

### **Announcements:**

1. Directory—confirm info
2. Today—Women’s Coffee Talk
3. Next Sunday—new members
4. Thursday—Grand Prix @ 6:30pm
5. March 6th Rusty funeral @ 11am
6. March 13th Clean up day @ 10am
7. Church of Nazarene in Winston

## Part 2 Mark 9:38-50

We have come to a point in Mark where Jesus is spending more time training the disciples and less time speaking to the crowds. The focus has shifted towards Jerusalem. The lessons that Jesus is teaching the disciples are not easy, feel good lessons. He speaks of his death and then challenges their discipleship. He said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

He was transfigured up on the mountain; they got a glimpse of His glory and heard God the Father say, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”

The disciples try to heal a boy possessed by an evil spirit and the disciples couldn’t. This is not to long after Jesus empowered them to do this when He sent them out by two’s. Jesus told them this kind can come out only by prayer.

Jesus speaks of His death a second time, and then on the the way to their next destination the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. When they get to their destination, Jesus asks them what they were arguing about. There was silence. They were caught. One finally speaks up and asks which of the disciples will be the greatest in the Kingdom. Again, Jesus responds with a a statement that turns their thinking from a selfish, worldly mindset and intent to helping them understand God’s Kingdom. Jesus flips things upside down. He says, “Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the

servant of everyone else.” Jesus tells them that humility and serving is the name of the game.

These are lessons that hit between the eyes. But they are lessons that will prepare them for what they are about to face. These lessons were to grow them as disciples. Jesus was calling them towards radical discipleship. The kind of discipleship that calls them and you and I to abandon and forsake the world's system of thinking and our selfish desires, but instead as Paul said, I “beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.” If that were enough, Paul a little later in Ephesians 5 says, “Be imitators of God.” “Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.” Radical discipleship.

This discipleship that the disciples, you and I are called to is different. It is a calling to get away from our selfish desires. It's a calling to get away from a need of status filled with success and power, control and comfort. Instead, it's a call to love; it's a call to forgive; it's a call to think of others as “more important than ourselves” (Philippians 2:3); it's the call to be “ambassadors of Christ.” (2 Cor 5:20). It's a call of humility and service. The kind of service that is willing to serve even those that have nothing to offer us back...and they aren't like us. They don't have a status that adds to ours. They may even be different than us. Maybe they do church different than us. They may worship different than us. The culture they grew up in may be different than ours. They may lead a little different than what we are used to. They may not be as organized or may be too organized; they may be event oriented or maybe they are task oriented. They may be person oriented or they may not be gifted with people. We are even called to even serve our enemy. We are called to love and forgive our enemy. We are called to radical discipleship. The calling is a high calling. It is a calling that you and I cannot do

on our own...and it's a calling that has no room for selfish desires, but only for a humility that is founded in biblical love and a service that is so others oriented that it is willing to sacrifice in order for that other to experience the goodness of God apart from my perception of how I think it should be done. Radical discipleship is not exclusive in who it reaches, serves, loves, forgives, hopes for, etc.

Radical discipleship has as a characteristic, an attribute of humility and service. Humility that says my desires and my ways are not the only way, but they could be one of the ways. However, I am going to serve by not worrying about getting my way, instead finding a way to build you up towards Christ. I am so in love with Christ and committed to Him that when I see you, I see God's love for you and I don't experience anything but God's heart for you.

The lessons that Jesus is challenging the disciples with are lessons that force us to think towards 'throwing off the old self and putting on the new self.' It's a challenge to walk in a manner worthy of the calling of the gospel. Our passage this morning is really a 'Part 2' of last weeks passage, but also the last few months of passages and scriptures we have looked at.

Mark 9:38-50. Let's read our passage, take a deeper look at it and then ask what this is telling us. Mark 9:38-50. [READ]

The passage of scripture we are going through this morning may seem to be two, maybe three distinct pieces, but I firmly believe they tie together what we looked at last week. They are 'part 2' of deeper understanding of the truth we looked at last week, "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be servant of everyone else."

**Verses 38-41**, Mark tells us of John coming to Jesus all proud of himself because he stopped someone from doing ‘their work’. Isn’t it ironic. Just before this, the disciples could not cast the demon out of the possessed boy. And here, this guy is casting out demons ‘in Jesus name’ and they are telling him to stop. This guy was not one of them, “he was not in their group.” Catch what John said, ‘in our group.’ This guy, whoever he was, was not doing ministry the same as them. The pride that had built within the disciples. They were special. They were part of the in-crowd with Jesus. This guy was not.

