

The Gospel of Mark- Chapter 9 Part 3

If you would be turning in your Bibles over to the Gospel of Mark in the 9th chapter. Today marks our third week in this chapter and our 39th week thus far. I'm scheduled to preach at Big Creek's Homecoming this afternoon. Usually we get there about long enough to possibly scarf something down rather quickly and then preach, so I'm going to be perhaps a little briefer than normal so that we can make it down there in time at least to do that.

Now we have been seeing some really great things here of late in this Gospel. Jesus has been declared as the Christ by the Apostles. He has been declared to be the Son of God by the Father himself as he overshadowed Peter, James and John there on the Mount of Transfiguration that we saw in the earlier part of this chapter.

Those events were truly high points of the Gospel. They testify certainly to two great truths Mark wishes to convey in this Gospel. Now, following the Mount of Transfiguration we saw last week that Jesus returned to the remaining nine apostles presumably in or close by Caesarea Philippi where we saw them in chapter 8. If you recall, this was a city that was basically the last outpost of Israel to the North.

Last week, in particular, we saw the man that had the son with what we would call grand mal seizures, but this man was afflicted by a demon spirit of the most cantankerous sorts. He resisted coming out of this child as much as he could and did as much hurt as he could on his way out so much that the people thought the boy was dead, but in the end, of course, no demon, no not even the Devil himself, can withstand the commands of Jesus and Jesus lifted the young boy to his feet free of any possession or hurt.

So that is where we've recently been. Now let's march forward and look at our passage today. We are going to look at a total of two paragraphs

beginning in verse 30 and extending through verse 37. We usually do about a paragraph each time, but these are very short so we are going to look at them together.

Would you read with me?

Mar 9:30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

Mar 9:31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

Mar 9:32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

That marks the first paragraph and now the second.

Mar 9:33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

Mar 9:34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

Mar 9:35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

Mar 9:36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

Mar 9:37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Some good stuff here. Definitely, good lessons for us to grow by today. Let's backup our attention to verse 30 here.

Mar 9:30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

So, the “thence” that they are departing from is the region of Caesarea Philippi and Jesus now begins his slow advance towards the city of Jerusalem where ultimately, he will be betrayed and crucified, even as we see alluded to here. Coming down from this area in the north they pass through Galilee and the city of Capernaum where Jesus has been on so many occasions we have looked at in this Gospel.

The region of Galilee and the city of Capernaum, in particular, have been the scenes of large crowds that have come out to hear Jesus preach and to see what miracles he will do. Those crowds in large part have faded, but also the ministry of Jesus has changed focus at this time as well.

Remember the last phase of the ministry of Jesus it is mainly focused towards his Apostles and small amounts of people. Remember how Jesus had even left Israel altogether to spend time teaching to the Apostles. We may see a few more smaller crowds, but nothing like the some 20,000 that were fed by the lake side as Jesus taught. The ministry of Christ is more private at this time.

We saw evidence of that even last week when we saw Jesus cast the demon out of the young boy as Mark describes it when he saw the crowd was growing. Now is not the time for crowds in the ministry of Christ, so as scripture tells us here, they head into Galilee and eventually Capernaum they do so with as much secrecy as possible.

Along the way here in Galilee Jesus begins to tell them something that they have heard before.

Mar 9:31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

Now in this gospel this is the second time we have recorded that Jesus spoke of this. The first

time was just recently after Peter confessed him as the Christ.

Turn back a page with me and look at how Jesus described it there. Let’s remember together what the apostles have been told and must be floating around somewhere in the back of their minds even now as Jesus mentions it again.

Mar 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

So, the Apostles have heard this message before. They know that the hands that Jesus will be delivered into is the priests and the elders. They know what Jesus has said. They know Jesus has foretold his death in the near future. When the time grows very close later and Lazarus is sick not far from Jerusalem, the apostles didn’t want to go down. They said, “*the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again.*” Thomas even said, “*let us go, that we may die with him.*”

So, the apostles are getting this message that Jesus is going to die. They understand the reality of what Jesus is saying. Nonetheless, they still don’t get it. They still don’t understand how the Messiah can be the Messiah and die. How can he usher a kingdom in and make the enemies of Israel his footstool and yet die, but death is what Jesus increasingly talks about these days? From our perspective looking back, we see they just aren’t getting the rise in three days thing.

Look here again.

Mar 9:32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

So, they have all these questions, but they are afraid to ask. You ever have questions you would like to ask a teacher, but was too afraid to

ask because you thought you would look stupid in front of the class or maybe even stupid just to the teacher?

That is what is going on here. They are afraid if they ask they are going to seem perhaps not spiritual enough in the eyes of Jesus or stupid in the eyes of each other. Truth is though, no one was understanding.

