

“I wanted to create a sculpture almost anyone, regardless of their background, could look at and instantly recognize that it is about the idea of struggling to break free.”

~ Zenos Frudakis, *Freedom* (2000)
16th and Vine Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Mark 9:14-29

¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. ¹⁶“What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

Mark 9:14-29

¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

Mark 9:14-29

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Mark 9:14-29

“From childhood,” he answered. ²²“It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

Mark 9:14-29

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Mark 9:14-29

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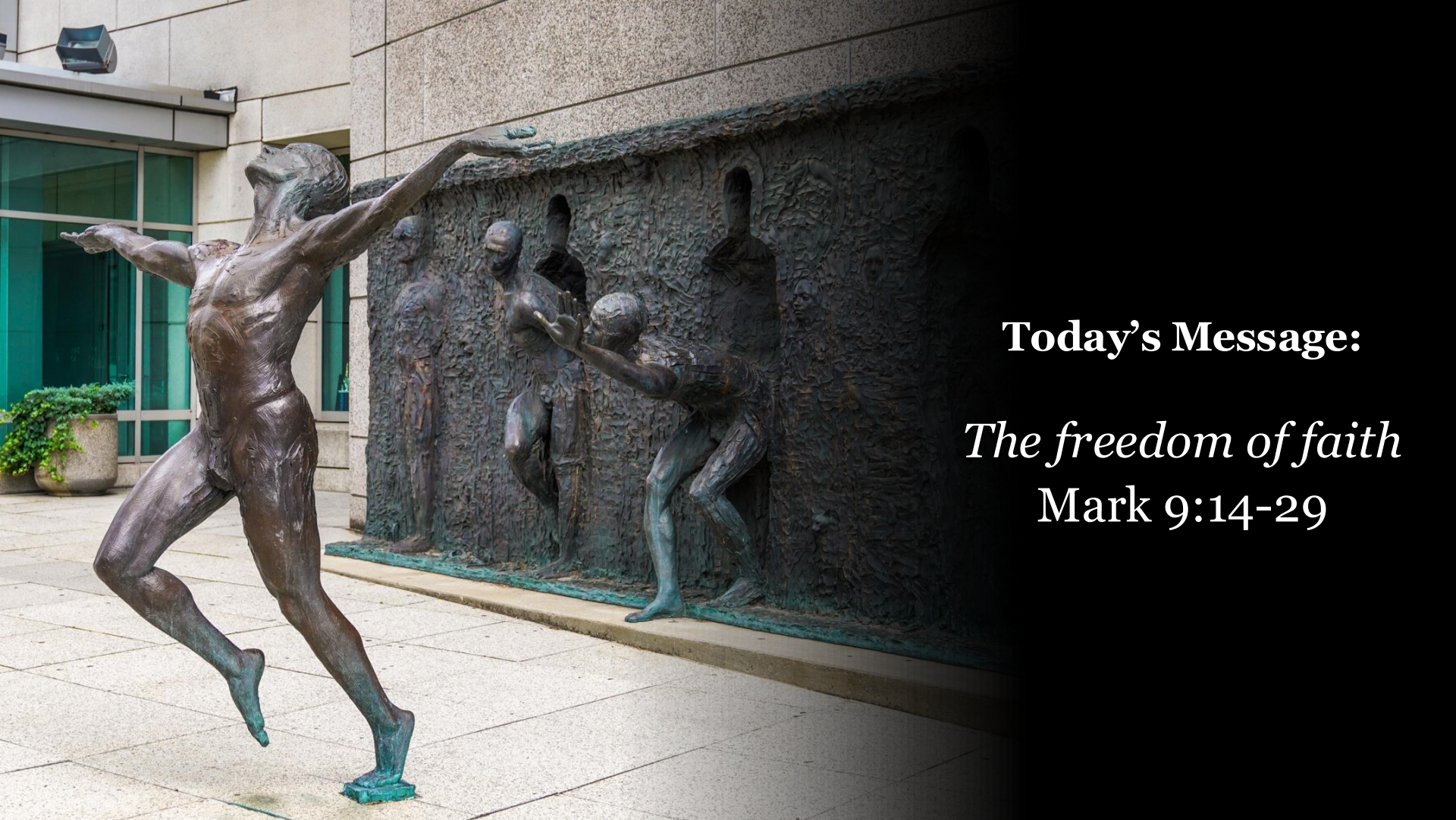
Mark 9:14-29

²⁶The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

Mark 9:14-29

²⁸After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁹He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”



Today's Message:
The freedom of faith
Mark 9:14-29

Mark 9:14-29 in Four Scenes:

Scene 1 – Coming down off the Mountain

Scene 2 – A desperate father

Scene 3 – The power of Jesus

Scene 4 – “Why didn’t it work for us?”

