

When Jesus Gets Frustrated

Luke 9:37 – 48

Normally when we think of the ministry and presence of Jesus we know Him to be a savior who is kind, compassionate, merciful and patient. Indeed, it is a significant part of God's character in both the OT and NT that God has seemingly always been patient and loving toward human beings. Likewise, there are times in scripture when God's patience seems to reach its limit. There seem to be certain things that God will only tolerate until He reaches a point of reacting. Generally they have to do with blatant rebellious sin, or faithlessness. We know from the Bible that God hates sin because God is Holy. And we also know that without "faith" it is impossible to please God. We see it in the OT as God expresses His disappointment and frustration toward the children of Israel because of their sin and lack of faith. In like manner in the NT we see how Jesus, who is God in the flesh, expresses His own disappointment and frustration toward the disciples because of their sins and lack of faith.

We see in this text why Jesus could not follow Peter's recommendation to build three tabernacles and stay on the Mount of Transfiguration for awhile. As soon as they come down from the mountain, a crowd greets him; and among that crowd is a man with a son who is possessed by an unclean spirit. Jesus knew that not only was there more ministry to do at the base of the mountain, but also that the disciples were failing miserably at their tasks. Jesus then makes a statement that catches us by surprise, but to Him it is a pure expression of His disappointment with those whom He had loved and taught. We see in this passage that:

1) Jesus gets frustrated when we fail to do what He has already equipped and trained us to do.

We know from Luke 9:1 that Jesus had given them the power of unclean spirits exactly like the one that had possessed the boy. He had also sent them out to do the work. They had done it before. So why couldn't they do it now? They lacked the faith and focus in what He had equipped them with. How often do we forget or neglect to use what God has already given us to do things He has already prepared us to do? Certainly Jesus is able to do it, but He has an expectation that we will carry on this ministry. He has given us power that we often fail to use.

2) Jesus gets frustrated when we don't understand the really important spiritual truths of the Gospel like we should.

While the people were truly amazed at how Jesus had healed the boy, He wanted His disciples to hear something that was far more important about His mission and ministry. When He tells them about how He must be delivered into the hands of men they don't understand it and don't have a clue even though He has said it to them before. He had just told them this a few days ago (Luke 9:22), and yet they still don't get it! The message on the Mount was "hear Him". But somehow they are not listening and understanding what Jesus is saying. They are blinded by the sensationalism of the miracle but can't see the truth about salvation.

3) Jesus gets frustrated when we let ego and pride take control of our mind and heart.

Instead of hearing Jesus like they are supposed to, ironically the disciples get into an argument about who is going to be the greatest. Certainly Jesus has already taught them about the dangers of pride and ego, so they know better than this! But somehow it sneaks into their conversation and erupts in an argument. The disciples have totally turned away from the truth of what Jesus is trying to communicate to them and turned the focus on themselves and their own selfish aspirations and goals. Striving to be the greatest in order to upstage another believer is a mentality that is contrary to God's mission and ministry. How often do we seek to be superior to others, over others, or have more prestige or reputation than others even in the church? This type of behavior frustrates Jesus because He has taught us that being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not about fame, recognition or notoriety. In fact, He had just told them that following Him meant that they had to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Him. So, to bring them back to reality, Jesus tears down their definition of "greatness" and lets them know that in the kingdom of God, greatness comes in our ability to receive and minister to a child, someone who is not a VIP or prestigious individual. In fact, He tells them that whoever is the "least" among them, that is the most lowly and humble of them will be great. So in essence, Jesus teaches them to stop aspiring for greatness, and start seeking humility and servanthood.