

**MARK**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Mark chapter 9 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In this chapter we will see the glorious Transfiguration of Jesus, we will see Him in all of His glory!

One commentary said this about Mark chapter 9. He wrote,

The transfiguration, during which Christ shows forth His divine splendor and the Father speaks audibly in the hearing of three apostles is a true high point in the book of Mark. The Servant of the Father and of humans is glorified. After giving an account of the powerlessness of the disciples to work miracles apart from Christ, Jesus speaks of His crucifixion for the second time. Amazingly, the apostles do not grasp that concept and argue about which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom age. Then Jesus speaks of rewards for service and retribution in hell for the wicked.

- James McGowan, The Gospel of Mark, p. 117

If you remember from our last study in Mark chapter 8, Peter made that great confession of faith that was revealed to him by God the Father. He said in regards to who Jesus is, **“You are the Christ.”** Mark 8:29. In other words, Peter is acknowledging that Jesus is the Messiah, the One the prophets spoke of.

Then Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection and Peter, who just had that awesome spiritual revelation, rebukes Jesus for speaking of those things. Peter had other plans for Jesus I guess and death was not on that list. And Jesus tells Peter, **“Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”** Mark 8:33.

Jesus came to do the Father's will and that was to go to the cross and pay in full the penalty for the sins of the world! And Peter was trying to keep Jesus from doing that and thus, Peter was acting like Satan in his actions and Jesus called him on it!

And then Jesus spoke on the cost of discipleship, something we don't see today. Denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Jesus. With that said, let's begin reading in Mark chapter 9, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

## **MARK 9**

### **VERSE 1**

Who is Jesus speaking of and what in the world is He speaking about? First, He is speaking of Peter, James and John. Now some have a hard time with this because these men have died and the kingdom is still not established.

Jesus was not speaking of the rapture or the Second Coming. That was not what Jesus was talking about. He was saying that these men will see a powerful display of the glory of God, what He will be like after His death and resurrection, what He will be like in the Kingdom Age.

Why was this important? Because Jesus, back in Mark chapter 8, just spoke about His death and resurrection and I think this was an assurance to Peter, James and John that death was not going to hold Him. That He was going to be raised in glory! In other words, we call it the

***TRANSFIGURATION!***

VERSES 2-3

So six days after Jesus spoke those words He took Peter, James and John up on this high mountain. What mountain is this speaking of? Some say that this is speaking of Mount Tabor, which was located about 45 minutes north of Jerusalem by tour bus. And that is the key, the tour companies love this spot because it is easy to get to. But keep in mind that Mount Tabor sits at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, about 11 miles west of the Sea of Galilee and its summit is only 1,843 feet. Not a **“high mountain”** if you think about it!

Not only is it in the wrong location in regards to where Jesus was at, Caesarea Philippi, but archaeologists tell us that in Jesus’ day Mount Tabor had a fortress on the top, which would have made it an unlikely place for the private nature of the transfiguration. So I don’t think this fits with the text or what archaeology is telling us.

Others say that it is Mount Miron, which is a high mountain at an elevation of 3,926 feet and it lies midway between Caesarea Philippi and Capernaum. That is a possibility but I think there is one that fits better.

Keep in mind that they are in the area of Caesarea Philippi and thus, I believe that this high mountain is none other than Mount Hermon which rises up some 9,230 feet. Now I don’t believe that they went to the top of the mountain but Jesus brought them **“up on a high mountain by themselves.”**

While they were up there we are told that Jesus was **“transfigured”** before them. The Greek word is METAMORPHOO, (met-am-or-fo’-o) and it speaks of “change in form” or “to change appearance from within.” We get our English word metamorphosis from this Greek word. Think of a caterpillar changing into a butterfly, that is the idea with this word.

Now to fill in some of the details of what was going on here. Luke 9:32 tells us that after they climbed Mount Hermon, which could have taken them a good part of the day, Peter, James and John got tired and fell asleep. Jesus brought them up there to pray, to share with them the glory of the kingdom, and they wanted to sleep! But the Lord woke them up in a powerful way!

And here on this mountain Jesus is transfigured before them, and, as I have said, it means “to be changed into another form.”

