirit of God came upon them. The Spirit of God came upon them so that they could rightly divide, rightly open the Word of God to every particular situation to discern this kind in your life and in mine.

And that's where wisdom comes. It comes when we actually see the movement of the Lord working in our life so that we do not have to have the devil tormenting us. We do not have to have the devil hurting us.

We do not have to have the chronic issues that have been dogging us in our life. What we do is we come before the people of God. It's exactly why we offer Celebrate Recovery.

It's exactly why we have pastorates. It's exactly why we have people who are strong in the Lord in this community. We don't walk alone.

We come to hear the Lord speaking to us and watch Him do what we cannot do on our own. Spirit of God moving upon us, moving upon His Word, discerning the story that we're in to give us the faith and power to make a difference. This past week, I was with a friend who has gone through a great trial in life.

And when I saw him, I was quite blessed by him because he was very light of heart. He was very happy. And so I sat down, we had lunch together, and I asked him this happiness.

I said, I know you've gone through some difficult times. And he said he has gone through difficult times. He is serving right now in a church that has just simply been divided and he doesn't know what to do.

And it just aches his soul because in the past ministries, he's had similar situations and been able to deal with them and see the Lord massively work in power. But this particular story, he couldn't resolve. Last summer, he was at the point of burnout and had to take some rest.

This fall, his doctor actually saw his blood pressure so rising, he said, you may have to stop ministry. He couldn't handle his situation. So what did he do? He called four other pastors that he knows and trusts.

Would you spend some time with me? And they came in for two days. And they began by praying that prayer of the apostle Paul in Colossians chapter one. For this reason also, since the day we heard it, we've not ceased to pray for you.

And to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will. Filled with the knowledge of his will. In all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

With all Holy Spirit wisdom and understanding. That we might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Please him in all respects.

Bearing fruit in every good work. Oh yes, it's possible. And they spent two days together.

And as they listened to the Lord, as they opened his word, as they cried out in prayer, the Lord met them. And wisdom was bestowed. He saw now what he was supposed to do.

He had wisdom from the Lord. And with the wisdom came the faith to be able to believe that he who spoke was going to actually live it out in power. And change the situation.

By the time I got to him, he was just full of peace. It wasn't over yet. But he knew that that chronic junk that the devil had done in this church was over.

I want that for you and for me. If the devil has taken a stronghold in your life over anything, and you've come to accept it, if you've come to refuse any help, if you're resigned to it, or if you're still throwing the kitchen sink at it, it's time to say no. To repent of the tenacity of the flesh.

To come to Jesus. Say, oh Jesus, I can't handle this. I can't do this.

It's bigger than I am. I need your people. I need your word.

I need your Holy Spirit. I need wisdom. I need your faith to infuse me.

And the power to say to the devil, no more. In the name of Jesus. Your day is over.

The Spirit of God has come. And it's a new day for me. It's a new day for my family.

It's a new day for our church. Oh my goodness, dear friends. This is what the church of our times needs.

If we're going to face the culture out there, if the devil's going to try to take our children and grandchildren, it's time that we get down on that 928. That posture of 928. Get down on our knees and ask Jesus to do what only Jesus can do.

End the reign of the flesh. Come Holy Spirit, and do what only you can do. In Jesus' name.

Let's stand together.

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