

Daily Bible Study

“Who is The Greatest?” Part - 2

Mark 9:36 - 41

February 6 – February 12, 2011

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY – As we return to our study of Mark’s gospel we pick up where we left off a couple weeks back and take for our text **Mark 9:36-41**. This lesson is the second part of the lesson we entitled, “*Who Is The Greatest?*” If you remember back when we left the text in **verse 35** we saw that Jesus was sitting down teaching the disciples a lesson in humility which was prompted by their prideful and selfish dialog on the roads concerning who would be the greatest in Jesus’ kingdom. He was teaching them concerning the matter of humble servant hood and how it is the key to real genuine “greatness”. The disciple’s idea of leadership and greatness was skewed much like many Christians today who think that powerful, aggressive, lording type people and personalities are what is required to be a great leader. Jesus made it clear in **verse 35** that in God’s Kingdom, the position of true greatness belongs to those who serve others, and place themselves, *last*, behind the needs of other individuals. That lesson is so counter to our culture today and yet it is foundational not only to understand and achieve greatness in the Kingdom of God but also to enter into it. Jesus will go on to demonstrate and illustrate in our text, this humility of attitude and serving of action which identify true genuine children of God. Us and the disciples will be taught and straightened out in our understanding and zeal by Jesus. The disciples apparently had been unfriendly to say the least to a man *casting out demons* in the name of Jesus and Christ sets them straight on this matter as well, telling them plainly how they are to treat other believers. He ends our text emphasizing His love, forbearance, and gracious heart over and against a petty, selfish, prideful exclusivism that was the action of the disciples and many of us in the Christian church today. Read our text: **Mark 9:36 - 41** “*Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.” Now John answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.” But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”*”

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father God, Please teach me and feed me from Your Word this week. Help me to see, hear, understand, and obey what You are saying to me through Sacred Scripture.

TUESDAY – **Mark 9:36 - 37** “*Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”* These next verses have been seen throughout the church since the writing of this inspired text as one of the “classic” portions of Jesus teaching ministry. The illustration He is about to give is powerful, clear, of immense impact, and unforgettable truth. The reason being; well not to mention the obvious, it is the very Word of God. When I come to a piece of Scripture like this one, which is so rich, I feel a pressure and hope that I won’t mess it up for you in teaching it. I feel this way in every text yet feel it more in some passages like this that are so good and so necessary for us to understand. It is also simple but profound and it is because of that I do not wish to make hash of it. This living illustration is *set in the midst* of the disciples and the illustration is a little boy. The Greek word used here (paidion) indicates this boy is an infant or a very young child (toddler). [This could perhaps have been Peter’s little boy if the disciples were in fact at his home in Capernaum.] Although Jesus has yet to even speak in teaching the lesson we learn of God’s care for little ones by the mere actions of Jesus as *He had taken him in His arms*. What Jesus is saying and doing here speaks not only to His love for the little ones which is evident in Scripture (**Matthew 19:13-15**) but it is a thorough and wonderful description of the nature of the Kingdom of God and how to enter it. Before we look specifically at that I would also draw your attention to what Jesus does not say. He is about to teach the disciples and admonish them by His teaching for their arrogant, prideful, selfish attitudes and actions and yet He does not slam them with a verbal rebuke. He could have among other things reminded them of their seeming uncaring for His upcoming death, or their fickle and fleeting emotions concerning Him yet He lives out what He is about to teach; He humbly serves them and bears with them and teaches them. This is Almighty God we are talking about here Beloved! This is amazing truth! He doesn’t make a big deal out of their neglect of Him; He just directs His comments to answering their question concerning greatness and The Kingdom.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank you for Your loving patience and kindness toward me. Help me live a life pleasing to You which demonstrates my gratefulness for Your amazing love.

