

## Title: “I’m Tired”

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Mark 9:14-18

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**Service Readings:** Is. 50:4-10; James 3:1-12; Mark 9:14-29

*What does it mean to do the work that God has laid before us? We learn through this passage what it is and how we are to approach it.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

I would like to read you a letter that I wrote to God last month. It was days after the terrible storms where we all experienced hardship of many different kinds. The storm had passed, the electricity was back on for most of us, and I finally had a moment to sit and talk to him. I decided to put my thoughts on paper and would like to share this with you today.

My Lord and Savior, Jesus,

I’m tired. I’m tired not just because these past few weeks have been personally busy for me, and I’m not just tired because the storm has worn me out emotionally and physically. This all contributes and maybe it is what has finally driven me to write to you these thoughts, but it is not just these things, but *everything*. I look out into the world and I see you being rejected at every level of every society. The world stage has no use for your intervention; even our great nation seems to have decided that the problems it faces are problems they can solve without you – if they can only get everyone to agree with their solutions. And closer to home, it seems that our communities have largely gone it alone. They have problems, *real* problems that you just don’t seem able or willing to solve. But all this is just a backdrop of the deeper problems that I write to you about. In our communities, in our families, even in our own *homes*, we struggle with our faith walk. We interact with our neighbors and so many of them seem to have no time for you. They have problems of today that they need to focus on, and unless you can write them a check for their bills, put food on their tables, or heal their loved ones, there seems to be no potential value for shifting focus away from their daily struggles and onto you. But, Lord, we still preach to them – with our words but also with our actions. We reach out to them in many ways. Our church, as you know, serves the community with free lunches, fellowship opportunities, VBS, Operation Christmas Child, and so many other events, but it doesn’t seem to be enough. Sure, we come across one or two that might open their hearts toward you, but more often than not, they just refuse to see how the solution to *all* of their problems can be found *in you*. They refuse to look beyond the struggle of money, health, and onto the salvation that you have earned and the eternal life that you now offer. They are living for today, not eternity. And how we try to reach them.

But this letter is not about our church but about me. This is a letter that is personal and I cannot hide my frustrations behind the your body of believers. I need to talk about me. I am tired. How many hours have I spent learning more about you so that I can teach others? How many years have I spent struggling to follow you, asking you to show me where you would have me go? How often have I woken up in the morning with a plea for you to show me what you would have me accomplish? And how many nights have I laid in bed wondering why you give me the tasks you give me when they don’t seem to accomplish *anything*. You want me to reach out to the youth and I have but at every turn it seems I am shut down. Nothing seems to be working. And yet you tell me to continue

working. You tell me to make connections with my family and with my friends, but those who I love deeply either continue to reject you or consider you not worthy of their pursuit. Why? Why do you wear me out with these works? I am tired and I need your strength.

He answered me. Here is what he said.

My dearest, precious child. I hear you and have come with my answer. I have known you since I formed you in your mother's womb. I know everything about you and I love you more than you can ever imagine. I also know that right now you are unable to receive the same tone I set with Job and so I am going to speak to you as a loving father speaks to his child.

First. You are as stubborn child. How long have I waited for you to finally reach the point where you feel that you can no longer do it alone? How many trials have I placed in your life, waiting for you to finally come to me, completely? Again and again I reached out to you, but each time you made me only your partner; each time you asked for my assistance. Each time you asked for anything *but me*. Don't you see? Just like those you have failed to reach, you too have turned your heart away from me. You let me in, but only to support you, to encourage you, but never to *take it from you*. Is it any wonder you are so tired, so discouraged? You are not doing the work I gave you, you are doing the work you gave yourself!

Answer me this. I sent my beloved son into the world to take on your sins. I sent him to do the work that you were unable to do, but the work that was necessary for your salvation. *This* is the only work that needed to be done – and it was. It was accomplished. It was completed. He did it. There is nothing left to do. The checklist has been completed. Was his efforts not enough, that there is still work left to be done? Was Jesus a liar when he spoke those words on the cross?

My desire for you is only that you pursue me as I pursue you. I know you intimately and I want you to know me the same. I want you to fall in love with the work that Jesus did for you; to imbed it so deeply that you mediate on it day and night. I want you to think of nothing else, for when you do this, you will begin to do my work. His death and resurrection wasn't simply a task that he set out to complete, it was nothing less than his desire to separate himself from me to join himself to you. This wasn't a *work*, this was an expression of *love*. The reality of his actions and his motivations must move from your head to your heart! And when it does, when it *truly does*, nothing will distract you from expressing your love to him in worship and praise. And *then...* then you will finally be able to do the work that I have set before you.

You see, the work that I have planned for you is not one of *accomplishment*; it is one of *response*. Do you remember when Jesus had descended from the mountain after his transfiguration? As he entered the town, what did he face? Let me remind you:

<sup>14</sup> And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. <sup>15</sup> And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. <sup>16</sup> And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" <sup>17</sup> And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. <sup>18</sup> And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able."

These disciples had work to do, but they turned it into a task, into something they needed to accomplish. They struggled with the exorcism and failed! Did I place this child in their midst for them to experience failure? Do you not think they were already feeling it because they were not invited up

the mountain with their teacher? And how does he reply? He casts out the demon and then tells them that “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.” Prayer! What did he mean? Why was prayer the answer? They were standing right there! They were followers of Jesus! They had even been sent out earlier to do this very thing! And they did! But in this instance? What happened? Why did they not have the ability that they seemed to have had before? Why did Jesus respond to their inquiry with “just pray?” Because the disciples had forgotten the work that was set out before them – not to heal, but to respond to the love of Jesus. They had forgotten that their only *real work* was to love him with all their hearts and with all their souls. If they had done this, they would have placed this challenge in my hands and allowed me to do my will. They still wouldn’t have been able to heal him but that would have no longer been their work. The work would have been to be Jesus for that family – to love them and in doing so, show the love that I have for them.

And this is the work that I desire from you. Love me with all your heart. Love me so much that you place all of your trust in me. Love me so that your every thought is of me. And when you do, the life you will live will be one in which *my work, my will*, can be done through you. And it will be one where the results of that work are not laid upon your mind or even your heart, but upon me. My son placed his trust in me, completely, and in doing so I was able to accomplish my work – work that opened a path of eternal life. The life that he lived, this life of complete trust, accomplished everything, even though it didn’t look like it at the time. It often times looked fruitless, but on this side of the cross, you can surely see that it was anything but. Love me so much that you place your trust in me, and in doing so, I will be able to show my love to those I bring before you. That is your work that I have prepared for you to do. Now go.

Please pray with me.

We come to You tired and worn, realizing our need for Your strength. Help us to surrender fully to Your will, To love You with all our hearts, minds, and souls. Remind us that the work of salvation is complete in Christ, And that our calling is to respond to Your love by loving and serving others. Guide us to trust You completely, So that Your work may be accomplished through us. May we find rest in Your presence and purpose in Your plan.

Amen.