ANYONE WHO WANTS TO BE FIRST

Mark 9:30-41

Key Verse 35

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

**Introduction**

 Last week, we learned how to overcome unbelief. Today’s passage shows that Jesus is teaching the disciples his death through betrayal and resurrection repeatedly. But the disciples neither understood nor asked a question about it; rather they were arguing with the topic, “Who is the greatest?” The disciples truly did not know what was going on and what they were doing. But Jesus did not rebuke them but taught them about how to be truly great before God. In serving God and others, we oftentimes have to suffer and take loss. But God knows where we are coming from and helps us to grow in Jesus’ image.

1. Read verses 30-34. What did Jesus repeatedly teach His disciples while they were alone? (30-31) What was their response? (32) What question did Jesus ask them in Capernaum? (33) Why did the disciples keep quiet? (34)

1-1, Read verses 30-34.

 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” 32 But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” 34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

1-2, What did Jesus repeatedly teach His disciples while they were alone? (30-31)

 ***They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”***

* Jesus and the disciples left the foot of the mountain, passing through Galilee, and heading toward Jerusalem.
* Jesus knew what was coming and what was needed before his crucifixion. Jesus wanted to concentrate on teaching the disciples because His time was coming.
* He had to teach something very urgent and important, which was about his suffering, death and resurrection.
* Last time when he taught this to the disciples, Peter was very defiant, even rebuking Jesus. Jesus rebuked him back, saying, “Get behind me, Satan!”
* At this moment, Jesus talked about his suffering, death and resurrection again in order to prepare the disciples’ hearts.
* They need to understand that his suffering and death is not an accident but God’s sovereign will for world salvation.
* After the death, he will rise again on the third day in order to break the power of death, the head of Satan, and give us the hope of eternal life with him.

1-3, What was their response? (32)

 ***But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.***

* But they still did not understand why the Messiah had to die. It did not make any sense. The Messiah was supposed to restore the kingdom of David on earth, freeing the people of Israel from the bondage of Rome.
* Their hearts were closed due to fear. They used to ask questions when they could not understand, but they lost their learning mind when they were fearful.
* Here we learn that when people act based on fear, they make a wrong decision, lie, close-minded and spiritually retarded.

1-4, What question did Jesus ask them in Capernaum? (33)

 ***They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?”***

1-5, Why did the disciples keep quiet? (34)

 ***34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.***

* Although Jesus was repeatedly talking about his upcoming suffering, death and resurrection, the disciples were thinking about themselves.
* They wanted to clarify what position they would get in the earthly messianic kingdom. They were arguing about “Who is the greatest?”
* When people seek their own interest and glory, they become self-centered. When people become self-centered, they begin to argue.
* This kind of conflict happens everywhere, among politicians, among workers, and even among immature people inside a church.
1. Read verses 35-37. What did Jesus teach the disciples about becoming great? (35) What does it mean to accept a little child in Jesus’ name? (36, 37a) Why is this equivalent to accepting Jesus and the Father in Heaven? (37b)

2-1, Read verses 35-37.

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

36 He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

2-2, What did Jesus teach the disciples about becoming great? (35)

***35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”***

* Jesus did not rebuke them, but taught them how to be great not in the sight of worldly people but in the sight of God.
* The world teaches to be great by being a number one, ruling over others. The disciples hated the Roman emperor, but they loved his power and authority.
* A sinful human being is power hungry. When they have it, they want to use it to a maximum degree.
* We are made in the image of God, who is great. But the greatness in God is different from that of the world. A servant of all makes a person truly great!
* Even the son of God did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

2-3, What does it mean to accept a little child in Jesus’ name? (36, 37a)

***36 He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me;***

* Jesus gave a practical example for the disciples. A little child is very cute and adorable to look at. But the baby’s mom has to take care of the baby.
* The baby cries whenever hungry or peed or pooped or even feels uncomfortable and sick, especially in the middle of night.
* Even though the baby is taken care of, there is no reply, saying, “Thanks mom or dad, great job! I really appreciate that you changed my diapers.”
* What is worse, there are people who are adults but acting like babies. So we call them childish. They may be a demanding person without return.
* They are noisy, very dependent, need service all the time, and doing whatever they feel like doing. It may be almost impossible to welcome such a person.
* Our human strength and love is very limited. That is the reason why Jesus said, “Welcome one of these children **in my name**.”
* In the name of Jesus we can welcome them and we can serve them. When we remember Jesus, we can overcome ourselves to welcome them.

