Integrity Church **Pastor Tony Balsamo**
Sunday Worship Service **November 15, 2026**
Series: Jesus Among Us
Title: When It's Time To Turn Up The Heat
Text: Luke 9:37-43

I recall many years ago coming to a crossroads in my ministry pursuit. I had been serving in my church for a number of years (under PF as one of his youth leaders), hoping for an opportunity to come on staff … I waited, I served, I sought to be faithful to whatever was before me… but no doors appeared to be opening … until I was offered to do an internship at Laura's old church (we were married about a year) … It was a very different kind of church that I would be serving in, it was a part of "EFCA" (whatever that meant) … but I needed to make a decision … the kind of decision that I knew would impact the next ten years of my life…

Ever have those moments when you're faced with having to make a decision that you know is going to have long term consequences … and you just don't want to choose wrong? There's no room for a mistake? You need God to speak clearly … and even quickly!

It's in those moments that you come to realize the importance of what I want to talk to you about today….

The title of my message is "When it's time to turn up the Heat"!

Let's take a look at our text:

Luke 9:37–43a (ESV)
37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him.

40 And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." 41 Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42 While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43 And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

Now if you recall where we left off last week, Jesus had invited Peter, James and John to the mountain and while Jesus prayed, He was face changed and the radiance of His glory shined like the sun … and while that was happening, the disciples noticed Moses and Elijah on the mountain speaking with Jesus … it's what we know as the Transfiguration, where the glory that was hidden in Jesus's flesh, is unveiled for the disciples to see … And when everything else faded away, Jesus was standing alone. It was an extraordinary revelation of who Jesus is.

But now, as we come to verse 37, something changes. Jesus comes down from the mountain.
And waiting for Him at the bottom is a desperate father, a suffering child, and a group of disciples who have encountered something they cannot overcome.

Quite a contrast to what just happened the day before!

On the mountain, we see the glory of Jesus revealed. In the valley, we're about to see the authority of Jesus demonstrated. But in the middle of it all, there's something important for us to learn about our own dependence upon God.

1. Some Challenges Expose The Limits of Our Faith

Luke tells us that when Jesus came down from the mountain, a great crowd met Him.
And from that crowd, a father cries out!

He is desperate. His only son is being tormented by an evil spirit. The boy is suffering terribly, and this father is pleading with Jesus to intervene… and I want you to notice something in verse 40.

The father says:

"And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not."

Notice those last four words… *But they could not!*

Now, why is that so surprising? Because if you go back to the beginning of Luke 9:

Luke 9:1 (ESV)
9 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases,

And then He sent them out … and Luke says they preached the Gospel, healing everywhere!

These weren't men who had never encountered spiritual opposition. They had been commissioned by Jesus. They had been given authority by Jesus. They had already participated in ministry in His name… But now they're facing a situation they cannot overcome.

And I think that's worth pausing over! … Because sometimes we assume that what God has done through us in the past automatically prepares us for everything we'll encounter in the future.

We've prayed before. We've trusted God before. We've seen Him answer prayer before.
And then something comes along that exposes just how dependent we still are upon Him.

Here's something I want you to remember: Just because we got by doing something one way in the past, doesn't mean it's going to work the same way in the future!

Yesterday's victories don't eliminate today's need for prayer. Yesterday's faithfulness doesn't mean I can walk through today's challenges relying upon myself.
And yesterday's experiences with God should never become a substitute for my time with Him today!

The longer we're in the faith, we run the risk of becoming so familiar with the things of God that we forget how dependent upon God we really are!

We know what to do. We know what to say. We know how things work.
And without even realizing it, our confidence begins shifting from the Lord to our own experience.

Now, the text doesn't tell us everything that was happening in the hearts of these disciples. But Jesus' response will make it clear that dependence upon God is central to understanding their failure.

Here's what I've learned and am learning… Sometimes God allows us to come face-to-face with something beyond our ability so that we will recognize our need for Him.

Maybe that's where some of us are today. Maybe you're facing something that seems beyond your ability. You've tried to work through it. You've done what you know to do. But the situation hasn't changed…

And perhaps the most important thing you can recognize is that your limitations are not God's limitations.

The disciples could not do it… But Jesus could. There was never a lack of ability in Jesus!

Which points us to our second point:

2. Some Challenges Require a Deeper Dependence Upon God

So Luke tells us what happened when Jesus intervened, but reading about this event through Marks Gospels provides a little more detail for us!

