

Title : I don't have this, but He does.  
Text: Matthew 17.14-23  
Theme: Jesus shares power and knowledge with his followers  
Series: Matthew #87  
Prop Stmtnt: Jesus is the King who wants his subjects to rule alongside of him.

60-second gospel presentation

Read Text:

It's the top of the ninth inning. The other team is batting and they have two outs and had a man on second and third. Your team is winning by one run and you are the pitcher and you just walked the last batter, loading the bases. Your coach comes walking out to the mound and wants to know how you are feeling, because a really good batter is coming to the plate and your team has a good reliever who is ready to go in the bullpen. Inside, you are not sure if you can get this guy but neither do you want to turn the ball over to someone else who will come in, strike the guy out and get carried off the field when you have been the one who has brought the team to this point. You desperately want to finish the game. You desperately want to win it, but can you? Inside, you are not sure. But do you admit that to the coach? When he asks you how you are feeling, do you say, "Honestly coach I want to get this out so badly but I am not sure I can do it" or do you say, "I got this coach. I got him. I got him." How do you answer? The answer that you give is determined in that moment by what you love the most. Do you love yourself more than the team, or do you love the team more than yourself?

You have a patient whose condition baffles you, but if you send her to another doctor you are admitting your limits and losing some revenue. Do you keep on guessing or do you send her to someone who is better than you in this area? The way that you answer that is determined by whether you care more about this patient than you do yourself. Most people struggle with sharing authority. And it is so sad. They get into a position of leadership and assume or pretend that they know everything and try to take credit for every good idea and blame shift for every bad one. It isn't long before morale crumbles, loyalty erodes, and the family, or the division or company or government falls apart.

Here is an amazing aspect about Jesus. He has all authority and he is not threatened by any of us. His ministry is marked by teaching and equipping because he is investing his message, his power and his mission into his disciples. He is preparing them to take over. I remember taking my son to college realizing that my time of influencing him and teaching him on a day-to-day basis in the home was now over. I now had about 5 hours to tell him everything that I had neglected to teach him for the past 18 years. He was excited to go to college and I was having a bit of a panic attack because I wasn't sure that I had covered everything adequately. Well, Jesus is not having a panic attack, but he, more than anyone else realizes that he has a limited amount of time with his disciples. Every

moment counts and you feel that urgency by Christ in this text. That is why, from this point in the life and ministry of Christ until the Triumphal Entry, Jesus spends more time teaching the disciples in private than he does teaching the crowds in public. Even this event that takes place in public is used by Christ primarily to instruct his disciples. Jesus is going to be imparting his authority to the disciples. That is how the book of Matthew ends. Meanwhile, Jesus has to prepare them to handle that authority with care. The privilege of authority and leadership brings with it the weighty and humbling responsibility of stewardship. Think of this. Jesus has just revealed his glory to three of his disciples. But there is more to this story. Before Jesus ascends into heaven, he entrusts his glory to the disciples because through them, he is entrusts his glory to the church. I want you to feel the weight of that because the weight of that responsibility is on you and us all. We, the church have been entrusted with the glory and the reputation of God. The privilege of being entrusted with his authority carries with it the weighty responsibility of guarding his glory.

In the OT, the people of God were kept away from the glory of God. Everything about the Tabernacle and Temple said, “stay out”, “stay away”, “unclean” and “defiled.” But, when Christ paid the ultimate price, the veil of the temple was ripped in two and we have the privilege of being able to come into the Holy of Holies. We have the privilege of coming into the very throne room of God. But, do you know what that means? It means that we have now been entrusted with the glory of God, because we are now the temple of God. Not only is your body the temple of the Holy Spirit but we, together as a body have been entrusted with guarding and spreading the glory of God. How do we do that? The answer to that is seen in this text because that is what Jesus is preparing his disciples for. Jesus is preparing his disciples to take over when he is gone. But, you cannot take people farther than where you are. If you are going to lead people to have faith in Jesus, you must really believe Jesus as well. I don’t just mean believe in Jesus, but believe Jesus. Peter, (presumably as the spokesman for the disciples) made a clear confession of faith in Christ. Romans 10 says that we must confess Christ with our mouths. Peter did that. But Romans 10 says that we must also believe in our hearts. Professing faith is not adequate unless we actually possess that faith. Here, Jesus is helping his disciples realize that they have to lean hard on him. They have to actually believe and act upon the promises of Christ. So, I see two big ideas in this text. The obvious one is that Jesus wants his disciples to not only profess to believe on him, he wants them to keep on leaning hard on him. But underneath that is another more foundational theme. He wants his disciples to always lean hard on him because he wants to share his authority with them. Jesus is a king who wants to share his authority with his subjects. This scene illustrates those two related truths. Let’s dig in.

**1. We live in a world that is full of desperate people.** (14-16)

If you compare Matthew’s account with Mark’s and Luke’s account of this scene there are some glaring contrasts. E.g. Matthew’s account is about a third of the size of Mark’s. Mark records a lot of details that Matthew does not include because Matthew is primarily

focusing on the unbelief of the disciples while Mark gives attention to other aspects of this event. Since I am preaching from Matthew's account, I am going to emphasize his angle, which is why my outline is not so much about the power of Jesus and spiritual warfare (Mark's theme) but it is about the need for the disciples to really believe Jesus. That need is very obvious because we, like them constantly face serious situations.

