Be Humble and Holy

Mark 9:30-50

Key Verse: 9:35 “Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Last week we learned that Jesus taught the power of faith to a father whose son was possessed by demons, saying, “*If you can, everything is possible for one who believes*.” Jesus also taught the power of prayer to his disciples who had asked the secret of healing the boy, saying, “*This kind can come out only by prayer*.” When we believe in Jesus’ words and pray by faith, we will experience that everything is possible with us. Amen! Jesus’ teaching to his disciples continues in today’s passage.

First, be humble (30-41) Jesus and his disciples left Caesarea Philippi and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. Here we learn that Jesus began to focus on disciples apart from the crowd. Jesus knew that he was going to be delivered into the hands of men and be killed and raised on the third day. (31) He knew that the hour of his death was approaching. So, he predicted his death to his disciples second time. But his disciples did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. (32) They must have been afraid of their uncertain future if something bad happened to Jesus.

When they entered in a house in Capernaum, Jesus asked them, “**What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest**. (33-34) The twelve disciples argued amongst themselves about who was the greatest, or who was the number one among them. While three disciples, Peter, James, and John, went up to a mountain with Jesus, the other nine might have felt uneasy and forgotten. They also failed healing a demon-possessed boy and were humiliated by the cynical religious leaders. So, on the way to Capernaum they argued who would be the greatest. In *Mere Christianity* C S Lewis said that pride is anti-God. God opposes the proud. Lewis also said that pride is competitive. He meant that pride makes people take possession of others such as other’s right (theft), other’s wives (lust), and other’s properties (greed). But Jesus didn’t rebuke his disciples’ pride. Rather, he taught them what a truly great man is.

Look at 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***.” Jesus taught them to be the very last and even the servant of all in order to be first. What a paradoxical statement! People in this world do their best to sit in first place so that they may be recognized as successful. We know how people compete to become first. But Jesus’ teaching is the opposite. Jesus taught them to be servants of all. Jesus illustrated this by taking a child to teach them how to serve. **He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “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**.” (36-37)What does ‘welcome children in Jesus’ name” mean? Children are immature and dependent. Some are continually demanding and asking. To serve children, we need great patience and affection. Also, we need to be humble in order to understand them. In order to understand them we must stand under them. To the disciples it was not easy to serve each other. Everyone considered himself better than others. Peter thought that he was better than John and John thought that he was better than Peter. James considered himself better than Andrew, but Andrew thought the opposite. All twelve disciples were in a power struggle.

This passage teaches me how to deal with those who have different ideals from me and those who often offend me. Jesus teaches me to welcome them as Jesus welcomes children in his arms. When I welcome them as I welcome my children, my heart is filled with peace and compassion. Humility is one the best virtue for Jesus’ disciple. Jesus asked us to learn from him. “*Learn from me, for I am humble and gentle in heart*.” (Mt 11:29) As pride is the anti-God, humility is Jesus Christ himself.

Look at verses 37-40. “***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.” “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, for whoever is not against us is for us***.” Here Jesus warned exclusiveness among the believers. John was not happy to see someone driving out demons in Jesus’ name because the man was not one of the Twelve. John thought that performing miracles belonged to only them. But God performed miracles for anyone who did so in the name of Jesus. Jesus said that whoever is not against us is for us. Those who call in the name of Jesus are all brothers and sisters. We are all one in Christ regardless of differences in race, nationality, language, culture, denomination, mission, church and so on. Jesus wants all the believers to be one as he and the Father is one. (Jn 17:11,21) How can we become one in Christ? How did Jesus show an example to his disciples? Jesus washed his disciples’ feet and said, “*Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*” (Jn 13:34) As Jesus washed his disciples’ dirty feet, he wanted them to wash other’s feet, too. Jesus wanted Peter to wash John’s feet, John to wash Peter’s feet, Andrew for James, James for Andrew, and all for each other. Those who wash other’s dirty feet, bear other’s weak points, and forgive other’s sin, are truly great men in the Lord. Jesus wanted his disciples to be one by loving one another. There is no other powerful word in the world than ‘love.’ This is because God is love. God wants us to love one another.

Second, be holy (42-49) Now Jesus teaches his disciples to be holy. Look at verses 42-49. “***If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where “’the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ Everyone will be salted with fire.***” According to these verses there will be no one on this earth who enters the kingdom of God with a sound body. We may see many people in heaven with no eyes or one eye or without hands and feet. The point of Jesus’ teaching for his disciples is to be holy. The consequence of sin is painful like cutting hands and feet, and it is costly like plucking out eyes. People treat sinning lightly. Some say that they enjoy sinning. Others don’t know if they cause others to sin. Still, others intentionally lead their friends, spouse, and children to sin. They are all accountable for what they did. We must consider sin seriously, not to mention the result of sin. We must fight against our sinful desire as if we cut off our hands and feet. It is better to suffer for a while on this earth than to suffer forever in the hell. People say that there is no hell. Others ask how the good God allow innocent people to suffer in the hell forever? It is true that our God is good, but there are no innocent and good people on this earth. Revelation 21:8 says, “*But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death*.” No one escape God’s judgment. We will be either in heaven or in hell. Our destiny is determined by our decision on this earth.

Third, be salty (50). Look at verse 50. “***Salt is good, but if it loses saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.***” Salt is good because it gives flavor for food. Salt also prevents food from corruption. In winter we use salt for ice-melting. We use salt effectively in many ways. But if salt loses its saltiness, it is useless. According to Matthew 7:13 people throw them away to be trampled down. Who are the salty Christians? Who are the saltless Christians? The salty Christians are those who are humble and gentle like Jesus. They are those who wash other’s dirty feet and forgive other’s sin. The salty Christians consider others better than themselves and welcome children in Jesus’ name. The salty Christians are also holy people. They keep their hearts and body pure from this corrupted world. They do not compromise with this adulterous generation. They bring people to the Lord. Jesus said “*have salt among yourselves*.” He meant that we have to have humility, holiness, and the same mindset of Christ. Then we have peace with God and with others.

CS Lewis said, “humility is not considering less of yourself, but yourself less.” But Paul praised the humility of Christ in this, “*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God...rather, he made himself nothing...being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross*!” (Php 2:6-8) Humility of Jesus is not only considering himself less, but as nothing. Jesus made himself nothing and submitted himself to God’s will. Then God exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. (Php 2:9) Let’s read the key verse 35.