Mark 9:26–29 (ESV)
26 And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” 29 And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.*”

Notice, Jesus doesn't give them a new technique. He doesn't tell them they need a better strategy or that they need to “try harder”… He points them to prayer

Why? Because prayer is an expression of our dependence upon God. Prayer reminds us that we are not the source of the power that’s needed… God is!!

And I wonder how often we approach the challenges in our lives by asking God to help us accomplish what we've already decided needs to happen.

We come to Him with our plans, our solutions, and our expectations and sometimes what we really want is for God to bless what we've already determined to do.

But prayer is meant to be something deeper than that. Prayer is not simply bringing God into our plans. It's bringing ourselves into submission to His plans!

And that brings me back to the title of today's message: When It's Time to Turn Up the Heat.

What do I mean by that? I'm not talking about becoming more frantic, more emotional, or more determined to convince God to do what we want.

Turning up the heat isn’t about getting God to move—it’s about drawing closer to Him so He can reveal what’s keeping us from moving.

Sometimes we're so focused on what we want God to change around us that we haven't considered what He may want to change within us.

Maybe it's our pride. Maybe it's our unwillingness to surrender control. Maybe it's an attitude we've allowed to take root. Maybe it's a misplaced confidence in our own abilities.
Or maybe we've simply allowed our relationship with God to become routine.

We still believe in Him. We still worship Him. We still pray.
But we've lost something of that conscious, daily dependence upon Him.

And sometimes a challenge beyond our ability to accomplish comes along that exposes it.

What about fasting?

Some ancient manuscripts (copies of the original writings) of Mark 9:29 include the words prayer "and fasting."

A vast majority of translations include it while others, like the ESV and NIV leave it out and place an * to acknowledge the manuscripts that include it…

Whether its supposed to be there or not isn’t so necessary to the point that Jesus is making, that being … the greater the challenge, the greater the prayer emphasis (which is why I believe fasting should be there because it’s consistent with what the people of God did when faced with extraordinary circumstances.

I’ll teach on fasting in the weeks ahead, but for today, suffice to say

The answer to greater challenges isn't greater confidence in ourselves. It's greater dependence upon God… prayer and fasting position to greater dependence upon God!

And that dependence isn't merely something we talk about. It's something we cultivate.
Through prayer. Through surrender. Through time in His Word. And yes, at times, through fasting.
Because sometimes what needs to change most isn't the situation we're asking God to change….. it's us.

Which brings us to our third point:

3. Some Challenges Call Us To Seek God Together

Luke 9:41–43a (ESV)
41 Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42 While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43 And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

What an incredible moment this is … we had this father begging and pleading with the disciples to heal his boy, but they couldn't … but Jesus steps in…and while the boy is still coming toward Him, the evil spirit throws him to the ground. But Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit and He heals the boy.

And then Luke tells us something beautiful… Jesus gives the boy back to his father.

Sound familiar?

Remember that grieving widow in Luke 7? Her only son had died. And as the funeral procession made its way out of town, Jesus stepped into the path of death itself and said:

Luke 7:14–15 (ESV)
14 …Young man, I say to you, arise." 15 And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

And now, here in Luke 9, we see that same compassionate heart of our Savior.

In Luke 7, a grieving mother receives her son back from the dead.
In Luke 9, a desperate father receives his son back from the grip of darkness.

Two parents. Two only sons. Two seemingly hopeless situations… And one compassionate Savior! ….
What the disciples were powerless to accomplish, Jesus accomplished with a word.

Because where human strength reaches its limits, the power and compassion of Jesus does not.

And notice how Luke describes the crowd's response.

Luke 9:43
And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

I love that. Because the focus of the story isn't ultimately the failure of the disciples. It's the majesty of Jesus. The same Jesus whose glory was revealed on the mountain has now demonstrated His authority in the valley.

And everyone is astonished at the majesty of God. But there's another application I want us to consider…

Sometimes the challenges we face remind us of our personal need for God and sometimes they remind us how much we need to seek Him together.

We see this throughout Scripture.

When Jehoshaphat faced an overwhelming enemy, he called the people together to seek the Lord.
When Esther faced a situation that threatened her people, she called for a united fast.
When the church in Acts was preparing to send out missionaries, they worshiped, fasted, and prayed together.