1 Peter 5:2 reads,

 “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.”

2-4, Why is this equivalent to accepting Jesus and the Father in Heaven? (37b)

***37 “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”***

* In that day, children were regarded more as property than individuals. It was understood that they were to be seen and not heard.
* Jesus said that the way we receive people regarded like children shows how we would receive Him.
* Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me. Because Jesus is last of all like a child and servant of all, when we welcome a child or someone who is a servant like Jesus, we honor and receive Jesus Himself.
* Whoever welcomes Me does not welcome me, but the One who had sent Me. When we welcome Jesus, we end up welcoming the Father in Heaven.
* People misunderstand God the Father and His Son, Jesus in the image of dictators. But our God is full of grace and truth, and is ready to serve all sinners.
* When the Apostle Paul remembered the grace of Jesus, he could embrace anyone so as to win their hearts over to Jesus.
* He could be everyone to everyone; to a Jew, he was a Jew. To Romans, he was a Roman in order to win their hearts over to God.
* May God help me to serve each one of our members with the love of Christ. May God help each one of us to serve God’s flock under our care!
1. Read verses 38-41. What was John boasting about? (38) What was Jesus’ response to him? (39) What else did Jesus teach His disciples? (40, 41) What can we learn from Jesus’ teaching?

3-1, Read verses 38-41.

38 “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

39 “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not against us is for us. 41 Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

3-2, What was John boasting about? (38)

***38 “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”***

* John didn’t accept the word of Jesus at all. He was full of himself. He met a person who was driving out demons in the name of Jesus, but was NOT one of the distinguished group of disciples who were following Jesus closely.
* John thought that he was privileged to follow Jesus. Truly it was by the grace of Jesus, but he used the privilege as an authority to stop the man who had faith in Jesus and were doing the work of God.
* John, the disciple, became a stumbling block to Jesus and the work of God, for it is from self-centeredness; I, my, me and my cool group. A disciple of Jesus must overcome this kind of mentality.

3-2, What was Jesus’ response to him? (39)

***39 “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me,***

3-3, What else did Jesus teach His disciples? (40, 41)

***40 for whoever is not against us is for us. 41 Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.***

3-4, What can we learn from Jesus’ teaching?

* John should have repented his self-centered way and become God-centered. In God’s perspective, a man who does miracles in the name of Jesus is not an enemy but a precious coworker.
* John should accept others who are in Jesus and serving others in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus wants to open our hearts and become God-centered.
* He wants us to be untied with other disciples in him and serve the work of God together.
* Before being arrested, this was how Jesus prayed, saying, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one”
* Likewise, Jesus’ prayer was not only for the 12 disciples but for all future disciples. Jesus prayed for them to be completely united.
* God centered person will be united with other believers instead of dividing. When we overcome ourselves and unite in Christ, there is a great work of God.
* Moreover, Jesus gave a promise for those who serve in v 41, saying, “Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.”
* The disciples of Jesus are very precious to God. Therefore, if anyone serves the disciples a cup of water in the name of Jesus, God will reward him or her.
* Likewise, when we serve God’s flock in Jesus’ name, we will certainly not lose our reward either. When we are united with others disciples in the name of Jesus, we have His great reward in heaven.

**Conclusion**

 May God help us to become a servant of all like our Lord Jesus Christ by participating His remaining sufferings daily. May the Lord help us to be enlightened to see through the eternal value in the Kingdom of God so that we may not misled in this transient world.

**One word: A Servant of All!**

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