

WEEK 3: FRIDAY

Once more we come close to Jesus in the crowd; and this time let's bring with us someone we know, perhaps someone very close to us, who is in serious need of Jesus' help. Take a moment and think who you want to bring.

Let's recall what has just happened. The disciples have told Jesus he is the Messiah, the one to fulfil Israel's hopes and dreams. He has told them, to their horror, that the way that fulfilment will come is through his own suffering and death. Then, amazingly, he has taken three of them up a mountain and has been transfigured before them, shining like the sun. They have heard God's voice declaring that Jesus is indeed his son, his beloved one.

Meanwhile the other disciples, left behind at the foot of the mountain, have faced a challenge they couldn't deal with. That's perhaps where we are ourselves right now, either with sickness in the family or with an impossible situation at work, or something more sad and secret that it's hard even to mention. So we stand there with them as Jesus shakes his head.

Surely his followers have learned the lesson by now? Surely they know that God's power is able to do whatever is needed? Actually, it isn't that easy. They've seen Jesus at work; they have known his power in their lives; but when Jesus goes away for a short while they revert, as we all do, to 'normal' mode. Wonderful things don't happen. Life is tough, and there's nothing that can be done.

But they are wrong. Jesus heals the boy. It's not even clear (to us, and perhaps to them) what the problem was. Epilepsy and demon-possession are two very different things, and it's likely that the loose terminology people used at the time wasn't meant to be medically precise. Anyway, Jesus deals with it. We pause there and hold before Jesus the person we've brought, about whom we seem able to do nothing. We watch as Jesus heals the boy, and we pray for healing for whoever it is on our hearts.

And then he deals with the disciples. You couldn't do it, he says, because of your little faith. He's said it four times already (6.30; 8.26; 14.31; 16.8) and they still don't get it. All it takes in fact, he says, is faith like a grain of mustard seed — an image he's already used for the kingdom itself (13.31). Faith is like a small window through which you can see a vast landscape, and the landscape in question is the sovereign power of the creator God and the overwhelming glory of Jesus himself. We stand at that window, doing our best to wipe it clean from the condensation of our own unbelieving breath, and holding on, as we do so, to those for whom we want to pray.

Jesus spoke of moving mountains — a regular type of exaggeration, no doubt, though they may have heard echoes of the challenge which awaited them on the holy mountain, Jerusalem itself. But sometimes it seems easier to move a mountain, shovelling it with spoons, than to shift the sorrow or sickness from a human heart and life. When you read the stories of remarkable Christians down the years, and in our own time too, again and again you find tales of people who have stood at that window, gazing out on the landscape of God's power and love, and gradually bringing the rest of the world, and the people for whom they were praying, into healing focus in relation to it. We need more people like that. The most important Christians are not the ones who preach great sermons and write great books, but the

ones who pray, and pray, and pray some more, sharing the quiet but effective victory of Jesus over all that defaces God's creation.

TODAY

(Fill in the blank in the prayer with whoever you want to pray for)

Lord Jesus, you have the power to heal and rescue. Today I pray for _____ who need you so badly. Bring them your healing love, and transform their lives with your grace.