

Daily Bible Study

“Who is The Greatest?”

Mark 9:33-35

January 23 – January 29, 2011

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –We return this week to our study in Mark and take for our text, **Mark 9:33-35**. As we get into this particular text, like many of the weeks prior please notice that we again see a major shift or a change or even a tension or contrast. We saw that when Jesus came down from the majestic transfiguration mountain to the scene of chaos and disorder down below with the crowds and the demon possessed boy. Last time we saw Jesus telling His disciples that He was going to *be betrayed* and was going to *be killed* and in three days *rise again*. We pointed out the disciples as well as our often difficulty in believing the gospel and living in its glorious reality. Scripture told us that the disciples were afraid, they were sorrowful and they even didn’t understand what Jesus was saying without Divine help which thankfully they later received. But now we come to a text which introduces yet another contrast as Jesus is here talking about giving His life for others; undeserving others mind you, and the disciples are arguing over who will be greatest or who will have the superior place and position in Jesus’ Kingdom. They truly had completely missed the point and Jesus will take this opportunity to teach them in His grace. This text in Mark 9 reveals to us two opposites. The prideful, ugly reaction and dispute of these men in light of what Jesus has just finished saying about His humble, selfless death is staggering. O, how this passage highlights for us the depraved sinfulness of men and also magnifies and shines brightly forth the perfection and sinlessness of Jesus Christ, the God Man. **Mark 9:33 - 35** *“Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”*

(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 9:33** *“Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?”* As we begin the text we find that Jesus *came to Capernaum*. Jesus was back in *Capernaum* which served as a hometown of sorts for the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry. The text says He was *in the house* and most scholars believe this was Peter’s house, which as mentioned seemed to be a headquarters of sorts for Jesus when He

was in that region. So when He was *in the house* He asks the disciples a question concerning their conversation which they had *among themselves on the road*. It was not merely a conversation but a Dialogizomai; “to bring together different reasons, to reckon up the reasons, to reason, revolve in one's mind, deliberate”. Look at the Greek word and it is clear that you can see our English word dialog right in it. They were “bringing together different reasons” and dialoging about something as they walked along the road and Jesus asks them what it was. Remember they had just been listening to Jesus discuss His betrayal, death, and resurrection. So Jesus asks them what they were discussing and tomorrow we will dive into what was to follow. For today, think of the care and concern of Jesus in even asking this question of His followers. Jesus could have just left us all alone in our sin to face its horrible consequences; death; but instead He is merciful and gracious and He loved us, saved us, and He is involved in our lives and as His children helps us in our growth and sanctification by lovingly pointing out and convicting us of our sin. Read and meditate upon **Ephesians 2:4-7**.

(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 loving me and being gracious and merciful toward me through Christ. Jesus, thank You for Your concern and love demonstrated in Your death in my place and giving me The Holy Spirit to be my counselor and guide. .

WEDNESDAY – Mark 9:33-34 “Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.” After Jesus asks the disciples the question concerning their dialog on the road we see some very interesting things. Notice that they do not respond to Him here but as Mark says, “they kept silent”. Matthew on the other hand, in his record of this incident has the disciples initiating the conversation with Jesus by asking Him, “Who then is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven” (**Matthew 18:1**)? This apparent “contradiction” has caused unnecessary angst among some people. If we take all the gospel accounts together and lay them out we will find much of the concerns and apparent “contradictions” are not really there at all. When Matthew records the disciples asking Jesus their question it just seems obvious that they are responding; for instance, “Who then...” It just sounds as if their has been discussion about it already that has taken place. Furthermore, Luke’s record tells us that Jesus reacts with His illustration with the child (found in our text in **Mark 9:36**) because He *perceived the thought of their heart* (**Luke 9:47**). Follow me in summarizing; the disciples keep quiet when Jesus asks them the question; Jesus already knows the answer to the question, and when the disciples get smart to this fact it is then that they respond with their own question to Him. That is my best attempt to summarize and hopefully it helps but regardless if it does or not we know there is no issue of contradiction in The Word but any apparent one’s lie rather in our understanding of it. God willing, we will look further this Lords Day into some more interesting things found in the comparisons of the gospel accounts of this story. Suffice to say, one could assume that the disciples *kept silent* because they are embarrassed and ashamed of telling Jesus what they were

talking about. We would be wise to remember and be aware of the fact that the Lord hears and sees us at all times. This should provide some help for guiding our choices and conduct. Read **Job 26:6**, **Proverbs 15:3**, **Jeremiah 23:24**, **Matthew 28:20**.

