

# **The Motley Crew – August 4, 2010**

## **Matthew 17:14-23**

### **The Questions**

#### **Read Matthew 17:14-23**

1. Why would Jesus' Words be so strong?
2. Is anything impossible with God?
3. I read this week that the Christian church in America is seen by many as irrelevant? Does verse 20 play into this, or is it just Americana?
4. What are the best ways to reach a community for Christ?
5. Isn't it amazing that Jesus would tell them over and over about His death?

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### Some Suggested Answers

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#### **The Healing of a Boy With a Demon**

14 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

17 "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." 18 Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

22 When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. 23 They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

*Note:* The parallel accounts in the Gospels of Mark and Luke are reproduced below.

Our text is a picture of mankind. Some are like the scribes who just want to argue with Christians. They are an unbelieving generation of people who don't really want Jesus and His promises. Then there are people, like the disciples, who have received the gifts of God but who do not use them because of the littleness of their faith. And then there are people like the father of this sick boy who cry: "Lord I do believe. Please help my unbelief." *Dr. Harold Buls, Commentary on Mark 9:14-29.*

## 1. Why would Jesus' Words in verse 17 be so strong?

While they had previously been successful in casting out demons (Matthew 10:8), their faith slipped today. This slippage of their faith is reflected by Jesus' words, which express His great disappointment.

This is one of the instances in which the deep feeling of Jesus is permitted to express itself. ... the point is the failure of the nine disciples to drive out the evil spirit. ... They are the ones "with whom" Jesus has been so long in a special way, and with whom He has borne for nearly three years. Yet here the old unbelief (see v. 20) which marked their entire generation again cropped out, so that because of it they had failed to heal this child. From His own disciples Jesus had a right to expect something better. *Lenski*, pp. 666-67.

Dr. Harold Buls observed:

The greatest problem which Jesus faced was that they would not believe Him. They would not believe that He was the Son of God. They would not believe that He was the Messiah. In Jn. 9, when Jesus healed the blind man, though the Jewish authorities had the evidence, they would not believe. ... Sinners can be helped. But stubborn unbelievers cannot be helped. *Commentary on Mark 9:14-29*.

And in this same commentary, Dr. Buls adds:

Prayer is based solely on the promises of God. The basis of prayer is faith in the promises of God. Faith is a gift of the God. See Eph. 2:8. ... Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Rom. 10:17. The disciples failed to do what Jesus commanded because they lacked faith. That's what Jesus means.

And, we keep "slipping back," too, and need to be repeatedly reminded of some fundamental Truths. Sometimes, for example, He heals differently than we expect or want. It is always necessary to keep our hearts in tune with the Word of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

When we express our own doubts and fears, family members and friends may be led to question God's promises. Yet the strength of our faith does not flow from us but is the work of the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament. Our prayer must ever be: "Lord, increase our faith." *Lutheran Study Bible*, p. 1620, note 17:14-20.

One of the group quoted from the commentary by Barclay concerning the expression "move mountains" which Barclay says would be easily understood by people living in those times. A great teacher was called an "uprooter" or "pulverizer" of mountains. Thus, when Our Lord talks about faith that can move mountains, the people would see this Teacher as one of those teachers who is an "uprooter" of mountains.

The rebuke for lack of faith has OT roots: Num 14:27; Deut 32:5, 30; Isa 59:8. *The NET Bible*.

"Lord I believe. Help my unbelief."

## 2. Is anything impossible with God?

No! Verse 20: "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. *Nothing will be impossible for you.*"

3. I read this week that the Christian church in America is seen by many as irrelevant? Does verse 20 play into this, or is it just Americana?

Barclay, writing in the 1930s, saw this as a problem then. And historically we see this in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and indeed all the way back to the time of Luther.

But, as Barclay noted, people still believed in Christ, even when the Churches failed their congregations.

One member pointed out that St. Paul's was recently criticized for adhering too closely to the Bible. The consensus was that this was a complement, not a criticism.

4. What are the best ways to reach a community for Christ?

Live it. Start with yourself. When Jesus comes into a life, then the way that I live, and what I say and do, shows Christ's message in me. And, as we talked about last week, our society does see, recognize and value the Good Samaritans who acts within our societies.

One member mentioned that a continuing message of her Southern Baptist mother was that your best witness is your testimony. It is the most important think that you can share.

There are some who have a narrow view. They reject as inappropriate the types of moving stories of how Christ has acted in the lives of the families of those with severe disabilities. For these Christians we must pray that they remain sensitive to the Word proclaimed by the Holy Spirit in their hearts, and that they will listen and obey, as did Joseph in the first two chapters of the Gospel of Matthew.