Now realize, the apostles understood how one could be restored to life. They knew of Jairus' daughter early on in this Gospel. Though not included in the Gospel of Mark, Luke in his gospel includes the restoration of the widow of Nain's son. That was prior to this discussion with Christ as well. Now so far, they hadn't seen anyone who was dead for very long be raised from the grave as the situation with Lazarus is still in the future, but they certainly understood the possibility that one could be restored to life. We even have some examples of that in the Old Testament.

Here is the question they have to be wondering though. In those earlier cases they have seen for themselves, Jesus raised those people from the dead. Jesus raised up Jairus' daughter. Jesus raised up the widow's son.

So, this begs the question if Jesus dies, how is he going to come back to life. No one else was raising the dead. Who's going to raise him up?

Can you start to see how they would have had all these questions? Now then, not only are they having a hard time in grasping it in the flesh, we know that the Holy Spirit was also veiling this message in large part, keeping them blind to what Jesus was saying for now and that would continue till after the resurrection.

The evidence of that can be seen in the fact that these men weren't out there on the third day looking for a resurrected Jesus, whereas, those that crucified Jesus sealed the tomb and put a

guard there because they realized what Jesus had said.

They didn't necessarily think he would rise on his own, but they understood Jesus said in three days he would rise again. They thought the apostles would steal the body and say he did.

The apostles weren't into schemes and scams. There was no need for them to talk of a resurrected Jesus if he were still dead. What benefit would that be to them to preach a resurrected Jesus knowing that he was really dead? For those that doubt the resurrection, they have to answer the question of why these 11 men would preach a lie till their death to speak of a kingdom that wasn't really going to come. Just a side thought there folks, but a thought worth mentioning.

Again though, due to that veiling of the truth by the Holy Spirit right now they were thinking death was the end and they thought that all way till he was laid in the grave. But, thank God death wasn't the end. Thank God that he rose again. It is only because of that truth that we are here today and can purpose our hearts in worship. He took are place in death so that in him we might have life.

That's a message folks that never grows old. That's the message of the gospel. That Jesus the Christ the Son of the living God came to give himself a ransom for man, died in our stead, rose again and now reigns in heaven at the right hand of the Father. I pray that everyone here knows that message today. I hope that you have trusted in him and called on him as your Savior.

The apostles at this point don't get that for Jesus to rule over a kingdom he must first make a way for a people to enter into that kingdom. Before he could be Lord of lords and King of kings, he must first become Savior and that is what he did on the cross. That in and of itself seems like a great place to stop today. End on the high point of the gospel, which is the power of God unto

salvation, but we need to go further this afternoon.

Let's look at our next section.

Mar 9:33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

Now try to grasp this for a moment. Jesus along the way has reminded them of the truth that he is going to die, and they don't understand that, but because they without a doubt believe that he is the Messiah they do believe that somehow his kingdom is going to come. In fact, they think that kingdom is very close. Close enough they can almost smell it.

Because of that belief, it led some if not even all of the apostles to debate one another along the way over something they considered to be of utmost importance. Now, Jesus knew what they were fighting about. He knew exactly what was going on behind the scenes at all times and all places. Nothing came as a surprise to Jesus.

Let's look here at what the debates were over. Might surprise some of you that are unfamiliar with this passage.

Mar 9:34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

Alright, you know what this little phrase means "but they held their peace"? Most of you probably do, but the phrase means they kept silent. You see no one there wanted to speak up and tell Jesus what they were bickering about. They were too ashamed to tell him what they were fighting over.

But again, Jesus knew. You see each one of these apostles had a bit of an inferiority complex. That is, they all thought the other 11 were inferior to them. They all thought they should be at the right hand of Christ when he

came into his kingdom. This was the place that was considered a place of honor and this is where they all wanted to be.

We get this thought in the back of our heads sometimes that as the apostles followed Jesus around that they were all one big happy family without any disagreements between them or without anyone doing something to make another upset. Even one big happy family is not happy all the time with each other. These men were the same way and they all wanted to be top dog in the family.

And the fact is, this wasn't the only time that we see this desire among the apostles. I don't know when this little dispute really first started, but even after Jesus says what he says here that should have put an end to the discussion, they will all still have desires to be the one who sat next to Jesus in the kingdom to come. We see this in scripture

Shortly after this discussion, we see the mother of James and John get in on the action. Hold your place here for a moment and look with me over to the Gospel of Matthew for a moment.

Mat 20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

Mat 20:21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

Mat 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

Mat 20:23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

Mat 20:24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

Christ goes on to once again say in different words, but the same message that he does in Mark. That said, you see here this mother's desire for the best possible outcome for her two boys and these other men were moved to indignation because they thought Jesus might grant it instead of them. You know what that means that they were moved with indignation? It means they were angry at James and John. Might have even thought they put their mother up to the task. So, there was anger among the apostles over this.