(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 understand that You are everywhere and see, hear, and observe all things. May I be empowered by Your Spirit to live in a way that glorifies You and understands that reality. Thanks for not just being here, but also loving me.

THURSDAY – Mark 9:34-35 “*But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”* It staggers the imagination to even think of how the disciples could go from sorrow and fear over Jesus coming betrayal and death (**Matthew 17:23**) to a debate over who would be the greatest and who would be the exalted ones in the Kingdom. It was agony to arrogance; truly incredible. Only a depraved sinner could be so cold, selfish and evil. This little discussion they had just makes it clear to us that the disciples were very far away from understanding the mission of Messiah Jesus. As I have said before; lest we jump on them with two feet we need to remember our own *foolishness* and *slowness of heart to believe* (**Luke 24:25**). It is painful to think that Jesus is heading to the cross while these guys are arguing over who will be the greatest. We don’t think we are guilty of this but we are. We are so consumed with our own agendas and selfish desires that we fail to gaze and dwell on the beauty that is the selfless gospel life and work of Jesus. The disciples, very much like us, although sometimes seemingly unaware of our sin are actually in our heart of hearts quite aware of it when the Holy Spirit searches and examines us. The disciples had nothing to say because they knew they were wrong and sinful. When Jesus wasn’t “there” or as they were “just walking along life’s road” it was no big deal to talk of self and self promotion (sin). But when they were made aware of Jesus presence among them and He questioned them, they were strangely silent in guilt. It seems the disciples thought the previous dialog of who would be the greatest had taken place in a safe environment possibly out of the sight of Jesus; but when it was placed out in Jesus plain sight before them they saw it for what it was. If we would only live by taking all we do and say and setting it in the sight of Jesus as it were. This would radically change how we live, what we do and say. The fact is beloved we do everything in His sight and He is with us and we need to learn to walk with Him closely and live aware of His presence. He the righteous judge does see. Thankfully Jesus is not only with us but He left us an example of how to live and act. Read **Hebrews 4:13**, **John 13:17**, and **1 Peter 2:21-23** (Notice some specific ways from these verses in **1 Peter** of how Jesus acted and where our behavior would be regulated by following Jesus example.

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

Suggestion for Prayer: Lord, help me live each day and moment aware of Your presence and comforted by looking to Your perfect life. May I realize that Your life here on earth was more than just an example for me to follow; it was a real life, lived in my place, and Your obedience and perfect life is credited to me by faith, so God will accept me on account of Your righteousness.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – **Mark 9:35** “*And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”*” Jesus although loving these men in the midst of their sinful behavior also takes it very seriously. The text tells us that *He sat down*. To many of us from our culture and mindset in reading this detail we see no big deal. The fact is that when a Rabbi sat down with His pupils or students He was really about the task of serious teaching. This was the custom and this is what Jesus does. He sits down and begins to teach them an important lesson. We sort of still see this important type of talk taking place today when a parent may stop a child from some behavior and say something like, “sit down, we need to talk”. Well Jesus sits these men down and then he says a remarkable thing in light of their current discussion. He says, “*If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all*”. This is really not an American way of thinking. Take heart patriotic sinners, it is not a sinful human way of thinking period, regardless of heritage. All of us are from Adam our sinful father and this statement from Christ flies in the face of all we have learned from our dad, the first Adam. But it is the second Adam who is speaking. The One who has just explained true servant hood and humility to these men contained in His prediction of upcoming death. He has showed them the example of this and will show them right up to His glorious ascension. Jesus said, greatness in the Kingdom is found by servant hood, by being *last, last of all*. He is telling us to substitute this ambition for self with an ambition for others which flows from and is only possible when an individual has their ambition first and foremost for God. When Jesus spoke, the “meaning” of *great* has changed if you will. What we often think is *great* is not *great*. The disciples talked about what they thought would be *great* but Jesus tells them they missed it completely. Our view of *great* must change to God’s view of *great* Beloved. True greatness is not found in suppressing others with power, prestige, force, etc....; but rather in suppressing self under them, immersing ourselves under the needs of others and serving them (**Philippians 2:4**). Jesus modeled and taught this theme of humility in His ministry (**John 13**). In closing this week may the Puritans prayer be yours, *Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory. Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision. Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine; let me find Thy light in my darkness, Thy life in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley.*