We talked a bit about the recent trip of the Prophets to the national convention in New Orleans, where over 25,000 Lutheran high school age students met and worshiped for a week at the 2010 National LCMS Youth Gathering. A main point: they are *not* the future of the Church, they *are* the Church today.

We also talked about the great worship services that they conducted on Sunday, sharing with the members of their church family the tremendously energizing experience of the week they spent in Louisiana. Those students came back from New Orleans *fired up!!!* and that spirit is epidemic in a community, both the church community and the greater community.

The Gathering's theme was "WE BELIEVE," based on John 20:31, which reads, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

A Christian should so live that he need never be ashamed of the character of his works, though they be revealed to all the world. He whose life and conduct are such as to make him unwilling his deeds should be manifest to everyone, certainly does not live in a Christian manner. ... A Christian ought to live as he would be found in the last day before all men. "Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." Eph 5, 9.

Source: "An Exhortation To Good Works," Martin Luther's Sermon for the First Sunday in Advent, based on Romans 13:11-14, from his *Church Postil* of 1521. The opening sentence is: "This epistle lesson treats not of faith, but of its fruits, or works. It teaches how a Christian should conduct himself outwardly in his relations to other men upon earth."

It is available at the website of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Lexington, KY:

<http://www.orlutheran.com/html/mlsero13.html>

5. Isn't it amazing that Jesus would tell them over and over about His death?

Yes. In these repeated messages, Our Lord is attempting to prepare His disciples for His upcoming crucifixion and resurrection. But the disciples were having a very hard time accepting and understanding His message. As the *Lutheran Study Bible* put it, "... the disciples felt helpless in grief and sorrow with no comprehension of the resurrection." (page 1620, note 17:23)

Mark 9:32: "But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it."

Luke 9:45: "But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it."

There are a number of reasons why the disciples, and especially the apostles, were having such a hard time accepting His prophecies concerning His death and resurrection. One reason is that they were expecting a different kind of Messiah. Also, they wanted to continue the *status quo*. Also, they liked Jesus, and didn't want to hear talk about death (and wouldn't be able to understand the concept of resurrection at this point, and wouldn't until after the Resurrection and the Pentecost).

Jesus could not spare the disciples this sorrow; it would have been cruel to be silent and to give them no warning. We are too familiar with the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ properly to place ourselves into the position of the disciples when He foretold these things. His words concerning His resurrection seemed as strange and as incredible to them as those regarding His death. *Lenski*, p. 671.

We closed with prayer.

This is what the Lord says, he who made the earth,  
the Lord who formed it and established it—the Lord is his name:  
"Call to me and I will answer you  
and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

Jeremiah 33:2-3

## Parallel Versions

<b>Matthew 17:14-21</b>	<b>Mark 9:14-32</b>	<b>Luke 9:37-45</b>
<b>The Healing of a Boy With a Demon</b>	<b>The Healing of a Boy with an Evil Spirit</b>	<b>The Healing of a Boy With an Evil Spirit</b>
<b>14</b> When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. <b>15</b> "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said.	<b>14</b> When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. <b>15</b> As	<b>37</b> The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. <b>38</b> A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg

"He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. **16**I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

**17**"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me."

**18**Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

**19**Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

**20**He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."[\[a\]](#)

**22**When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. **23**They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

Footnotes:

- a. [Matthew 17:20](#) Some manuscripts you. **21** But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

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.

**17**A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. **18**Whenever 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."

**19**"O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

**20**So 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.

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

"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."

**23**"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

**24**Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

**25**When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he

you to look at my son, for he is my only child. **39**A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. **40**I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

**41**"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

**42**Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil[\[a\]](#) spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

**43**And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, **44**"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." **45**But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

Footnotes:

- a. [Luke 9:42](#) Greek unclean

	<p>rebuked the evil[a] spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."</p> <p><b>26</b>The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." <b>27</b>But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.</p> <p><b>28</b>After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"</p> <p><b>29</b>He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer.[b]"</p> <p><b>30</b>They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, <b>31</b>because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." <b>32</b>But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.</p> <p>Footnotes:</p> <p>a. <a href="#">Mark 9:25</a> Greek unclean</p> <p>b. <a href="#">Mark 9:29</a> Some manuscripts prayer and fasting</p>	
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## For Additional Study

### Online Resources

[Book of Concord in PDF Format](#), The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod  
 <<http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/LCMS/TrigBOC.pdf>> (2MB file)

These texts are in the public domain and may be copied and distributed freely. The source of these translations is *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).

