

Reading Mark Chapter 9: v. 30-50.

Title: Humility & Servanthood are the key to Christian Discipleship.

9:30 Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it.

9:31 For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

9:32 But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

9:33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?"

9:34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.

9:35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

9:36 Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them,

9:37 "Whoever receives one of these children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."

9:38 Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us."

9:39 But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me.

9:40 "For he who is not against us is on our side.

9:41 "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

9:42 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

9:43 "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-

9:44 "where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'

9:45 "And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-

9:46 "where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'

9:47 "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire-

9:48 "where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'

9:49 "For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.

9:50 "Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."

Introduction

Two months ago we discovered that Jesus had begun a new section of His teaching.

It began from Mark Chapter 8: v. 31.

From this point in Mark's gospel, Jesus introduced to His disciples, something that not only shocked them, but also something that they found hard to understand.

Jesus told His disciples that He would have to suffer, die, and rise again from the dead.

Jesus also informed His disciples that suffering before glory would also be the pattern of their discipleship.

Mark 8: v.34. (N.K.J.)

8:34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Last month as we studied Mark 9: v. 1-13, we discovered that Jesus gave Peter, James and John a taste of His glory.

This gave the assurance to his closest disciples that one day Jesus would return in His glory. They had a sort of **“Heavenly experience”**.

This teaching is also encouraging for every Christian.

To know that there is a much better life, after our death, where Jesus will reign in His glory **is something we must all be encouraged about.**

We were not there at the time, but we must trust the witness of these disciples.

To have the assurance in your heart that after your death, one day you will be raised from the dead and live on a New Earth, with the glory of Jesus, and no sin or death or sickness to disturb your eternal life, **is a big encouragement.**

None of us will ever have the same experience as the disciples had 2,000 years ago.

However, every Christian has the holy Spirit living in their hearts.

He is able to encourage us at different times in our lives.

I have known people, when they were close to dying, to have some wonderful experiences with the Holy Spirit and sometimes with Jesus.

God will give you the experiences that you need, **when you need them.**

The problem with the disciples of Jesus, at this point, is that they only wanted to experience the “Glory” of Jesus.

They **didn’t want to experience or even think or know** about the **“Suffering of Jesus”**

The disciples couldn’t understand the need for Jesus to suffer.

Jesus rebukes Peter because he couldn’t understand this subject. **(Mark 8: v. 32)**

The disciples also didn’t understand that Jesus would **rise from the dead.**

The disciples also were unable to cast out a demon, because they didn’t depend upon Jesus through **“Prayer and Fasting”.**

In the next section of Mark, that we will learn about today, Jesus is correcting some misunderstandings about His ministry.

Jesus also had to correct the disciples thinking about the nature of discipleship.

I will divide our passage into two main sections.

1. The Challenge for humility - Chapter 9: v.30-37.

We live in a world today that teaches us that we must be the best and that we must try to be “FIRST” in everything.

Being the first to invent something is the key to prosperity for any company.

I know that for the last 30 years a large Japanese company has employed people from the U.S.A and the U.K. & Europe, simply to try and imagine what the world will be like in 20 years- time.

Once these people have a clear idea of what the world might look like, they then plan and invent products for this new type of living.

Today we have Driverless Cars, Smart Phones, Solar Power Houses, and many inventions that began life over 30 years ago.

So to be first, and to be the best and to be the greatest is something that is imbedded in our society. It is part of our D.N.A.

Therefore, when Jesus told his disciples that to be last is the best, it didn’t fit very well into their thinking.

It probably doesn’t fit too well into our thinking either, if we are honest!!!

Let us examine v. 30-37 and discover how Jesus **corrected the thinking of His disciples.**

In v. 33 we are told that Jesus has now arrived in Capernaum, and taught His disciples in a house.

Jesus asked His disciples a question. He said **“What was it that you discussed among yourselves on the road?”**

The disciples kept silent because they didn’t want Jesus to know about their discussions.

However, Jesus already knew what they had been talking about, because He knows everything that is going on in people’s hearts, minds and conversations.