Scene 1 – Coming down off the Mountain

Scene 1 – Coming down off the Mountain

The context of the disciple's latest experiences

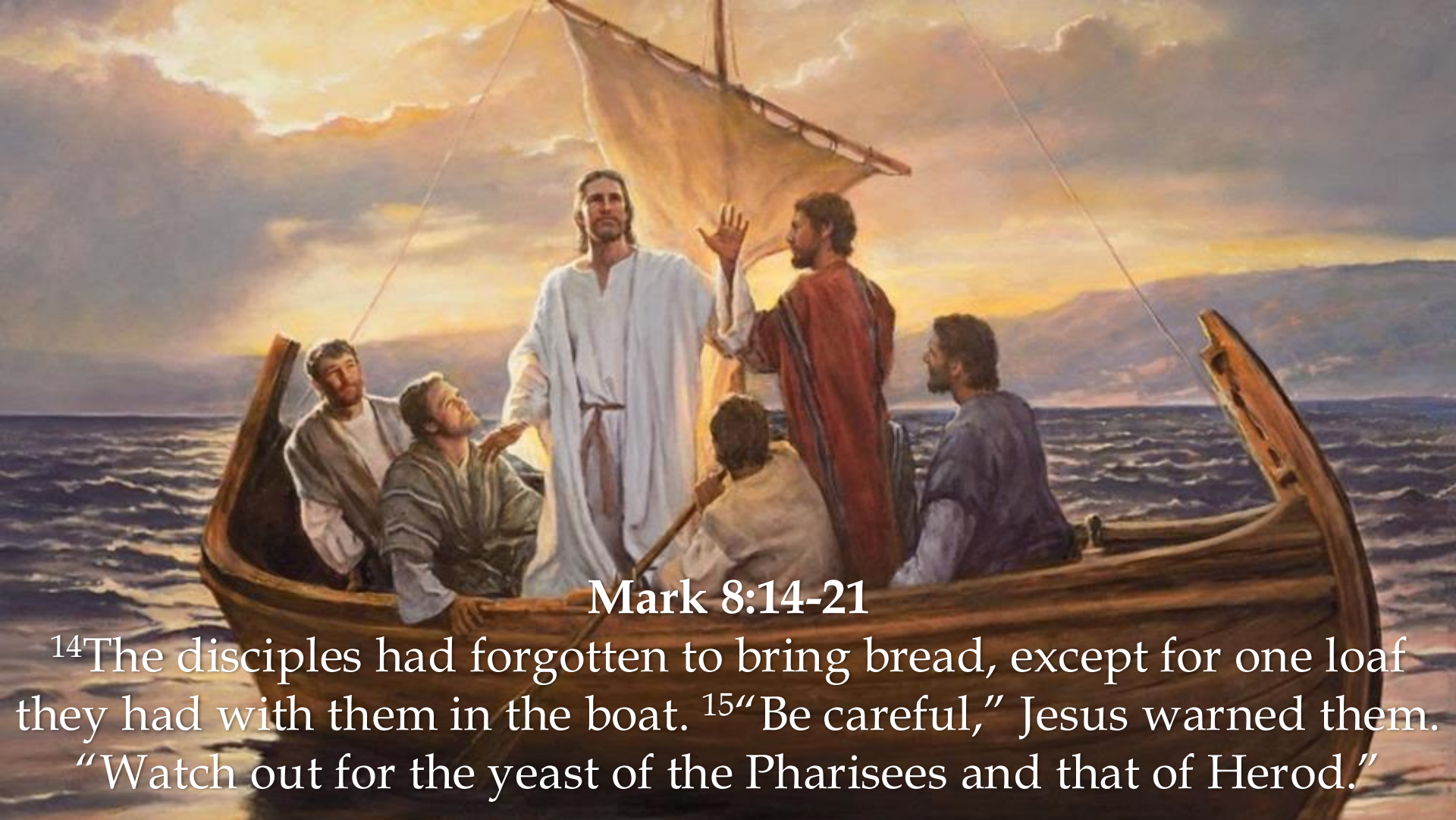
Mark 9:14-19