A number of important Lutheran texts can be found in the Belief and Practice section of the website of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod: <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=112>

John S. C. Abbott and Jacob Abbott, *Illustrated New Testament*  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/ain/>

Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/bnn/>

Harold F. Buls  
<http://www.pericope.org/buls-notes/index.html> and  
<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-bul.html>  
Adapted from *Exegetical Notes, Series A, Festival Season Sundays, Gospel Texts*, by Harold H. Buls, Concordia Theological Seminary Press: Ft Wayne IN, 1980

The Adam Clarke Commentary  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/acc/>

Burton Coffman, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/bcc/>

John Darby, *Synopsis of the Bible*  
<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/darby/matthew1.htm>

*The Greek Interlinear Bible*,  
[http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Greek\\_Index.htm](http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Greek_Index.htm)  
Based on NA26/27. A word-by-word translation of the Greek New Testament.

David Guzik, *Commentaries on the Bible*  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/guz/>

*The Geneva Study Bible*  
<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/geneva/matthew1.htm>

John Gill, *Exposition of the Bible*  
<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/gill/matthew1.htm>

Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Complete)  
<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/mh/matthew1.htm>

Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Concise)  
<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/mhc/matthew1.htm>

Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*  
<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/jfb/matthew1.htm>

B.W. Johnson, *People's New Testament*  
<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/johnson/matthew1.htm>

John Lightfoot, *Bible Commentary*  
<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/light/matthew1.htm>

Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/mlg/>

J. W. McGarvey, *Original Commentary on Acts*

<http://www.studylight.org/com/oca/>

J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel* (also known as "Harmony Of the Four Gospels")

<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/four/matthew1.htm>

Alexander Maclaren's commentaries on the books of the Bible (various titles)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/m#a2330>

The NET Bible. <<http://bible.org/netbible/>> A completely new translation of the Bible with 60,932 translators' notes. It was completed by more than 25 scholars – experts in the original biblical languages – who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. Excellent notes, citing both the Greek and Hebrew, as needed. Greek and Hebrew fonts available without cost.

A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*

<http://www.studylight.org/com/rwp/>

C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Notes* (1917 Edition)

<http://www.studylight.org/com/srn/>

Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*

<http://www.studylight.org/com/tod/>

R. A. Torrey, *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*

<http://www.studylight.org/com/tsk/>

W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*

<http://www.antioch.com.sg/bible/vines/>

John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*

<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/matthew/wesley/matthew1.htm>

Other Additional Resources:

<http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/SPLC/Motley%20Crew%20Research%20Resources.html>

## **Other Resources**

Barker, Kenneth L., ed., *TNIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006)

*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions. Readers Edition.* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006)

Davies, Benjamin, ed., *Baker's Pocket Harmony of the Gospels* (Baker Book House, 1975). Formerly printed as *Harmony of the Four Gospels*.

Goodrick, Edward W. and John R. Kohlenberger III, eds., *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999). This is the second edition, originally published as the *Zondervan NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. It was originally published as *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. It should be distinguished from *The NIV Complete Concordance* by the same authors.

Green, Jay P., ed., *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Vol. IV. Second Edition. (Hendrickson Publishers, 1985)

Halley, Henry H., *Halley's Bible Handbook*. New Revised Edition (24<sup>th</sup> Edition). (Grand Rapids:

Zondervan Publishing House, 1965)

Hickie, W.J., *Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977). This is a reprint of an older edition, originally published by Macmillan, August. 1893. A contemporary review described this as "A handy little volume, compiled on sound principles from trustworthy authorities." The 1911 edition is available online and for download at [http://openlibrary.org/b/OL17866849M/Greek-English\\_lexicon\\_to\\_the\\_New\\_Testament](http://openlibrary.org/b/OL17866849M/Greek-English_lexicon_to_the_New_Testament)

Hoerber, Robert G., ed., *Concordia Self-Study Bible*. NIV (Great Rapids, Zondervan: 1973, 1984).

Lenski, R.C.H., *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943, reprinted 1964)

*The Lutheran Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

Nave, Orville J., ed., *Nave's Topical Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979)

*New Bible Dictionary*. Second Edition. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1962)

Nicoll, W. Robertson, *The Greek Expositor's Testament*. Vol. 1. Five Volumes. (New York: George H. Doran Co., ca. 1910). Excellent notes on the Greek text and summaries of commentators. Available at Google Books ( [www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com) ) and the Internet Archive ( [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) - easier to find here than at Google Books).

*NIV Archeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005)

Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture* (Text from Project Gutenberg)

Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000). This "Concise Edition" is derived from the six-volume work by Robertson published in 1933. Robertson was also the author of 45 books, including numerous commentaries, a Harmony of the Gospels, etc. Also available online

Rogers, Cleon L. Jr., and Cleon L. Rogers III, eds., *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998). This is the second edition of the excellent work by Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, translated and edited by Cleon L. Rogers, Jr.

Strong, James, ed., *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990)

Vine, W.E., *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words: A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, no date). Originally published circa 1940.