Thus, what was veiled in His flesh is now revealed, they saw Jesus in glory! This was not just some costume or disguise Jesus was wearing, He was changed, He was **TRANSFIGURED!** As one writer put it, “For a brief moment that veil of his humanity was lifted, and his true essence was allowed to shine through. The glory which was always in the depths of his being rose to the surface for that one time in his earthly life. Or put another way, he slipped back into eternity, to his pre-human glory. It was a glance back and a look forward into his future glory!” (R. Kent Hughes, Mark Volume 2, p. 15)

And I love Mark’s little note that the clothes of Jesus became whiter than any laundromat could get them! Even Mr. Clean couldn’t get them any whiter!

Now notice what happens as Jesus is transfigured before them.

#### VERSE 4

Moses represented the Law, Elijah the prophets, two of the heavy hitters of the Jewish faith, and they appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. They affirmed that Jesus is the Messiah, the One that Moses and the prophets spoke of coming.

Keep in mind that Moses had passed from this world 1,400 years before and Elijah had passed some 900 years before. And here they are, with Jesus and I think the point here is that God will raise the dead in glory. That not only will Jesus be put to death and be raised, but so will His followers, it was hope in the resurrection life!

They also were discussing the death of Jesus, His departure, as Luke 9:30-31 tells us. Now this discussion went on for a period of time, and as the disciples woke up, after listening for a while, Peter gets uncomfortable and breaks the silence.

#### VERSES 5-10

Luke tells us that Peter, James, and John were all asleep, and when they awoke they saw Jesus transfigured with Elijah and Moses. And poor Peter, he didn't know what to say but that didn't stop him from talking.

May we learn that lesson. We have a hard time with silence, but if there is nothing to say, don't say it. Here Peter wanted to build a little mountain top resort on Mount Hermon. He was saying to the Lord, "You don't need to go down, you don't have to go to Jerusalem, to the cross and die. We can just enjoy our time up here; it doesn't have to end!" But it needed to happen, Jesus did need to go to the cross if we were to be set free from our sin.

Another important point here is Peter put Moses and Elijah on the same level with Jesus. ***"We have the Law, Moses! We have the prophets, Elijah! We have Jesus, the Messiah! It doesn't get any better than this!"***

First of all, God is not equal with any man or anything. In Isaiah 42:8 we are told, **"I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images."**

And yet that is what Peter did and the Lord corrected him very quickly. The Father tells them to listen and obey the words of Jesus, focus on Him now. In Hebrews 1:1-2 we are told, **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”** You see, the last words from God is from His Son! *LISTEN TO HIM!*

And today we listen to every Tom, Dick and Harry. We elevate some leaders, some pastors to the point that they are infallible. We have satellite feeds to several locations so this pastor can be heard. Wait a minute, aren't we supposed to be listening to Jesus? Of course we are. The best of men are men at best, don't make them into a god!

And as soon as the Father is done speaking, we see Moses and Elijah gone and who is left? Jesus! What an important lesson to learn and believe, to hold onto no matter how many people, friends, have left us. It is as Hebrews 13:5 says, **“... ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”** You can take that to the bank.

Now as they are coming down the mountain Jesus tells them not to tell anyone about this until **“the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”** Why would Jesus tell them to keep this a secret? The Jews were looking for the Messiah who would come and set them free from Roman persecution, the Roman bondage that they were in, not a suffering servant.

Thus, keep it a secret for now because it is not time. Speak forth these words after He is risen and that is exactly what they have done and folks, since the Lord has risen, we are not to keep silent about His truths! We are to bring people to Jesus; we are to share of His atoning death for our sins and His resurrection from the grave on the third day!

I'm sure they talked about this amongst themselves for months, and they still didn't get it. In fact, they fully didn't understand these things until after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In John 12:16 we are told, **“His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.”**

Now of this day, listen to what Peter has to say and it may surprise you. In II Petr 1:16-21 we are told, **“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”**

Peter is saying that they did not follow some fairy tale, some fable but he was an eyewitness of Jesus being glorified before them on the Mount of Transfiguration. He heard God the Father speak and tell them to listen to His Son, to listen to Jesus!