WEDNESDAY – **Mark 9:36 - 37** “*Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”* All the “big men” are about to be taught a lesson by word and illustration as the *little child* is *set in the midst of them*. The little boy does nothing that we are told except *set* there as Jesus uses him to paint a picture which drives home this incredible truth; Believers are humble and trusting as this little child is. The wonderful and touching relationship between God (Jesus) and human beings as His children is demonstrated in the phrase which is peculiar to only Mark’s account of this story;

...And when He had taken him in His arms. It is in the arms of Jesus that this *little one* felt secure, trusting and loved. We learn from continuing to read as well as other portions of Scripture that Jesus is giving us an example of what true Christians look like and who they are; those individuals who with childlike faith, recognize their need, weakness, and dependence, and humbly rest and trust in Him alone for salvation and safety as well as find their delight in Him (**Matthew 18:3**). Now Jesus explains further the relationship between His children and Himself, their union with The Father, and the responsibility Christians have toward one another. “*Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.*” Jesus says, instead of chasing preeminence and “greatness” you need to concentrate your efforts on the needs of these *little children*, and serve them. Who is the greatest? “*If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.*” We are according to Jesus are to *receive* (dechomai “accept, receive, take”) *these little children in My name*. That is, in the manner that Jesus would do so. How do we know how He would? By His revealed Word and His life of example to us. Christ was never false or insincere in His motive or actions toward others and we are to follow this example. Jesus finishes showing the link of the chain as He says in obeying and behaving like this as a true child of God, an individual *receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me*. In this phrase we see the union of relationship between believers and God; us as little children united to Jesus who is in an infinite close relationship to The Father. Read **John 5:24** and **John 10:27-30** which help elaborate on this thought.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, thank You for the wonderful relationship we have with You as Your children. Help me obey the commands of Jesus, following His example of caring & serving others.*

THURSDAY – **Mark 9:38-40** “*Now John answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.” But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side.”* The slowness and dullness of Jesus followers, here the disciples, is demonstrated by these comments from John the Apostle. He appears to reveal that he is missing the point and even this mild man’s Luciferian arrogance is exposed. How proud and selfish is the fallen human heart! Possibly John’s comments are prompted in light of Jesus talking about doing things *in My name*. It is if John is waiting commendation from Jesus as he goes on to tell Him that they (disciples) saw a man casting out demons *in Your name* and they came to Jesus rescue by forbidding him to do so. The word *forbid* (kolou) means “to stop, prevent” and here in the imperfect tense means “tried to stop”. Here is an important lesson; this man was apparently not a fraud and possibly was fully convinced he was right in doing what he was doing. He apparently was doing it with zeal and under the blessing from Jesus. Although we don’t read of Jesus’ direct sanction to him we see in Christ’s response

that he was not to be hindered. Jesus says in essence, “this guy is on our side”. In the *name of Jesus* this man was doing something in accordance with Jesus revealed will and Jesus says that a person working for him with true motive won’t then go *speaking evil of Me* and refuse to give glory and credit to The One in whose name he was working (see also—**Matthew 12:30**). Many Christians need to stop trying to fight Jesus battles for Him as well as fight one another and get busy fighting their OWN sin and humbly serving and caring for others! This man was not using “*in Christ’s name*” as an “abracadabra” but in faith understanding its reality and power of Jesus.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Lord, help me be more concerned with dealing with my own sin and humbly loving and serving You and others than by trying to be Your policeman.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Mark 9:41 “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” Jesus now moves on from just saying to “stop hindering” those working *in my name* to explain that all acts of kindness, mercy, healing, care, etc... done *in His name* are demonstrations of belonging to Him as one of His true children and furthermore these deeds as well as the one doing them will be eternally rewarded. In contrast to the fleeting, temporary earthly recognition of Who is the Greatest? which dominated the disciples thinking is the abiding fact of eternal reward that according to Jesus, can’t ever be *lost*. The deed that Jesus uses here as an example, “a cup of water to drink” is not in and of itself meritorious but what makes it so is that it is given “*in My name, because you belong to Christ*”. This gift of love and service (*a cup of water to drink*) is seen by Jesus as if it were given to Him. These are the type of things Jesus was speaking about in **Matthew 25:40**. It is in that passage where we are also reminded of the context of *reward* as that scene is taking place at the final judgment. Those who are true Christians, demonstrating genuine faith by actions such as these Jesus speaks about, will receive the blessing of God both in this life and at the final judgment which reward will carry on throughout eternity (**Daniel 12:1-3, Luke 18:29-30**).

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to experience Your peace and blessing in this life as You empower me to live in humble obedience. Remind me of the lasting value of eternal reward.