



Sunday of St. John the Ladder

St. John Climacus--"the Ladder"--was a 7th century monk on Mt. Sinai. His nickname comes from a spiritual work he wrote in which he outlined 30 "steps" for Christians to climb in their spiritual progress. The first steps are to break with the world. Functionally, this is a "death"--a break from everything *in the world* that we put our trust in to give us life. It's like today's scripture passage. A man asked Jesus to help his unbelief. So that this man would trust in no one but God, his son became "like a corpse." Only when we also "die" and no longer trust in our selves or in the world, will we fully turn our trust towards God.

Scripture: Mark 9:17-31

Bottom Line: Our death is the birth of trust in God.

Discussion Questions

1. The disciples weren't able to drive out the evil spirits. What do you think prevented them from doing so?
2. Being "deaf and dumb" can be understood as a metaphor. What do you think symbolism of being deaf and dumb is?
3. In the passage, the man tried to do everything to save his son. But in the end, it wasn't what *he* could do but what *Jesus* could do. How can you give Jesus more control over your life? What will surrendering to Jesus look like?
4. The man had to take a leap of faith, even in the face of his son's death. What leaps of faith do you need to take? What are some reasons you don't take those leaps of faith?
5. Jesus tells his disciples that only prayer and fasting can drive out some demons. What can you do to maintain a healthy prayer life and embrace fasting?

Moving Forward

There will be situations in your life that seem hopeless. In those times, pray, fast, and cry out, "Help my unbelief!" Remember, God can take a lifeless corpse and raise it from the dead.

Changing Your Mind

The man replied, "Many times the evil spirit has tried to kill him . . . Have pity on us and help us, if you possibly can!" Jesus said, "Yes, if you yourself can! Everything is possible for the person who has faith." (Mark 9:21b-23)