Now as much as they saw the Lord glorified before them, as much as they saw this with their own eyes and were convinced by this, there is something that is even more sure. What is that?

The prophetic word of God can be trusted more so than what we see with our own eyes. Think about that. Fruit and wax fruit, can you tell them apart? Probably not today because the fake looks so real. You can be deceived by your eyes but not by God's Word!

Thus, we don't walk by sight we walk by faith and trust in what God has said, just as Peter tells us.

### VERSES 11-13

As they continue heading down the mountain, keep in mind it could have taken them the good part of the day to come down, they ask Jesus a question which was troubling them. You see, the coming of Elijah was clearly prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6, which says, "**Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.**"

If that is true, and it is, then if Jesus is the Messiah, where is Elijah? In fact, the Scribes taught that before the Messiah comes, Elijah will come first, He must come first as a forerunner or herald.

And Jesus answers their question in verses 12 and 13 of Mark chapter 9. In verse 12 Jesus speaks of Elijah coming in the future tense, something that has not happened yet. You see, in Revelation chapter 11 I believe Elijah is one of the two witnesses during the Tribulation Period and thus, Elijah will come before the Lord returns to set up His Kingdom on this earth, just as the Scribes were teaching.



Then Jesus speaks of suffering before glory, speaking of His First Coming. Before He sets up His Kingdom here on earth, He must suffer and die for the sins of the world, and on the third day He will rise from the dead, just as He has done in His First Coming. We look back at the fulfillment of the resurrection!

Then, in verse 13, Jesus speaks of in the past tense regarding Elijah, something that has already taken place. Who is Jesus speaking of? John the Baptist, for in Matthew 11:14 we read regarding John, **“And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.”**

Also, in Luke chapter 1, as the angel Gabriel is announcing to Zacharias that he will have a son and call him John, we read beginning in verse 16, **“And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”** Luke 1:16-17.

That is exactly what John did, he prepared the hearts of the people for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus! So Elijah has come, John the Baptist is a type of Elijah, in Christ’s First Coming; and Elijah will come before the Lord returns in His Second Coming. The Scribes were right!

And please understand that John was not a reincarnation of Elijah. John the Baptist ministered in the role and spirit of Elijah. He was a picture or type of Elijah!

### VERSES 14-18

Before we dig into the text, let me share this with you because it will give you a good picture of what was going on. Raphael’s last painting, The Transfiguration, hangs in the Vatican Gallery.

And as you look at this picture you will see in the upper part the transfigured form of Jesus. There He is in all of His glory with Moses on the left and Elijah on the right.

But there is more. As you look down you see Peter, James and John who just woke up and kind of shielding their eyes from the glory shone from Jesus.

And as you look down even further you will see on ground level a poor demon-possessed boy, his mouth open, looking like a wild man. Also, there was this boy's father and surrounding them were the rest of the disciples.

Interestingly enough, some of the disciples are pointing upward to the glorified Lord on the mountain and as we will see, He will be the boy's only answer to this possession!

The reality is, as we will see, I don't think these disciples were thinking about Jesus, and that was the problem as we have read.

That was the painting, now here is the story. They have finally made it down Mount Hermon and Jesus see's the other nine apostles getting blasted from these professional religious people, the Scribes.

They had a hard time winning their arguments with Jesus and so they picked on His men, and they were winning this time. Now this is really sad to me. You see, we are going to see that these Scribes were happy because these nine apostles couldn't cast out this demon from this young man. These Scribes, instead of being interested in how they could help this boy, they were happy that the disciples of Jesus couldn't set this man free!

And so they are trying to discredit Jesus in front of all these people and discourage those nine apostles who couldn't go up on Mount Hermon with Jesus. And I think they were doing a good job with these men and before all these people who were there.

As one writer put it, “One wonders why these same scribes, instead of further embarrassing the crestfallen disciples before the crowd, did not set about exorcising the demon themselves, as a proof of orthodoxy.” (Cole)

We need to be careful we don’t fall into this ministry of criticizing others without bringing the help to the people who need it.

