

Failure

- If you ask people who are post-Christian why they gave up on church, Christianity, God, what would they say?

For most the bar is too low

- People want
 - To feel better about their lives, happier, more meaning, more beauty
 - A sense of security of good things after life
 - To be a bit more moral
- We've been talking about the end of the age of decay!

Things are rolling in Luke 9

- Jesus delegates the mission of the announcement of the end of the age of decay with miraculous samples to his disciples and they triumph!
- Jesus feeds the 5000
- Jesus reveals that he'll be raised from the dead
- Jesus is revealed in theophanic glory on the mount of transfiguration

Luke 9:37-42 (NRSV)

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

Luke 9:43-45 (NRSV)

And all were astounded at the greatness of God. While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands." But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was concealed from them, so that they could not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

This text is about failure

- While they were on the mountain the age of decay continues to do its ugly work.
- The disciples couldn't heal the boy
- Jesus seems to lose his cool
- The crowd remains clueless
- Jesus tells them he'll be handed over to men who wish to do him harm
- The disciples are clueless, scared, silent
- Back to square one it seems...

The Disciples' Failure

Luke 9:1 (NRSV)

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority **over all demons** and to cure diseases,

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What to make of Jesus' outburst?!

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Disciples' failure

- Why were they successful before but failing here?
- It can't be about the man, the boy, the situation
 - Jesus accomplished it
- The connection with Jesus' outburst clearly seems to lay blame at the feet of the disciples. It is a failure or lacking on their part. But what?

Jesus' outburst

- Jesus can get tired and frustrated
 - We see that in other places
- Jesus can lose his temper
 - Is this sin? Where's the grace?
- Jesus' words are really, very harsh!

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- Jesus can lose his temper
 - Is this sin? Where's the grace?
- Jesus' words are really, very harsh!
- These words aren't totally new to Jesus

Moses' farewell song

Deuteronomy 32:4-5 (NRSV)

The Rock, his work is perfect,
and all his ways are just.

A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he;

yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him,
a perverse and crooked generation.

In the desert, the people's rebellion at the spy's report

Numbers 14:1-4 (NRSV)

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" So they said to one another, "Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt."

Numbers 14:5-9 (NRSV)

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the Israelites. And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the Israelites, "The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only, do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are no more than bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them."

Numbers 14:10-12 (NRSV)

But the whole congregation threatened to stone them. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?"

Numbers 14:10-12 (NRSV)

But the whole congregation threatened to stone them. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? **I will strike them with pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.**"

Numbers 14:26-31 (NRSV)

And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: How long shall this wicked congregation complain against me? I have heard the complaints of the Israelites, which they complain against me. Say to them, "As I live," says the Lord, "I will do to you the very things I heard you say: your dead bodies shall fall in this very wilderness; and of all your number, included in the census, from twenty years old and upward, who have complained against me, not one of you shall come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. But your little ones, who you said would become booty, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have despised.

Exodus all over again

- 12 Disciples go out to announce the coming of God's deliverance from the age of decay.
- Feeding of the 5000 in the wilderness echoes God feeding his people in the desert with manna
- Transfiguration echoes God meeting with the elders on Sinai in Exodus 24

The response of the people is the same!

- The people don't believe
- The hearts of the people are twisted (in on themselves)
- They are faithless, wandering, prone to fear, panic, flight back to Egypt!
(empire, security, the power of the sword, control, etc.)

In Exodus

- At the rebellion of the people
 - God says he'll make a new people out of Moses, but Moses protests
 - God says he'll make a new people out of those people's children and that generation that rebelled against God will die in the wilderness, forsaken and abandoned by God!

How will it turn out this time?

- Jesus is reconstituting Israel through his disciples
- Jesus has announced the rescue, the exodus from the age of decay
- The disciples, and the crowd are just as faithless, twisted, and hungering for empire as their ancestors
- How will God respond? Who will be smitten by God's anger this time!

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How Jesus will conquer

- We are faithless and we do fail
- We deserve to be left to die in the desert
- Jesus says, "I will be abandoned in the wilderness in your place, and you will receive the reward that I deserve."

Failure

- Have you failed the gospel?
- Have you abandoned God's promise and fallen into fear and despair?
- Have you despaired in the desert and wished that God had left you in empire Egypt with its gods of security and fertility?
- Are you having trouble trusting that God will give you what you need?

Having trouble believing

- Your bad things will turn out for good
- Your truly good things can never be taken away
- The best things are yet to come

The Son of Man will be
betrayed into human hands...

