



The Austin Stone
COMMUNITY CHURCH

JESUS IS BETTER

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The story of Jesus healing a boy with an unclean spirit is one of the most powerful encounters recorded in Mark's Gospel. Found in chapter 9, the writer tells us about a violent spirit that has tormented a young boy since birth. The account is graphic, and it's difficult not to read the story and feel compassion for the disturbed boy.

However, hidden in the narrative is a curious phrase that has provided encouragement to saints throughout the ages. Tucked away in verse 24, the father cries out "I believe; help my unbelief!" In five words, a first-century father captures the wonderful tension of Christian living.

When we gather for corporate worship, "I believe; help my unbelief!" is the same tension that we find ourselves living. We hear sermons, read Scriptures, and sing songs where our hearts are often cold to the truth we proclaim. Verses like "at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" sound grand, but are they actually true?

We are driven by our loves. For our loves, we'll give and fight. The husband who loves his bride lays his life down for her. The father who loves his child will give whatever he must for their good.

There is no other, so sure and steady... upon this Rock I will stand.

"Jesus Is Better," then, is a hymn of praise in the midst of lament. The song starts with confession: Because of Christ's work, I am upheld. In a clear allusion to Matthew 7, we confess that we stand on the Rock of Ages. We have been given citizenship to the Kingdom of Christ - the kingdom that will never fail - and now we confess that we submit to His lordship alone.

Your kindly rule has shattered and broken the curse of sin's tyranny.

Even still, the same Christ who is our sure foundation is also the victorious King who has shattered the regime of all false, tyrannical lords. While these false lords - idolatry, sin, Satan - rule oppressively, the ruler of the Kingdom of light rules by His everlasting kindness. His kindness is so rich that He lays His own life down for His people. His blood has been shed - His head has been crushed - in our place.

These realities are glorious — this King is better than all.

Jesus is better – make my heart believe

And that's what makes these last verses so powerful. When we sing that "Jesus is better," we are both testifying to something that we believe, while

confessing just how much we don't.

Make no mistake: Jesus is better than the frailty of riches. Jesus is sovereign over my sorrows. Jesus supplies more comforts in His eternal rest than any vacation home could promise. But my heart is sick, and as long as I am in this corrupted body, there will always be that little morsel of doubt hiding away in the crevice of my heart.

This is why we need songs that operate both as testimony and confession. We need songs that shape the contours of heart, but also attempt the impossible by verbalizing the groans that are in fact "too deep for words." (cf. Romans 8:23)

We need new loves. We need new hearts. There is only one who can change that. Thankfully, by the power of His Spirit, He can make our feeble hearts believe. He did it for the father in Mark 9. He's done it for saints throughout the ages. And as long as He tarries, He will continue to do it until we finally behold that kind face breaking through the clouds.

Jesus, you are better — please make our hearts believe.