So as all this commotion is going on Jesus is standing right there and after they saw Him the people ran to Him. Why? Maybe they recognized something the apostles forgot, that Jesus can heal! They heard all that Jesus had done and I am sure many wanted to be touched by Him but there was one that truly needed to be delivered, and that is this demon-possessed boy!

And I love what Jesus does here. He looks over at the Scribes and says, “Why are you picking on My boys? What is your problem man?” I’m paraphrasing of course but the thing I want you to notice is Jesus comes to our aid, He will fight for us, He will stand up for us when everyone else is fighting against us.

Paul, in Hebrews 4:14-16 says, **“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”** I love that. God wants us to take care of our character and He will take care of our reputation, He will fight for us!

Now the Scribes have nothing to say because what could they say? Their evil heart was exposed and they just kept silent. But, out from the crowd a father cries out in desperation. His only son is demon possessed and this demon is trying to kill his only son. He was broken, hopeless and fell down before Jesus because he didn't know how much longer he could protect his son. He brought him to the nine apostles who did not go up with Jesus on Mount Hermon, but they couldn't help. Jesus is all he has left now. That is not a bad thing and that is where God brings us to many times, the end of ourselves and to Jesus!

### VERSES 19-27

As you read this you may be wondering why these nine disciples could not cast this demon from this boy. Remember when Jesus sent them out two by two and as they returned from this road trip we read in Luke 10:17, "**Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.'**" What happened now?

I think there are a couple of things going on here. First of all, maybe they were not happy with Jesus leaving them behind and taking Peter, James and John with Him up on the mountain. Maybe they were thinking, "Hey, Jesus called Peter Satan so why does he get to go up with Jesus?" And bitterness, anger, covetousness and the like, will cause you to take your eyes off of Jesus.

Also, I think the violent actions the demon was manifesting in this boy caused these men to take their eyes off of Jesus and what He could do and place them on this demon and what he was doing.

And that destroyed the faith they had, they were paralyzed with fear, which is the opposite of faith. Fear causes you to lose the presence of God in your life. Here we see Jesus rebuke these men for their unbelief.

Now, what was a distraction to these men was not a distraction to Jesus, He stayed focused. If you are fearing what the devil can do to you tonight, his power, listen carefully to what John tells us, **“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”** Don’t forget that truth!

We now see Jesus begin to question this man about his son. And this man tells Jesus that this has been going on since childhood. Imagine, day in and day out he was watching his son, trying to protect his son as this demon was trying to kill him! What a father this man was. And now, as his son is getting older, he can’t protect him all the time and his only hope is Jesus! Folks, Jesus is the hope for us all and apart from Him there is no lasting hope!

And this father was not sure if Jesus could do anything for his son, but he did have a little hope. He says to Jesus **“But if You can do anything . . .”** Interestingly enough, Jesus turns that question around!

He tells this father, **“If you can believe all things are possible to him who believes.”** Mark 9:23. Of course all things are possible with God, that is not the question. The question is ***“Do you believe?”***

Now faith teachers like to run with that one and they tell us if you name it you can claim it, if you blab it you can grab it! Wrong, wrong, wrong! Jesus is trying to get this man’s faith to grow and is telling him ***“You may not have faith in these men, but what about me? Can you trust me?”***

You see, when we pray we should be trusting in God, that He can do it and we should not be seeking our will to be done, but His. That our will would be conformed to His. It is as I John 5:14-15 says, **“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”** Trust Him for great things and ask that His will be done in your life!

And I love the response of this man because I believe that is our hearts cry many times, **“Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!”** Mark 9:24. He believed a little and he wanted to believe more and thus, he asks God to help his faith to grow. Why? Because it only takes a little faith for God to move mountains but no faith won't move a stone! If you are lacking faith, ask God to increase your faith and then believe in His promise.

As all this is going on the crowds are gathering around Jesus. And Jesus rebukes this demon and this spirit cries out and the boy is delivered!

Now here's the thing. Can people be demon possessed today? Absolutely. In our culture, in our society, Satan destroys lives. And many times it is just the demonic influence, getting people to practice Satanic things. But that is just a door that can be used for people to become possessed.