And you might think that would be the end to the story, but no that was not the end of it! All the way up to the Lord's Supper this was a dispute going on the background.

Luke includes in the events of the Supper itself, that is the same night Jesus was taken by force in the Garden. So, this same night essentially all the way to the end, Luke records this:

Luk 22:24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

No wonder when they came to the meal that night Jesus had to end up washing the feet of the apostles. They all came with the attitude of I'm the best. I'm the most fit for the job. They thought the kingdom was around the corner and they all were still wanting the top job.

Washing the feet was something the least in stature performed or perhaps even a servant or slave. By even offering to do the task, you were in their eyes of the Jews admitting that you were the low man on the totem pole and none of them were ready to admit that.

So again, this argument of who is the greatest goes all the way to the Supper. It's finally there,

seeing the humility of Christ in action, I think they got the message.

Now that we have seen this lingering dispute, let's return to the Gospel of Mark and see what the response of Jesus is at this time in particular to this thought that one was greater than another. Let's read verse 35.

Mar 9:35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

Jesus told them that the one that wants to be first is the one who is the greatest of servants. What we have here is a statement concerning humbling oneself. Making yourself a servant to others.

When James and John's mother asked Jesus about her two boys sitting at the right and left hand, Jesus again said something similar to this, but what he went on to say really brings this thought of servitude home to us a little more and should have to the apostles at that time.

There he said:

Mat 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

Mat 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

So basically the same message, but then Jesus went on to say.

Mat 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Jesus explains that if the apostles were going to be great in the kingdom they would have to be a servant to others, just as he was a servant. You say like when he washed their feet? Yes, but so much more than that.

You see in everything that Jesus did he was lowering himself to be a servant of others. At some point in our lives we've all heard the stories of where the king's son or daughter trades places with a servant to see what life is like in the kingdom. You've heard that theme played out before.

Understand, Jesus didn't come into the world to see what the world was like. He was God in the flesh who lowered himself to be a servant. I guess Paul says it better there in the book of Philippians when he says:

Php 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Php 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Php 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Everything that Jesus did was because he was lowering himself and ministering to the needs of others. Did you ever notice in scripture that Jesus never did a miracle for himself? He didn't get hungry and make bread out of stones. He could have, but he didn't because he came not to be served but to serve and in all things was obedient to the will of the Father.

Jesus is telling these men that have followed him from place to place that if you want to be first in my kingdom, it takes more than leaving your family and following me. It takes more than taking up your cross and following me. You are going to have to do those things and follow my example in ministering to the needs of others.

How did Jesus minister to others? Through the preaching of the word. Giving hope where there was none. But also, ministering to people's physical needs when it was appropriate and taking care of one another.

The apostles were being called on to do the same thing. By the way we are called on to do the same thing. Show each other the same kind of love and service that he showed to them.

There's a lot there to chew on folks, but for now let's read on.

Mar 9:36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

Mar 9:37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Children weren't exactly high on the social ladder in these days. I love the fact that Jesus picks up this young child and holds it. The one in whom all things were made that were made in the flesh is there holding this young child.

Now remember the context, Jesus has just been talking about service and lowering oneself as low as you can go in order to minister to the needs of others and then Jesus elevates this child who can do nothing in and of itself and says if you receive this child in my name you've received the one that sent me.

Matthew adds to our context a little bit when he says:

Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

You see here is the message, Jesus is saying you want to be great in the kingdom of heaven- serve others. You want to be great in the kingdom of

heaven understand it is not about being strong and independent. Being great in the kingdom of heaven means becoming dependent on the Father for all things.

This is just the opposite of what most of us would do. When we go to hire someone for a job, we want someone who can get the job done with as little oversight as possible. Someone independent and strong.

Jesus would say that person is least in the kingdom. Want to be strong in the eyes of the Lord? Seek out direction from the Lord in all things. Understand we can't do it on our own.

So, let's recap for just a moment what we have read today.

Number one, we saw the discussion that Jesus had with the apostles that he came to die. In that action, he showed the greatest example of humbling oneself that could ever be showed. He took our sin and shame to give us holiness and glory.

My prayer is that everyone here might know this Jesus who is even now serving us at the Father's right hand where he ever liveth to make intercession for the saints.

Secondly, we saw that if we are going to be great in the kingdom that is to come, we need to practice that same humility of elevating others over ourselves. To seek after their needs spiritually and even sometimes physically.

And thirdly, we saw that being great in the kingdom also comes not through our own independence, but rather our dependence on God for all things.

Folks you might say today I don't want to be first in the kingdom. I know I'll never be. Maybe not. I won't be either, but we are nonetheless called to humble ourselves before others and we are called to depend on him. We are called to follow after him and this is exactly what he did throughout his ministry.