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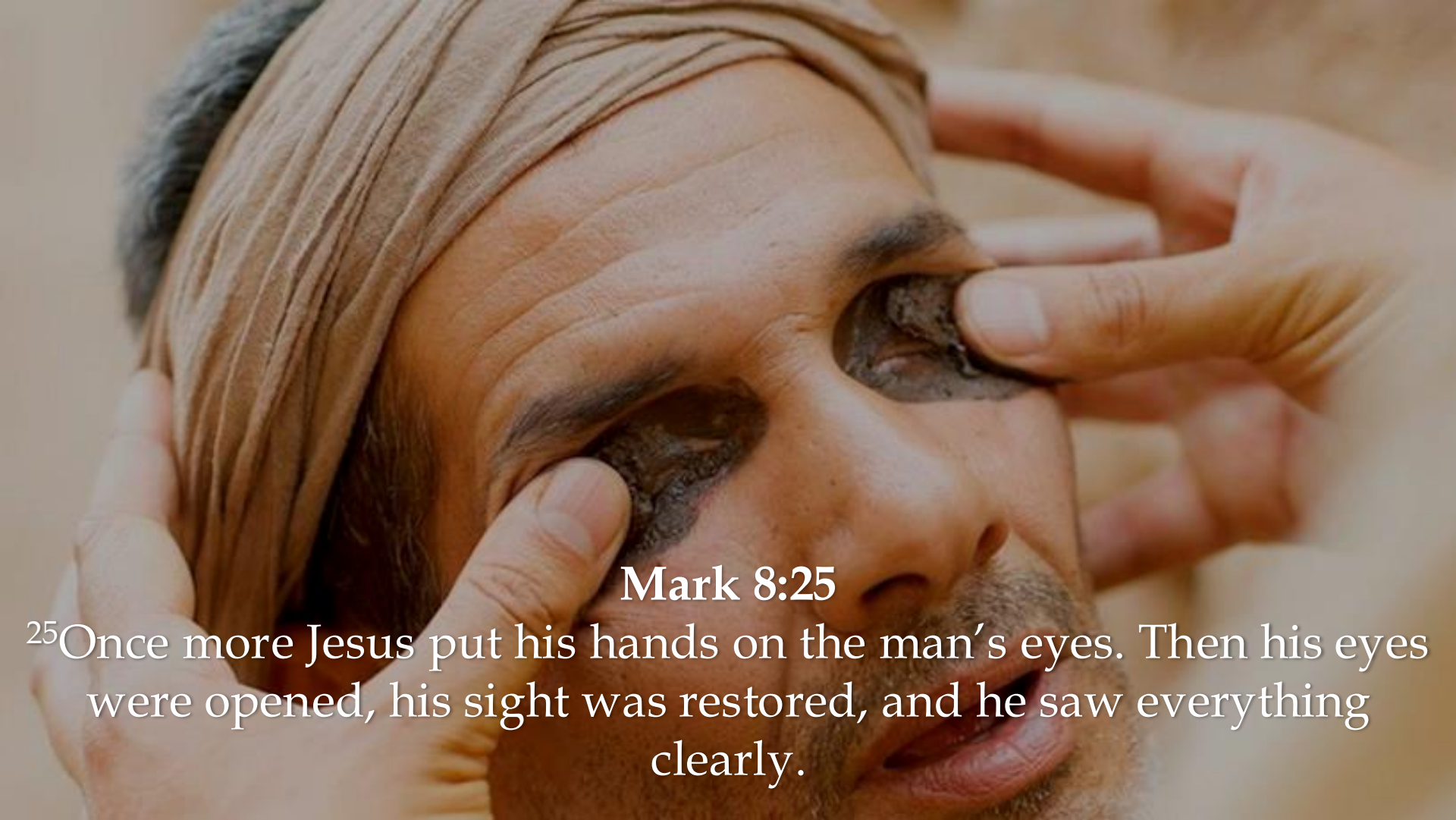
Mark 8:1-3

¹In those days there was again a large crowd, and they had nothing to eat...