Let me share this with you. It is a story from the Chicago Tribune from Wednesday January 13, 1988. This story is about the tragic events in the life of a fourteen-year-old boy named Thomas Sullivan. He was a very studious, a very thoughtful young man until he became involved with the occult and Satan worship.

Within a matter of weeks his life changed and not for good. He ended up stabbing his mother and set fire to his house hoping to kill his father and brother. He then cut his own throat and wrists with his Boy Scout knife and he died outside his home in the bloody snow! Satan has come to kill and destroy and we see that in both these stories and it is played out over and over again in the lives of many people!

Now here me out on this because many will try to tell you otherwise. As Christians I don't believe we can be demonically possessed but we can be oppressed and some become overwhelmed by this.

First of all, we can't be possessed as Christians because the Lord is in us, and there is no way He is going to share the throne of our hearts with a demon!

But we can be oppressed or troubled by Satan and his demons. How do we overcome this? First of all, in Psalm 103:6 we read "**The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.**" We need to look to the Lord and that oppression can be replaced with His peace!

And in I John 5:4-5 we are told, "**For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**" We need to believe what the Word of God is saying and rest in Him!

Now as this boy is set free you can imagine the face of this father, the cheers from the crowds, from the disciples, but not all were cheering! Sad to say, in this crowd were the Scribes who by now were slithering away like snakes instead of shouting for joy over what God had done. Why? Because it went against their narrow-minded, man-made religious beliefs and they went away saying nothing! Very sad.

I love how Morgan summed this up for us. He wrote, “He found disputing scribes, a distracted father, a demon-possessed boy, and defeated disciples . . . He silenced the scribes, He comforted the father, He healed the boy, He instructed the disciples.” Exactly and we will see Jesus instruct His disciples in the next few verses even more.

#### VERSES 28-29

Now, as they are alone, these nine disciples wanted to know why they couldn’t cast out this demon? And the answer Jesus gives them is interesting. He tells them, “**This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.**” Mark 9:29.

Now that is interesting to me. I can understand prayer because as these nine encountered this demon-possessed boy they could have had eight of them praying and the other one dealing with the situation but what about fasting?

Fasting is letting go of something, like food, so you can focus on God. Maybe they were so focused on themselves, because they were not allowed to go up to Mount Hermon with Jesus, that they were angry, bitter, coveting and not seeking God!

Prayer and fasting draw us closer to God and it focuses us on the One who can truly help in any situation we face. And think about it, Jesus already gave them the authority to cast out demons. We read of that in Mark 3:14-15, “**Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.**” We also see this in Mark 6:7, “**And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.**” You see, the power was there, but that power was not appropriated into their lives.



Warren Wiersbe put it like this, “The authority that Jesus had given them was effective only if exercised by faith, but faith must be cultivated through spiritual discipline and devotion.”

Notice their question, “**Why could we not cast him out?**” You see, the focus was upon themselves and not the Lord and if you want a remedy for spiritual problems, which this was, then you have to depend on God. It is not about you and they lost that focus because they were not praying, they were not fasting!

Another writer put it like this,

The disciples had been tempted to believe that the gift they had received from Jesus (6:7) was in their control and could be exercised at their disposal. This was a subtle form of unbelief, for it encouraged them to trust in themselves rather than God. They had to learn that their previous success in expelling demons provided no guarantee of continued power. Rather the power of God must be asked for on each occasion in radical reliance upon his ability alone. When faith confronts the demonic, God’s omnipotence is its sole assurance, and God’s sovereignty is its only restriction. This is the faith which experiences the miracle of deliverance.

- William Lane, The Gospel According to Mark,  
The New International Commentary of the New Testament,  
pp. 335-336

What a powerful lesson for us. We need to look to the One who can help us and not try to do it from our own strength. We must not let things get in our way of looking to the Lord, but rely totally on Him. Those mountains in our lives can be moved if we look to the One who can move them, Jesus!

VERSES 30-32

As Jesus heads southward towards Jerusalem, He passed through the region of Galilee and He wants to come in stealth, not wanting anyone to know He is in town. Why? First of all, He was going to focus on His men who would carry on the work after His death and resurrection.