There are moments when God's people recognize that what lies before them is greater than anything they can accomplish through human strength alone… and they respond by seeking Him together.

Now, I don't want us to miss something.

We don't pray together because God is somehow more powerful when more people are praying.
We pray together because we share a common dependence upon the same powerful God.

We humble ourselves together. We surrender together. We seek His wisdom together.
And we remind one another that our confidence is not in ourselves… It's in Him!

And that brings us back to where we began.

Some challenges expose the limits of our spiritual readiness and call us into a deeper dependence on God through prayer and fasting.

So What are you facing?
Maybe you're facing a challenge that feels bigger than you are.
Maybe it's something in your marriage. Maybe it's one of your children.
Maybe it's a relationship that's broken, a burden you've been carrying, or a situation that just doesn't seem to change.

And it's not that you've prayed, you've prayed like you've always prayed… but may the heat needs to get turned up bit … maybe the spiritual disciplines you've employed in the past aren't going to work here …. maybe "this answer" only comes by prayer and fasting..

The disciples were facing something they couldn't overcome and Jesus pointed them to a deeper dependence upon God.

Sometimes the challenge before us reveals something God wants to do within us.

Maybe it's time to turn up the heat!

Again, turning up the heat isn't about getting God to move—it's about <u>drawing closer to Him</u> so He can reveal what's keeping us from moving.

And maybe, just maybe, the greatest thing God wants to accomplish through the challenge you're facing isn't simply changing your circumstances… Maybe it's changing you.

So whatever you're facing today, whatever you've been carrying, whatever you've been asking God to do… Perhaps it's time to turn up the heat… if you want something you've never had before, do something you've never done before … more prayer, more fasting, more dependence upon God…

Now, I want to shift gears for just a few minutes. Because while we've been talking about the challenges we face personally, I believe there's something important happening in the life of our church.

I believe we're standing at what I would call a crisis of opportunity.

And I don't use the word *crisis* because something is wrong. Quite the opposite! … We have seen God at work in our midst in ways that we have never experienced before in this church!

To the Glory of God alone, our church is growing in every conceivable way … spiritually, relationally, numerically, missionally, and financially! It is an exciting time to be at Integrity Church … but its also humbling!

Because I believe this next year may perhaps be the most formative year we've ever experienced at Integrity Church… are you sensing that? Are you seeing God at work in our midst? We have to decide on meeting space, new pastoral hires, the launching of a campus into Sound Beach among many other things…

Church, I don't want us to miss what God has for us tomorrow simply because we're relying on what we've experienced yesterday!

And that's why I believe it's time for us as a church family to TURN UP THE HEAT!

As we prepare to begin 2027, We're launching a special season of seeking God that we're calling: FIRST THINGS FIRST!

And it all begins NEW YEAR'S EVE! … so let's ring in the New Year together!
We're going to gather as a church family for an incredible night of worship, prayer, testimonies and celebration as we step into 2027 together!

And when the clock strikes midnight, we're launching something called… THE FIRST 72!
72 consecutive hours of prayer!

We'll be looking for 288 people, each willing to carry the baton of guided prayer to the Throne of God for 15 minutes! Think about that! One church family. 288 commitments. 72 hours. <u>One continuous conversation with God</u>!

And that's just the beginning… We're dedicating the first 21 days of 2027 to prayer and fasting, seeking God for our lives, our families, our church and reaching the lost.

And as we pray for the lost, We'll gather 1,000 names to post on the wall… One thousand people we're asking God to bring to Christ in 2027!

We'll be sharing all the details in the coming weeks, including how YOU can be part of it!

But church, let me bring us back to Luke 9.

Those disciples had experienced the power of Jesus before. They had seen Him work. They had even been used by Him to accomplish extraordinary things!

But yesterday's experiences weren't enough for the challenge they faced that day!

And I don't want us to make that same mistake!

God has done some incredible things at Integrity Church, but we cannot allow yesterday's victories to become a substitute for today's dependence upon Him! Remember that desperate father? The disciples couldn't… BUT JESUS COULD!

… And church, as we look toward everything God has placed before us, that's where our confidence needs to be!

Not in our experience. Not in our growth. Not in our plans. BUT IN JESUS!
Because the answer to greater challenges isn't greater confidence in ourselves… it's greater dependence upon God!
So church, it's time to TURN UP THE HEAT! And we're going to begin 2027 by putting…

FIRST THINGS FIRST … Let's Pray!