

Last is First

Mark 9:30-37

Series: Christ our Focus

1. Introduction:

- a. Last week we saw Christ teaching the disciples a lesson in Faith. This week the lesson is one in humility.
- b. Humility is not considered a virtue in our society but it is of great value in the economy of God.
- c. Humility was not a virtue in the world of Jesus' time either. We read:
 - i. **Matthew 23:5-7** They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, (6) and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues (7) and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.
- d. Every human heart is a relentless worshiper of itself, fallen human nature is dominated by pride.
 - i. Pride has dominated humanity ever since the fall and yet most people do not consider themselves to be overly proud.
 - ii. However, we tell ourselves that what is wrong with us is that we have too little pride. We need more self-esteem.
 - iii. **Proverbs 16:5** Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished.
- e. Humility is foundational to the Christian life:
 - i. **Isaiah 66:2** All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.
 - ii. **Micah 6:8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
 - iii. **Luke 14:11** For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

2. Verses 30-32 – Humility exemplified

- a. This is the second of three passion predictions found in Mark.
 - i. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34

- b. Verse 30 – Jesus is concentrating on preparing and teaching his disciples hence he does not want any undue attraction.
 - c. Verse 31-Here we are taught that the son of God must 1) suffer; 2) die; 3) be resurrected
 - i. **Irony** – Son of Man (the servant) would be delivered to death at the hands of the very people he was going to save.
 - ii. In the first passion prediction Jesus condemns the religious leaders:
 - 1. **Mark 8:31** And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.
 - 2. Yet here, the enemy is all of humanity.
 - a. We all stand guilty for the death of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. The inhumanity of men is here displayed openly to us.
 - iii. The Son of man would be delivered:
 - 1. By the Pharisees, by humanity, and by the Father Himself as part of the redemptive plan.
 - 2. **Acts 2:23** this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.
 - d. Verse 32 – They did not understand and were afraid.
 - i. **Irony** – the more plainly Jesus spoke, the more misunderstood he was.
3. Verses 33-34 – Unity destroyed by pride
- a. Question asked by our Lord – he knew the answer.
 - b. Because of the subject matter, the disciples keep silent—A wordless confession.
 - c. Jesus is speaking of his hour of trial and they are arguing about their position in the kingdom.
 - i. They knew that things were coming to an end and they believed that Jesus would set up the earthly kingdom, after all, he was on his way to Jerusalem.
 - ii. Jesus was going to serve and yet they want to be served.
 - d. We must contrast the humility of Jesus vs. the disciples’ desires for recognition juxtaposed.
 - i. In all three passion dialogues this happens
4. Verse 35 – Greatness is servanthood.

- a. To be first in the kingdom of God is to be a servant first and foremost.
 - i. Servant—Greek is *diakonos*—ordinary word for waiting on tables.
 - ii. Christ would assume the position of servant for a rebellious mankind.
 - iii. Greatness in God’s economy is available to each follower that truly and simply serves others.
 - 1. **Luke 22:27** For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or *one* who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.
 - 2. **Mark 10:43-45** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, (44) and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. (45) For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
 - iv. We need the heart of:
 - 1. John: **John 3:30** He must increase, but I must decrease."
 - 2. Jesus:**John 13:3-5** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, (4) rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. (5) Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.
 - 3. Paul: **Acts 14:14-15** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, (15) "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

5. Verses 36-37 – Pride rejects God

- a. Children were thought of very lowly so they were a very good example of the last.
- b. The child is not an example of humility but as an example of the “little” and insignificant ones whom followers of Jesus are to receive.
 - i. To welcome one that is considered “little” is to welcome Jesus.

- ii. Disciples are not to be like children but like Jesus who embraces children and bids them to come to him.
- iii. It is Jesus, not the child, that demonstrates what it means to be “the servant of all.”
 - 1. **Matthew 25:31-46** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. (34) Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' (37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' (40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (41) "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' (44) Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' (45) Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' (46) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

6. Conclusion –

- a. Greatness in God is not being first or the best

- b. Greatness in the kingdom is reserved for those that take the lowest position and serve others.
 - c. Greatness in the kingdom is reserved for those that love like Christ loved and serve as he served.
 - i. We are called to carry our own cross as Christ carried his in service to sinful humanity.
 - d. What would happen if each person here embarked on a mission to uphold humility and live as Christ lived?
7. Benediction:
- a. **James 4:6** But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."