The word “**taught**” in verse 31 is in the imperfect tense, which speaks of constantly doing it, teaching them. But as Jesus spoke of His coming death and resurrection, they didn’t get it.

The second reason He came in stealth was the people wanted Jesus to free them from the Roman bondage they were in and that is not why He came, and He did not want His men to get caught up in this, which was already a problem for them.

But why could they not understand these things? Very simply, the reason they couldn’t understand these things is they had preconceived ideas what the Messiah was all about, just like many do today. Be careful for as it was a stumbling block to these men it can be a stumbling block to us!

Look at things like the deity of Jesus, the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation Period, the Kingdom Age and-so-on. And many have preconceived ideas of these things, even rejecting them because of what they have been taught and not what the Scriptures are saying!

And to me, this is kind of funny. It says that they were afraid to ask Him about this death and resurrection, why? Remember what the Lord said to Peter back in Mark 8:33 when Peter said that this death and resurrection thing is not for you Jesus. He told Peter, “**Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.**” Thus, they did not want to get rebuked for asking!

But keep in mind that Jesus did not rebuke Peter for asking but for telling the Lord, “**Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You.**” Matthew 16:22. God does not rebuke us for our questions, but when He tells us what we need to do, we need to obey even if we don’t understand it or agree with it!

#### VERSES 33-34

Here we see that as they head southward they enter Capernaum. This was the base camp for Jesus’ Galilean ministry, entering probably Peter’s house.

Now as they are traveling the disciples of Jesus were arguing about something. And you thought you had problems traveling with kids in the car! “Don’t make me pull this camel over!” Luke tells us that Jesus knew their hearts, their thoughts, maybe out of ear range but He knew what they were thinking and He begins to question them about it.

And there was this embarrassing silence coming from His men because they were arguing who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. This was an ongoing discussion with these guys, they wanted the good position and Jesus is going to teach them and us a powerful lesson to follow, one that is vastly different from what the world teaches!

#### VERSES 35-37

Now keep in mind that Jesus wanted to know what they were arguing on the road about and they kept silent, they were embarrassed because they were talking about who would be the greatest in the kingdom.

And maybe they were looking down, maybe even moving away from Jesus a little because they were so embarrassed and Mark tells us that Jesus sat down and He called His men back to Him. He wanted to teach them some lessons of faith that are to be put into practice, how they are to live and it is not lording over people but serving them.

Barclay makes this point in regards to Jesus sitting down. He wrote, “When a Rabbi was teaching as a Rabbi, as a master teaches his scholars and disciples, when he was really making a pronouncement, he sat to teach. Jesus deliberately took up the position of a Rabbi teaching his pupils before he spoke.”

And Jesus tells them that if they want to be first you need to learn to be a servant of all. Not something you want to hear if you want to be important in a kingdom! But Jesus is basically saying, “Don’t look out for yourself, but for others!”

Now the word “**servant**” is not the Greek word DOULOS or bonds slave, but DIAKONOS which speaks of a person who attends to the needs of others.

It is as Paul said in Philippians 2:3-4, “**Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**”

What Jesus is doing with His men and with us, is He is challenging us to be *the servant of all*. In the world the idea of power is seen by how many people serve a person.

In ancient China, it was fashionable for wealthy men to grow their fingernails so long that their hands were unusable for basic tasks. This demonstrated that they did not need to do *anything* for themselves; a servant was always there to wait on them.

The world may think of this as greatness, but God does not. Jesus declared that true greatness is shown not by how many serve you, but by how many you serve. And we may not like it but Jesus is our example. Keep in mind that the Gospel of Mark is painting a picture for us of Jesus, the suffering servant. In fact, in Mark 10:42-45 Jesus said, “... ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”

Now is this a very difficult teaching to understand? No, not at all. Then what is the problem? Why is this so hard for us to understand? The problem comes when we have to apply it to our lives. We tend to be self-centered and Jesus wants us to be others-centered.