Jesus realised that the disciples didn't want to expose their hearts, so He decided to sit down and give them a lesson in "**True Discipleship**".

The fact that Jesus sat down to teach made his teaching very formal and important.

In the western world, everybody stands up to teach, but in those days, if a teacher sat down to teach, it was a serious teaching lesson, and the students needed to take careful notice.

The first thing that Jesus said to the disciples was this, "**If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and a servant of all.**"

After this statement Jesus proceeded to give an illustration of what He meant by this statement.

Jesus took a little child in his arms and said to the disciples "**whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me**".

There are a few things that we need to understand here by way of cultural context.

Firstly, children had NO social status in Israel at this time.

They were at the bottom of the social ladder.

Children were not allowed to be inside a teaching meeting, like the one that Jesus was giving to His disciples.

Secondly, social status was an important part of the culture at this time.

Everybody had a particular place in society.

If you are Japanese you can understand this much better. However, in the western world the thinking is very different today.

So for Jesus to interrupt a teaching session and involve a child was a very big break with the culture.

The disciples would have been shocked.

The disciples certainly wouldn't forget this incident.

So what "Truth" is Jesus trying to communicate to His disciples and what practical application can we apply to our lives today?

Jesus was trying to teach His disciples the following lessons.

a) **True Discipleship is the very opposite thinking of the world's way of operating.**

b) **Jesus was trying to expose the pride inside the hearts of the disciples.**

Pride is a very subtle satanic influence that we don't often recognise in our own hearts. The disciples were arguing on the road about who would be first.

Jesus knew this would be a problem for the future, so he wanted to confront the disciples with this warning.

It was pride that caused the devil to rebel against God.

Pride is very subtle and it can take lots of different forms.

If the sin of pride is allowed to take control of our hearts it can cause big problems.

It can cause conflict, divorce, and even war on a national scale.

Christians are not exempt from the temptation to be seduced by pride.

c) **True Discipleship involves "Humility".**

Humility is difficult to describe, but easy to discern in a situation.

Someone once said, "We never become truly great, we never do our best work until we are "clothed with humility"".

The greatest example of humility is to be like Jesus.

He was God, and yet became a servant.

There is a true story about mountain goats in Nepal which illustrates what is needed sometimes to overcome pride.

In Nepal there are high mountains and wild goats roam around on very narrow paths. These paths are only wide enough for one goat to travel along.

One day a Missionary was walking in the mountains along one of these narrow paths.

He stopped and noticed two wild goats going in opposite directions.

When they met each other, it was clear that they could not pass each other.
There could either be a fight and the winner would pass, but they might both be killed by falling off the mountain.
As the missionary watched the conflict between the two goats he was amazed.
The larger goat lay down with his head bowed to the ground.
The smaller goat walked on top of him and was able to continue on the path.
Then the larger goat walked forward in the opposite direction.
You would have expected the smaller goat to lie down and not the larger goat!!
God spoke to the missionary about Humility that avoids conflict and he was the richer for the experience.

d) True discipleship involves servanthood in ministry.

It involves serving people for the sake of Jesus, and not for our own satisfaction or reward.

The disciples were being prepared to serve Jesus in ministry and present the Gospel to the good, the bad, and the ugly in society.

Being a servant of Jesus, means just that, serving Jesus.

We must never forget that "Service" at O.I.C. means serving JESUS.

It doesn't matter if we are on the pack down team or the set up team or the hospitality team, or the welcome team, we do it for Jesus, under the umbrella of OIC.

One of the things that has encouraged me since I have been the Pastor at OIC and that is many people delight to serve Jesus in different ways, however humble.

This is the first Sunday of 2018. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ and you are not presently serving Jesus at OIC with a ministry, then NOW is the time to start.

There are plenty of vacancies and God will slowly equip you to serve if you are willing. The qualification is willingness and humility and not qualifications!!

e) True discipleship involves the full surrender of our old life to God.

