

Are We Ready to Show Others Compelling Love?

“He asked his father, ‘How long has it been since it came to him?’ He said, ‘From childhood. Often it has thrown him into the fire and into the water to kill him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us'” (Mark 9:21-22).

Jesus helps children. You see that in the Gospel of Mark. He raised from death the 12-year-old daughter of Jairus (5:35-43), and healed the little daughter of a Greek woman (7:24-30). Now, for the third time in this Gospel, a desperate parent has come to Jesus with concern for his child.

Jesus’ question to the dad is a curious one: “How long has he been like this?” Didn’t Jesus already know? I suspect He did. The onlookers, however, did not. When the father identified the possession as one of long standing, the crowd realized the severity of the problem. Additionally, the father volunteered that the demon had tried to kill the boy by throwing him into fire and water.

What a nightmare this must have been for the dad. He had to constantly watch over his son, helpless when the boy went into convulsions but ever vigilant to rescue him from burning or drowning. The fact that the father said his son had suffered this condition from childhood suggests that now this boy may be in his teenage years or older.

The father’s love is compelling. It speaks volumes to all parents who have severely disabled children, children who require constant, watchful care. Here before us is a parent who loves his child deeply even though the son’s condition severely impinged on the father’s own daily life and schedule. Absent from the story is the mother. Is it possible that, like so many parents, she could no longer deal with the disabled

son and left the home and marriage?

The father doesn't know if Jesus can do anything. His question is a pitiful plea, "If you can do anything ... help us."

Jesus is not physically present today, but we, His church, are.

How do we respond to the terribly hurtful adversities children suffer? The neglect and abuse of children has reached epidemic proportions in our culture.

Can we help even one foster child, one son or daughter of a prisoner, one malnourished or poverty-stricken child, a disabled boy or girl, a child used for human trafficking? Are we willing to help a single parent?

We can so easily allow our crowded schedules and busy routines to wall us off from the needs of children. We must hear their cries and the plea also of a distressed parent, "If you can do anything ... help us."

I like the story of the old man walking the beach at daybreak. He was throwing back into the surf starfish that had washed up on the sand. A smarty teenager followed him and said, "Old man, what are you doing? There are millions of starfish on this beach, and they're going to die when the sun comes out. What difference does it make what you do?"

The old man held a starfish in his hand and, as he tossed it back into the water, replied, "It matters to this one."

Indeed, we may not be able to do everything, but we can always do something! It matters to this one.

A Prayer: Lord Jesus, the father's plea haunts me. It calls me to listen to the cries of others. May I not remain passive or impotent in meeting the needs of others, especially children, who come to me this day.

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