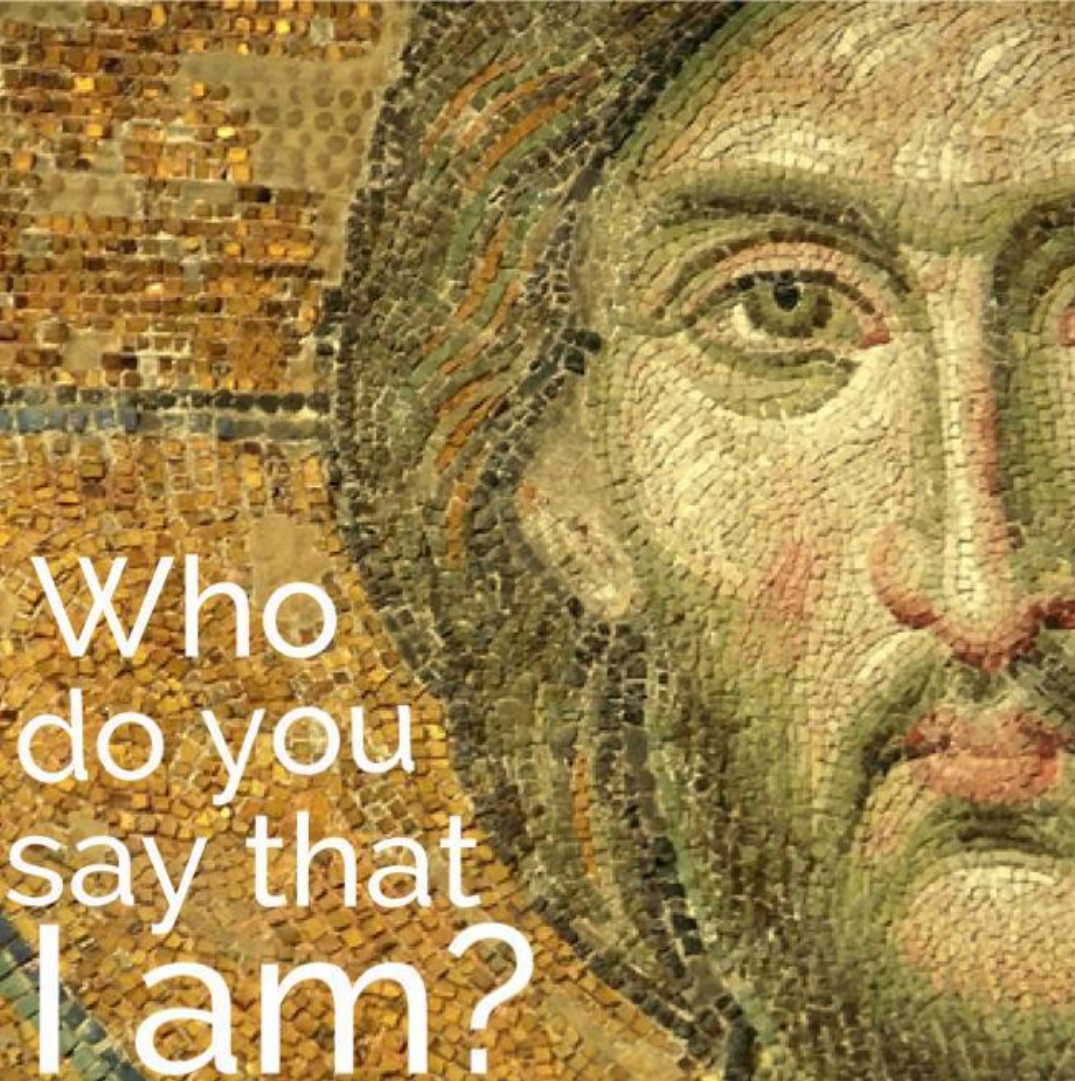
Mark 8:14-21

¹⁴The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵“Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”



Mark 8:25

²⁵Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.



Who
do you
say that
I am?

Mark 8:29

²⁹“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”



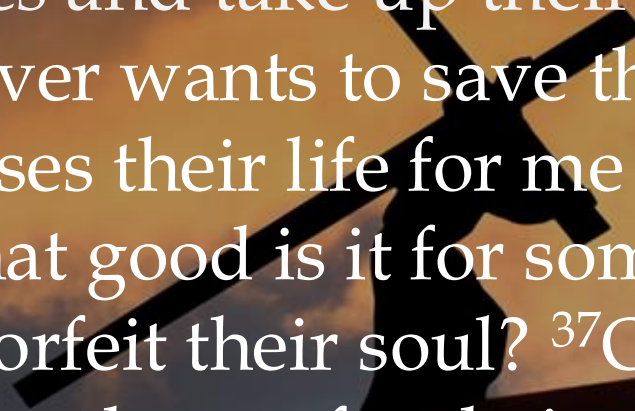
Mark 8:31-33

³¹He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³²He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Mark 8:34-37

³⁴Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

A silhouette of a person carrying a cross is visible in the background, set against a sunset sky with warm orange and yellow tones. The person is walking towards the right, and the cross is a simple wooden structure.