How are we doing? Think along these lines. Can you rejoice when others are promoted ahead of you? How about in the ministry, can you rejoice as someone is used by God? Can you serve others without the applause, the thanks, the praise of men? God wants you to, He wants you to be a servant of all!

And to give us a picture of what a true servant is all about, Jesus says, “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”

Children were not to get in the way, they were to be seen and not heard. They were not to bother the adults, especially these holy men of God, or so the disciples thought. And Jesus is showing them, and us, that there is no partiality in the kingdom of God. Everyone is important to God, especially children. If you can reach out to all, care for them, then you are doing those things unto the Lord. That is what He was trying to teach His men and us.

#### VERSES 38-42

This is kind of interesting to me. Jesus just got done speaking of being a servant, or reaching out to all, and then John steps in and comes against this man for freeing another person from demon possession.

What was the problem for John here? This man who did this was not a card carrying member of The Apostolic Troop! This is how they saw their ministry. It was very narrow-minded, intolerant, selfish, exclusive and selective.

And Jesus steps in and says he is working with us and not against us. Too often people feel if you are not part of their ministry you are not of God. You have to join their group because they alone love God. And Jesus is saying the exact opposite. God has a variety of ways and people to do His work. Don't limit Him and don't be so narrow-minded, as John was being.

I will give you one example of this. In this particular church there was a church split over how to receive the offering, by collection bag or by a box in the back of the church. Many in the church left because the offering was received instead of using the box, and a church of 100 went down to around 50 people. How sad. Can you imagine such a thing?

Oh, I forgot to tell you, that occurred in this church before I came up here. We are not excluded from letting things get in our way of what God wants to do!

Then, in verse 41 we see Jesus speaking of someone who performs the smallest, the simplest act of hospitality, of love, in the name of Jesus, and that person will be rewarded for their actions. You see, there is no service too small that is done in His name, there are only people who are too big to do the work.

That is the positive side, and now Jesus speaks about the negative side. Those that are not doing good, that are not saved, whose heart is far from Him in verse 42. And Jesus gives this warning to those who cause one of these **“little ones”** to stumble!

First of all, who are these **“little ones”**? I believe it is speaking of these little children Jesus just spoke of and more. I think it is speaking of any child of God that is caused to stumble! The Greek word for **“stumble”** is SKANDALIZO, (skan-dal-od'-zo) and it means to trip or cause someone to veer off course.

In other words, if you cause one of God's children to go off track, to doubt Him, to question Him, to forsake Him, you are in big trouble. In fact, it would be better if you got one of those big millstones and tied it around your neck and you jumped into the sea than face the judgment of God for doing these things to His children! That is a heavy warning!

VERSES 43-48

Jesus is not speaking of cutting off limbs and eyes, for you would reach a point where you would run out! He is speaking of those things that cause us to cling to this world and its wicked behavior and how they must be removed from our lives, cut out just as a surgeon amputates a gangrenous limb! And thus, our hands speak of the deeds we do. Our feet speak of where we are walking, the things we are involved in. Our eyes speak of the things we see, the things we allow into our mind and our hearts. And thus, a heart self-examined is important as you allow the Word of God by the Spirit of God to transform your life!

One commentator put it like this,

What Jesus is calling for is not physical mutilation, but spiritual mortification – the cutting off of harmful practices from one’s life. The hand, foot, and eye encompass the totality of life. The hand symbolizes what we do, the foot where we go, and the eye what we see. His logic is impeccable and compelling. It is better to clean up your fleeting life here through some healthy self-denial, than go bearing your sins to an unending Gehenna, an eternal, smoking rubbish heap where the worms eternally gorge themselves on the refuse of your life. Any sacrifice, any discipline, any self-denial is worth it!

These gory metaphors tell us that halfway measures just will not do it. There must be a severing, a gouging out of sin if there is to be victory. This must be decisive and complete – as serious and final as a hand or a foot or eye cast upon the floor.

- R. Kent Hughes, Mark Volume 2, pp. 39-40



You see, the point that Jesus is making is that you don't keep from sin when it is easy to do so or when you have the time to do it, you have to take sin more seriously than that. Sin is serious and thus, we must be willing to fight against it not only in our own lives but also so that we don't cause others, especially children to veer off course from God by our actions or our enticements! You must take drastic action against sin!