We do this so that through the Holy Spirit, He might fill us with a "New Life" in humility and service.

Our old life is full of pride and self-seeking. We must surrender it to Jesus.

Don't fight against the Lord your God; you will not succeed.

We now come to the second section of our passage.

2. Be at Peace with each other – Chapter 9: v. 38-50.

This section begins with the disciples making another mistake.

In v. 38 the disciples rejected someone who wasn't a follower of Jesus; he was casting out a demon in the name of Jesus.

We don't have any details about this "other person" who was casting out a demon in the name of Jesus.

However, from the following scriptures we do know that casting out demons and other miracles is not proof of a relation with God, through Jesus.

Mathew 7 : v. 21-23.

7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

7:22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

7:23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

What Jesus replied to the disciples was more of a challenge to their humility, than it was a support to the person who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus.

In v. 41 Jesus points out that if the disciples receive even a small amount of support, like a cup of water, then this action is not to be despised.

In other words, even if the miracle worker who was casting out demons, was not a true disciple of Jesus, then Jesus could still use his actions in a positive way.

In v. 40 Jesus said, "**For he who is not against us is on our side.**"

In other words, in the future, the disciples would need to remember this truth.

Jesus then moves on to give the disciples some severe warnings in v. 42-50.

After each of the warnings that Jesus gives His disciples, He follows the warning with the reality of "**Hell**".

Jesus quotes from Isaiah Chapter 66: v. 24.

Let me first give you this quote in its context.

Isaiah 66: v. 22-24 in the New Living Translation.

²² "As surely as my new heavens and earth will remain,
so will you always be my people,
with a name that will never disappear,"
says the LORD.

²³ "All humanity will come to worship me
from week to week
and from month to month.

²⁴ And as they go out, they will see
the dead bodies of those who have rebelled against me.

For the worms that devour them will never die,
and the fire that burns them will never go out.

All who pass by
will view them with utter horror."

You don't need to be a Bible Scholar to understand what Jesus is teaching His disciples here in these verses,

Jesus is teaching his disciples that "SIN" is serious in God's eyes and that it has **consequences**.

Before you become a Christian, one of the hardest things is to realise that you were born with a sinful nature, and that sinful nature causes you to commit acts of sin.

For us to understand "Sin", God provided us with 10 rules for living.

These rules are found in Exodus 20: v.1-17 and Deuteronomy Chapter 5: v. 1-20.

Let me read out these rules in the N.L.T.

1. You must not have any other god but me. – This means that visiting a Temple in Japan for prayer or worship is a sin.
2. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens, or on the earth, or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them. – are there any idols in our hearts?
3. You must not misuse the name of the name of the Lord your God. – There are many people who do this. This is a sin in God's eyes.
4. Remember the Sabbath Day to set it apart as "Holy" – How are we doing?
5. Honour your Father and Mother.
6. You must not commit murder.
7. You must not commit adultery.
8. You must not steal.
9. You must not testify falsely against your neighbour.
10. You must not covet your neighbour's house, wife, male or female servant, or anything else that belongs to your neighbour.

When we hear these 10 commands most people might think that they are doing well, until Jesus tells us that the things that we think about doing, but do not actually do are also a sin. Then we are challenged.

If we are all very honest then each one of us have at least broken one of God's rules and are guilty of this sin.

The important thing for us today is that although we deserve to be punished by God and go to eternity in Hell, Jesus has provided a way of escape.

This way of escape was at great cost to God and to Jesus.

It is this act of sacrifice on God's part that we are celebrating today as we take part in Holy Communion.

Now you have two choices.

You can take part in this service, or you can refuse the bread and the wine as it is passed around.

It is your choice, there is no pressure to take part.

However, if you want to become a Christian today, you can actually pray to receive Jesus Christ in your life, by first saying sorry to God, for your sin and then asking His forgiveness.

Once you have done this you can take part in your first "Communion" and remember the death of Jesus for your "personal sin".

We will pray now and you will be given an opportunity to respond if you want to become a Christian today.

Let us pray.