Mark 9:2-13

²After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

Mark 9:2-13

⁸Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant. ¹¹And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” ¹²Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

Scene 1 – Coming down off the Mountain

Large Crowd and Arguments

Mark 9:14-1

¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶“What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

Scene 1 – Coming down off the Mountain

The problem

Mark 9:17-18

¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

Scene 1 – Coming down off the Mountain

The problem that they are arguing about

Mark 9:17-18

¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

Scene 1 – Coming down off the Mountain

Jesus' response to these problems

Mark 9:19

¹⁹“You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

Their failure was not because they did not try. On the contrary, they did their best. Their problem was *unbelief*. They believed in the process, they believed in themselves because they had done it previously, but they were not resting their faith in him. Jesus, fresh from the glorious Transfiguration, was heartbroken! “O unbelieving generation [i.e., you disciples are just like the rest of this generation], how long shall I stay with you? [i.e., will you ever learn?]””

~ R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 23.

Scene 2 - A desperate father

Scene 2 – A desperate father

The reaction of seeing Jesus

Mark 9:20-24

²⁰So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹Jesus asked the boy's father,
“How long has he been like this?”

Scene 2 – A desperate father

A surprising question

Mark 9:20-24

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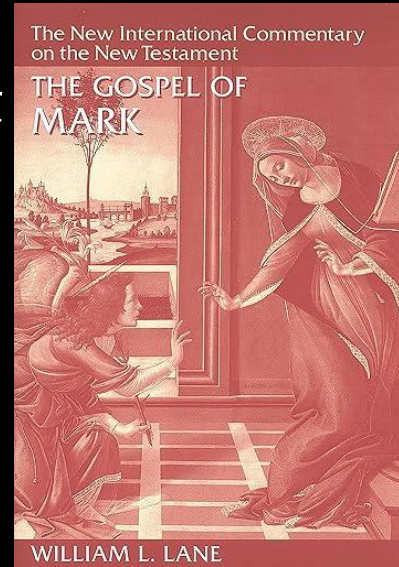
Scene 2 – A desperate father
A desperate and disillusioned father

Mark 9:20-24

“From childhood,” he answered. ²²“It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

The father was deeply alarmed and saw in this new convulsion one more incident in a series of near-fatal seizures which could only end in disaster if help was not forthcoming. His distress is well expressed in the desperate cry, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." At the same time, his words contain a concealed accusation against the powerlessness of the disciples, which has led him to doubt Jesus' ability to offer real assistance to his son.

~ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 333.



Scene 2 – A desperate father

“If I can?”

Mark 9:20-24

²³“ ‘If you can’?” said Jesus.

“Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed,
“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”





**What will happen to the
faith of millions?**

~ Tammy Faye Baker, 1987

Scene 2 – A desperate father

The struggle of faith

Mark 9:23-24

²³“ ‘If you can’?” said Jesus.

“Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed,
“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Scene 3 – The Power of Jesus

Jesus > evil (and death!)

Mark 9:25

²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

²⁶The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

Scene 4 – “Why didn’t this work for us?”

The question

Mark 9:28-29

²⁸After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁹He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

Scene 4 – “Why didn’t this work for us?”