Paul gives us some insight with his struggles when he wrote in I Corinthians 9:27, "**But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**" That phrase "**I discipline my body**" can be translated, "to strike under the eye; to give a black eye."

In other words, Paul did not want his flesh to get the better of him, not that he physically beat himself up, but he fed his spirit and made his flesh a slave and not lord of his life. Many today feed the flesh and they wonder why they have no victory over it.

Whatever you feed you will be a slave to, either the flesh and its desires, its works or the Spirit, a bondsman of Christ and you will see the fruit of the Spirit come forth instead of the works of the flesh! You see, the best prevention against causing others to sin is making whatever sacrifice is necessary to protect oneself from sin.

And if you are not concerned let me give you some details that should cause you to fear if you have not come to Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. The Bible tells us that Hell or Gehenna is the final resting place or place of torment for those who reject God, the Lake of Fire.

And Jesus uses the Valley of Hinnom, a physical place to the south of Jerusalem as an illustration. This is where the city garbage was burned and the smoke and fire burned continually. And if you still don't get it, Jesus said in Mark 9:44, "**where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'**" What does that mean?

The worm speaks of maggots that feed on garbage, dead things. Thus, these maggots will eternally feed upon the eternal bodies of those who have rejected Jesus. The fire burning continually speaks of their eternal bodies being used for fuel for this fire to consume. It is not a pretty picture, nor is it meant to be. It is a reality outside of Christ!

And we as Christians should not miss the point. We need to strive against sin, fight against sin and like I have said, we do that by feeding the Spirit and not the flesh. One writer put it like this,

Christ's compelling logic demands some answers: Are there places where your feet carry you that you have no business being – perhaps a social establishment that you visit after-hours? Are there events which you attend which involve temptations you cannot handle? Regarding the hand, are there hidden activities or habits which occupy you, things perhaps which if someone else knew about, you would be most embarrassed? . . .

Finally, and importantly, Jesus' metaphors recommend that we be willing to endure pain to conquer our sinful habits. It hurts to sever your foot or tear out an eye, and it hurts to give up wrong things in our lives. Better your blood on the ground than your life on the rubbish heap for eternity. If God is speaking to you to do it – do it now!

- R. Kent Hughes, Mark Volume 2, p. 40

Not much more to say about that! Now Jesus will finish up this warning.

VERSES 49-50

Now to understand the point that Jesus is making here, you have to go back to the Old Testament. Most of the sacrificial offerings were seasoned with salt and burned in the fire unto the Lord.

And I believe the point that Jesus is making here in verse 49 is that our lives are seasoned with salt unto the Lord, given as a sacrifice unto Him, and many times we do things when it is not easy, when there is persecution, when things are hot, and God knows and rewards us accordingly.

Thus, we see our lives as a sacrifice unto God, the salt. Paul said in Romans 12:1, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”** As a sacrifice we don’t just give part of our bodies to God, but we give all of ourselves to Him!

Fire speaks of the persecution we face, the trials we endure. Peter expounds on the cost of living for Christ in I Peter 4:1-5, where he says, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”**

And Paul, in II Timothy 3:12 says, **“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”** You see, because we refuse to be like the world, floating downstream like a dead fish, people will come against us. We are swimming against the tide of this world, going upstream, and in doing so, our light exposes the evil that others are doing and they don’t like it!

And Jesus concludes by saying we are to be at peace with others. We are to love people with the understanding that they might not love us back! It is as Jesus said in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”** May we have that kind of love for others, that *AGAPE* love or sacrificial love, that love that Jesus loved with. Be a servant of all!

As I conclude this evening keep in mind that it did take a while for His men did get it, but not yet. They are still going to be arguing who is the greatest even at the time of the Last Supper.

But in the end they did get it. Let me close with these words from Warren W. Wiersbee. He said, “If we are yielded to Him, that suffering will lead to glory, faith will produce power, and our sacrificial service will lead to honor.”

It is as Peter said, **“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”** I Peter 5:10. Peter finally got it, he understood the heart of a servant! How about you?