**a. We constantly face serious situations. (14-15)**

This week many of you are going to face a situation that you do not have an answer for and you do not know what you are going to do. There are three examples of this here. 1) There is the son whose life is overrun at times by a demon. Please do not dismiss this idea of demonic activity as something that is relegated to voodoo ceremonies in Haiti. If we could see the spirit world that is present even in this room we would be shocked. This boy's life is at stake. The demon drives him to self-destructive actions. He throws him into fire or into water. That seems a bit odd to us so let me explain. We live in a cold weather climate and therefore we have historically done most of our cooking indoors. But in hot weather climates, most cooking was done outdoors. Most homes had an area just beyond the door for a little fire pit, where a pot would sit, often on large stones, where the water would boil in order to cook the meat, or prepare the rice. So, I take this to mean that the demon causes the boy to be thrown into a fire, probably near a home, where he would be burned by the fire and scalded by the water. The water could also be a reference to a pond or a lake where the boy would get thrown into in an effort by the demon to drown him. Can you imagine being possessed by a personal power that is intent on destroying you? That is serious. 2) Next we meet the dad. Now, many of you can relate a bit to what he is going through. You have had a child who is sick or suffering from a condition that requires constant monitoring. Even when your child is sleeping, you live and die on every sound coming from the monitor. Everything your child does requires oversight and supervision. It is hard to imagine that anyone would agree to supervise him for the dad. Meaning this dad probably has no break and no hope. This is a desperate man. 3) Finally, we see the (9) disciples, who Matthew focuses on. In the absence of Jesus and Peter, James and John, they have obviously been taking matters into their own hands and it sounds like they were performing some miracles, or doing something that attracted attention. So, this dad brings them his son and the disciples are frustrated. They cannot help the boy and his situation is serious. What do you do when you face a serious situation that you cannot fix? You can get angry and defensive. You can blame others. You can try to point out the failures of others in order to distract attention away from your own problem. You can make excuses. You can shut down, cover up, and try to muddle your way through. Or, you can confess your dilemma, admit the obvious truth that you do not have what it takes to fix this and cry out to God for help! Matthew spares some of the details, but he would know because he was there. It is quite possible that the disciples were now arguing amongst each other and blaming one another. They were pathetic! We at least know that based on the intensity of Christ's response.

**b. We constantly face serious situations that we cannot fix. (16)**

Who is it that comes running to Jesus? It is the father. And this man, who is not named, is a reflection of the type of faith that Jesus is looking for. He calls Jesus Lord, he kneels not only out of respect, but he kneels because he is petitioning Jesus. This father is facing a problem that he cannot fix. But, his plight reveals another plight. The disciples are facing a problem that they cannot fix but they are not running up to Jesus and bowing before him. They are bound and determined to do this without Jesus. Here is the irony, even though Jesus is not here, we cannot fix anything without him. And God ordains situations that make that extremely clear to us.

**2. We cannot help people unless we point them to Jesus.** (17-18)

When Jesus calls them a “faithless and twisted generation” is he talking to the people as a whole or to the nine disciples? I think it is both because in this situation, the disciples are acting like the generation of Israelites who were acting as if they did not need God.

Notice the words “faithless and twisted”. This language comes right out of Deuteronomy 32 and here is why that is so important.

In Deuteronomy, Moses is preparing the children of Israel to go into the promised land. They are about to conquer armies larger than their own, and inherit land that they do not have to clear, cities that they do not have to build and homes that they do not have to construct. They are on the verge of becoming a legitimate nation in the eyes of the world. 40 years ago, they were a group of slaves despised by their owners and unknown to the world. Now, they are about to write history as they displace nations and cultures that have been around for hundreds of years. Over and over Moses warns them because they are going to be tempted to think that God has been gracious to them because they deserved it. In fact God tells them in Deuteronomy that he is NOT giving them the land because they are righteous. No, he is giving them the land because he is removing the Canaanites because they are so exceedingly wicked. The fact is, as Moses states, you (Israel) are a faithless and twisted generation (32.5, 20). The words of Moses are serious and stern. He knows that they are going to be tempted to get into the land and get full of themselves. So he warns them. For about 43 verses he warns them and then admonishes them to be careful to do all the words of this law “*For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this world shall live in the land...*” And what happened to Israel? They did forget it. They failed to lean on God because after experiencing a measure of success they acted as if, “I’ve got this.” The nine disciples were doing the same thing. Christ is frustrated and exasperated with these disciples. He and Peter, James and John were only gone for 2-3 days and already they were trying to do things on their own. How would they handle things when he actually ascended and left them? The point is obvious.