Their heart may have seemed to be in the right place because they were trying to preserve the ministry that they were doing, but their heart was filled with pride and they missed that this guy was also doing ministry. They didn’t look to see how the Kingdom of God was being built up, but instead were looking to how their ministry looked and were comparing it. Humility is out the window. If you remember last week, I mentioned that the greatest destructive tool to the church is pride. It will cause division and it will put up all kinds of stumbling blocks to those outside the family of Jesus. The persons intent may not be division, but their pride will naturally bring division.

But what about when Jesus said, “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’” and Jesus responds with “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” Wait a minute! Jesus is a hypocrite! No. Just a couple verses before Jesus says, “by their fruit you will recognize them”, speaking of those who are followers of Christ.

Are there wolves in sheep’s clothing deceiving people? Yes! Jesus calls them false prophets, Paul calls them false teachers. Their ministry will point towards them, or their abilities, or their

special knowledge and it will be for their or something else's benefit.

Even the enemy of God can seem to do great works. Satan has great power. Scripture doesn't say that Satan will not send a demon from one person to another. And there are things that Satan does that seem like a miracle. What it says is that Satan's kingdom will not be divided. Satan does what seems to be great works, he gives great power to men. Remember, Pharaoh's magicians did many powerful things when Moses came to Pharaoh asking him to let the people of God go. But, the question has to be this, "Does it point to the Kingdom of God?" "Does it glorify God?" 1 Corinthians 12:3 says, "So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit." The enemy of God will not give God the honor and glory. The enemy of God will not build up the kingdom of God and point towards God's Kingdom. The enemy of God will not point to the fullness of God's Word, instead he will use parts of it. He will not encourage study of God's Word and prayer and God's Spirit interacting with you to lead you into truth as you read God's Word. It will be more about what a man says God's Word says. Satan will add to it, take away from it, or spin it just as he did with Adam and Eve in the garden.

Satan will give people great power that is why we do not decide a human is of God or not by the abilities and power he or she has or the great things he or she has done. Their should be a humility and a servanthood that makes less of themselves and makes more of Jesus. They proclaim Jesus is Lord. They point to the greatness of Jesus.

There was a question growing with John the Baptist's disciples because Jesus was baptizing. People were going to Jesus to be baptized and John's disciples questioned it saying, "everybody is going to Him instead of coming to us." John's response is telling

and challenging. “I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for Him...Therefore I am joyed at His success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.”

Jesus’s response to John is simple. “Anyone who is not against us is for us.” May we not be known for our differences, but for our similarities. If it isn’t unbiblical or heretical, let’s not be known for our differences: what church or pastor you sit under; your style of worship; what books you are reading; how big your ministry is; which ministry is more important; what denomination you are in; what translation of the Bible you read; etc. Radical discipleship is about the Kingdom of God and lifting the name of Jesus high.

This takes us into the next part of the passage. This part is a stern warning and we must take heed.

### **Read verses 42-48.**

First, I would like you to notice that many of the translations of scripture are missing verses 44 and 46. Many of the earlier and better manuscripts don’t have verses 44 and 46 in them so they are left out. They don’t add to or take away from the understanding of this passage. They are a repeat of verse 48. The idea is somewhere along the way a scribe may have filled in the words of verse 48 between verse 43 and 45 and 47 to drive home the point.

Pride is the basis of sin. Pride is what took Satan and Adam down. Proverbs says, “Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.” Pride is focused more on the self and it is about personal gain...and it has a destructive nature.

Who are the little ones? It could be children, but it is also speaking of those who may be young in their faith. Those that

have lack knowledge and experience with Jesus. Those that have little understanding and are looking for it. Those young or struggling in the faith can be like sponges and yet they don't have the discernment.

Just like little kids, we tend to look at those who have been in the church for a long time as spiritual fathers and mothers. You who have been in the faith for a long time have a natural ministry to those who have not been in the church for a long time. Those who teach or who are in leadership within the church, you have a responsibility. You don't get a choice. People will look to you for what it looks like to be a follower of Christ. They will look at your speech. They will look at your actions. They will look at your responses. They will look at how you treat one another within the church. Do you gossip? Do you put down other ministries? Do you seek power? Are you arrogant? How do you treat your family members? Are you a giver or a taker? Is it your way or the highway? Does your family know you to be one way at home and another way in the public eye?