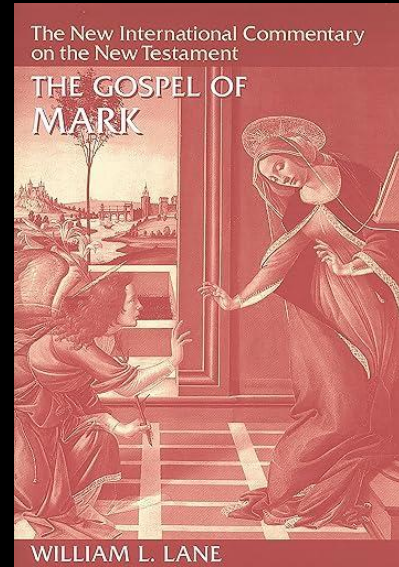
The answer

Mark 9:28-29

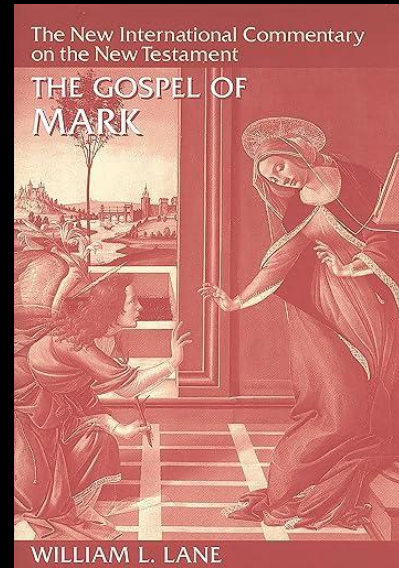
²⁸After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

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“
In response to the inevitable question of why they had failed, Jesus explained to the disciples that such malign evil spirits can be expelled only by a full reliance upon the unlimited power of God expressed through prayer... The disciples had been tempted to believe that the gift they had received from Jesus (Ch. 6:7) was in their control and could be exercised at their disposal.



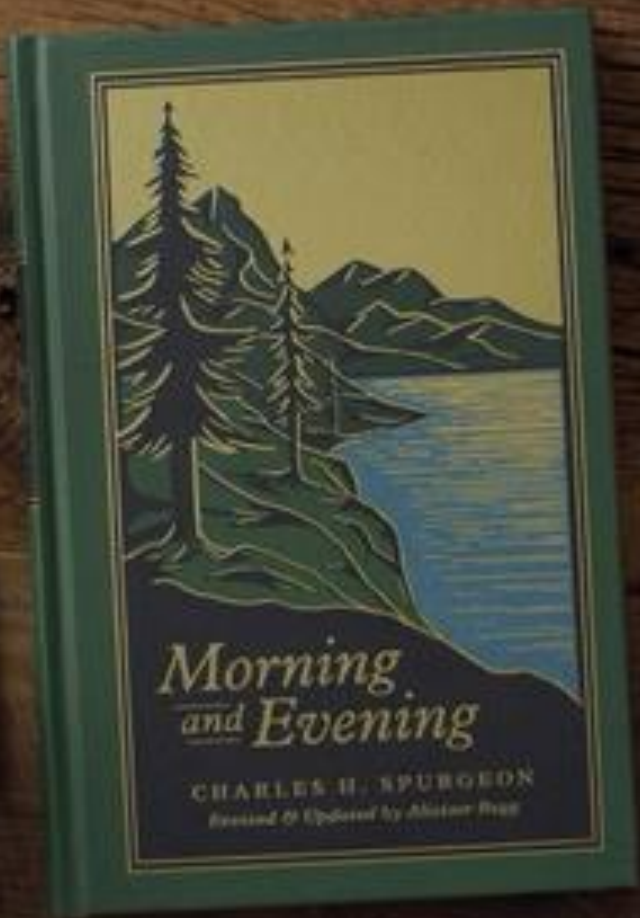
“ This was a subtle form of unbelief, for it encouraged them to trust in themselves rather than in God. They had to learn that their previous success in expelling demons provided no guarantee of continued power. Rather the power of God must be asked for On each occasion in radical reliance upon his ability alone.



~ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 335-336.

Gospel Application

Is your faith freeing?



1834-1892

Morning, June 28

Written 1865 & 1869

It is ever the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, 'Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you do not repent enough; you will never be able to continue to the end; you have not the joy of his children; you have such a wavering hold of Jesus.' All these are thoughts about self, and we shall never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self: he tells us that we are nothing, but that 'Christ is all in all.' Remember, therefore, it is not your hold of Christ that saves you – it is Christ; it is not your joy in Christ that saves you – it is Christ;

it is not even faith in Christ, though that be the instrument – it is Christ's blood and merits; therefore, look not so much to your hand with which thou art grasping Christ, as to Christ; **look not to your hope, but to Jesus, the source of your hope; look not to your faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith.** We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what Jesus is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul. If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by "looking unto Jesus." Keep thine eye simply on him; let his death, his sufferings, his merits, his glories, his intercession, be fresh upon your mind; when you wake in the morning look to him; when you lie down at night look to him. Oh! let not your hopes or fears come between you and Jesus; follow hard after him, and he will never fail you.