**a. We cannot point people to Jesus unless we lean on him ourselves.** (17)

But, why don’t we lean on Jesus? We don’t lean on him because we think that we got this. Do you realize that there is no situation that I face where I can say that I do not need to

lean on Jesus because “I got this”? I never got this, but thank God he’s got this and he’s got me! But when you are the recipient of God’s grace you must remember that just because you received grace does not mean that you ever, ever deserved grace.

Kenny Petty grew up in the inner city of St. Louis and decided by the age of 14 that he wanted to be a drug dealer. He wanted the money, the bling, the cars, the girls, the prestige and the clothes. So he went after it and he went after it hard. He got shot when he was 17, got shot again when he was 18 and by 19 decided that he needed to do the shooting and did. He was arrested and charged with 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder and found himself in prison where once a week an old preacher would come to his area and preach. Kenny mocked him relentlessly. One day, Kenny did something that earned him a stint in the hole. He was sent to isolation for 30 days where no one could visit him. No one, except the preacher. The old man visited Kenny one day and asked Kenny to do him a favor.

Would you read Psalm 51 every day for a week? Kenny thought “Man, I have ridden you so hard and yet you have come to visit me anyway, sure, I can do that for you.” And he did. Kenny said, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day it hit me. “Against you and you only have I sinned.”

Kenny realized his sin was before God. At that moment Kenny realized that he had a need that he could not solve. He needed the forgiveness of God and he had no way of getting that on his own. That need drove Kenny and he came to faith in Christ and his life is a testimony the grace of God. But, what drove him to lean upon God? What drove him to lean upon Jesus? Kenny had to come to grips with his need.

Now, I am taking a long time to explain this point, but it is worth it, so hang in here with me. In order for you to become a genuine follower of Christ, you have to realize and own your need for God’s grace. Our problem is that we tend to compare ourselves to other people and we always find other people who we think are worse than us. When we compare ourselves to others we come to the wrong conclusion because we are using wrong data. From our perspective, we may need some grace, but others need it even more, or way more than us. That is a faulty conclusion because we are trying to compare our sin to the sins of others. Our sin is before God and compared to him we need an infinite amount of grace. That means that we are infinitely dependent upon him. We have to lean completely upon him for our salvation. That is why the only way that we can become a follower of Christ is by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone.

We become believers by faith and we grow as believers by faith. I respond in faith to Christ for salvation because I realize my need of him and I grow in my relationship to God by faith because I continually realize how much I need him. You never outgrow your need for Jesus. In fact, the more that you grow as a follower of Christ, the more you realize how much you need him. The disciples were trying this on their own, it did not work for them it will not work for us.

**b. Only Jesus has absolute authority. (18)**

Jesus orders that they bring the boy to him. He rebuked the demon. It came out of him and the boy was healed instantly. Jesus can do what we cannot, but...

**3. Jesus longs for us to lean on him.** (19-23)

The disciples come to Jesus privately and ask. "Why couldn't they cast the demon out?" Jesus said, "because of your little faith." They thought that they had this. They thought that they could do this. After the warning comes the encouragement. The disciples were not completely without faith, but they had failed to engage it in this situation. So, while Jesus rebukes them for that, **he now encourages them**. Just lean on me! It doesn't even take much. A little bit of faith is like a little mustard seed. Mustard seeds are really small and yet look at what they grow! A little bit of faith can accomplish what is an otherwise impossible task. "You will say to this mountain (Jesus had just come down from a mountain), move from here to there and it will move." That was a common expression in those days as it still is in ours for being able to accomplish something that seems impossible. Jesus longs for us to lean on him so that he can show his glory through us.

**a. He shares his authority with us.** (19-21)

So, even though Jesus healed this boy, he would rather have his disciples do it, but they could only do it if they leaned on him. That is the entire point. Jesus shares his authority with us. After Peter made his bold confession of faith, Jesus told Peter that he was giving him the keys to the kingdom, because it was through Peter that these keys were entrusted to the entire church. Watch the pattern. Jesus gives the keys to Peter who gives them to the church. Jesus shares his authority with us. But we can only exercise that authority to the degree that we keep on leaning on Jesus.

**b. He shares his knowledge with us.** (22-23)

When they made their way back into Galilee Jesus told them something that he had not yet said publicly. He told them that he was about to be delivered in the hands of men. (He was telling them that he was going to be betrayed.) And they will kill me and I will rise again on the third day. They were greatly distressed, but what was Jesus doing? He was entrusting them with kingdom information. Jesus does not keep us in the dark. He tells us what we need to know. He prepares us for what we are going to face. He shares his knowledge with us so that it drives us to lean even more on him. He shares his authority with us, so that we will recognize the responsibility that we have to lean upon him in order to properly use it. Authority and knowledge are never given to us to make much of us, but always to make much of Jesus. He is the source. We are the conduits. We don't have this, but He does. And He has us.

Conclusion:

What are the areas of influence and authority that God has given to you? How hard do you lean on God to help you fulfill that responsibility? The amount of time you pray about that reveals the answer to that question.

What do you do with the knowledge that God has shared with you about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ? Has that caused you to cry out to him for salvation? Do you lean on him for courage and compassion to share it with others or do you take it for granted and consider yourself a little bit better than others?