People have a natural ability to sniff out a hypocrite and Satan will strengthen that ability when it comes to sniffing out a hypocrite that claims to follow Jesus.

Jesus says it is better to have a millstone tied around your neck and thrown into the ocean than to lead one of these little ones astray. He isn't talking about the size of a human powered millstone, but a millstone that only an animal of burden can move...one so heavy there is no possible way of saving yourself if thrown into a deep water. In other words, Jesus is saying that you better take real seriously your fight against pride. If you don't and lead someone young, immature, struggling in the faith astray, the consequence is huge!

What Jesus is not saying is to make yourself out to *look* like a follower of Jesus. What He is saying is *be* a follower of Jesus, because the looking part will naturally follow.

Jesus is not giving us a 'if you do this you go to heaven and if you don't do this you go to hell' prescription. He is giving us a hyperbole to help us to understand the severity of how devastating pride is. Radical discipleship filtered through pride will put a stumbling block in front of others. If we in the church do not choose humility and selfless servanthood, the church will falter, it will not grow, and the young in the Lord will leave, probably to never step foot in church again. One of the biggest areas I have seen this is, in many churches, is in the song selection and the opinion of church goes in what we call 'the worship service'. It is real easy to make the 'worship service' an act of worshiping not just God, but worshiping ourselves through making it about our likes and dislikes instead of coming with the sole intent to bring an offering of sacrifice and praise to God in unity with those standing or sitting next to me.

This also plays out in how a ministry is led. The leader does it one way and someone comes in and says it should be done a different way or does it without discussing with the leaders.

The leaders must understand too that they, we aren't always right. The leaders also need to cast down their pride. But, God does hold up leadership so there needs to be that honoring and respect of leadership.

It is similar in the household. There is leadership within the household. The husband is called to lead his wife and children to the heart of God. The husband is called to love as Christ loved. Those under that leadership should give honor and respect to that leadership. To subvert, not submit to that leadership must be checked for pride, because if there is any pride at all to be



found, division will be follow. There will be a breakdown. Destruction and deconstruction will have already started.

This can be stated within our jobs and many other areas of our lives, too. However, the context is talking about those in the Kingdom of God. Who is greater? What is the pecking order? Who has authority and power? Jesus says, “Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.” It isn’t about where I place, it is about helping another to place.

Sometimes it isn’t about what we gain, but about what we need to get rid of. Maybe there are things in your life that you have freedom to do, maybe even freedom in scripture to do, but you need to walk away from that freedom because it may become a stumbling block for another believer. 1 Corinthians 8:9-11 says, “But you must be careful that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. For if others see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, won’t they be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating fool that has been offered to an idol? So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed.” What is Paul’s point in saying this? You and I have a responsibility to not let our freedoms to be a stumbling block that could cause someone to fall back into that sin.

We must as people of God catch the vision that radical, God honoring discipleship is based on humility and servanthood. We are the body of Christ, connected to one another. We breed opportunity to build each other up, or we breed opportunity to tear each other down.

You and I must cut sin out of our life. Jesus is driving that point home. Sin has a detrimental impact upon the body of Christ. It doesn’t have just an impact upon that person, but countless others. Ravi Zacharius and the ministry he had is an example of this. Lots is coming out about his issues with women. The many

people he affected are now struggling because of it. The ministry he began and was so strong is now struggling. The millions of people that he challenged to seek God are now faced with the confusion of following a hypocrite and the enemy of God will use that to show God as a liar...even though God wasn't the one that committed sin.

The last section ties this altogether. Read verses 49-50. Jesus is telling his disciples that it is important to live at peace with those that are not against us, but for us. If we don't live at peace, then we lose our saltiness. We lose our ability to preserve, purify, and flavor the world around us.

Fire is the picture of trials. We will be salted with the fire of trials. As followers of Christ we will face trials. We will be tested. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says, "So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world."

Matthew 5:13 says, "You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless."

Radical disciples are to be life-producing agents in a dying world. Sin is spoiling the world around us. As we go through this life, we are the salt that impacts this world, that points people to Christ. As we humble ourselves and serve, take up our cross, deny ourselves for the sake of making Christ known, but in peace with one another.

Matthew 5:16 tells us what the purpose is: "so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."