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INTERNATIONAL

TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Mark - Lesson 9D

Chapter 9:30-37

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- We are moving toward the pinnacle moment of Mark's gospel and that is none other than the Passion moment. Here's a quick recap of where we have been up to this point.
 - Midway in Mark 8, Peter, having been illumined by the Holy Spirit, made this great confession regarding Christ's identity.
 - He stated emphatically in the region of Caesarea Philippi that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
 - This established for the twelve the identity of who Jesus was: That He indeed was the Messiah, the Anointed One, promised from the Father.
 - It would be directly after this moment that Jesus would reveal His mission to these men.
 - And that mission consisted of Jesus having to suffer many things, being rejected by the religious leaders, being killed, yet being raised in 3 days.
 - Upon hearing this startling truth, Peter rebukes Jesus, rejecting the idea that their Messiah was to die – for how could a Kingdom come without its King.
 - This was then followed by Jesus correcting Peter by having Peter to set his mind on God's doing and not Satan's doing.
 - In other words, eternal matters are established by an eternal sovereign therefore we must submit to that and not our own understanding.
 - For anything that stands against God's plans are satanic and have an alternative agenda – so Peter needed to get in line with God's plan.
 - It was after this time that Jesus immediately moves into a discussion concerning the cost of discipleship.
 - He explained that to follow Him was a mission and call to come and die with Christ.
 - It required that one consider this great cost of following Christ, yet in pursuing Him would come great reward!
 - However, the reward to come would not be tangible right now, for Jesus was speaking about the eternal rewards that will come when we are with Him.
 - It was then that Jesus explained to His disciples that although His coming death seemed like the end of a good thing, that death was not the end.
 - The Kingdom of God was going to come, but in the Father's timing that has already been determined.
 - So, in an effort to provide encouragement and incentive to understand the Kingdom Program efforts and their mission, Jesus takes with Him, Peter, James and John to a high mountain.
 - There, Jesus reveals His Shekinah Glory while providing some eschatological indicators for the three disciples with Him.
 - After this moment of transfiguration, as they descended from the high mountain, Jesus warns the three not to speak a word until He rose from the dead.
 - We will see later in Mark's Gospel that this indicator becomes a receipt of sorts by which the disciples will now have as proof of what Jesus said.
 - Once the 3 disciples and Jesus arrive at the base of the mountain, they were met

- by a disappointing welcome as we saw last week (Mark 9C).
- In summary, we witnessed a rather humiliating moment for the disciples.
 - And what stark contrast this moment would have been. They go from such a glorious moment on the high mountain to a ghastly gloom in the plains.
- Jesus finds that the 9 disciples have tried expelling a “mute and deaf” demon from a child.
 - However, because this is a Messianic Miracle and because of the disciples’ pride, they are unable to expel the demon.
 - What should have been an opportunity to trust in God to take care of this need, became a moment to flex and attempt this in their own strength.
 - Well not only did this create further skepticism in the crowd but it also caused doubt and confusion for the child’s father anticipating a miracle from Messiah.
 - And what we witnessed there was the needed reminder, as believers, to remain ever dependent on the Father’s provision and the very words of Jesus.
 - We concluded from last week’s teaching that faith in any object apart from Christ not only leads to epic disappointment, but it leads to lack of ability to overcome anything.
 - Tonight, we will witness an amazing moment of teaching from Jesus as He unfolds the hearts of the disciples.
 - And as He does this, His teaching will show the disciples and us today (The Church) how to prepare for the work of serving Jesus well now, in anticipation for the Kingdom to come.
 - But to do that one must have a correct disposition and understanding towards Christ’s mission.
 - Our outline for our teaching tonight is the following:
 - 1. A Struggle to Understand (v.30-32)
 - 2. A Sense of Perspective (v.33-35)
 - 3. A Picture of Service (v.36-37)
 - If I were to put a tag on tonight’s text, it would simply be: “The Lesson in being Last”
 - I invite you to open a copy of the text and meet me in Mark 9:30-37.

Mark 9:30 From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it.

Mark 9:31 For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.”

Mark 9:32 But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?”

Mark 9:34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one

another which of them was the greatest.

Mark 9:35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and *said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”

Mark 9:36 Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,

Mark 9:37 “Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.”

- Let’s Pray.
- Getting straight in tonight, let’s reread the start of the passage again.

Mark 9:30 From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it.

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- Mark tells us that from the departure near the region of Caesarea Philippi, that Jesus and His disciples are now headed toward the lower region of the Galilee.
 - However, this time their journey south is not one of public pronouncement or demonstrating miracles.
 - The text tells us that Jesus was not looking to be noticed regarding His whereabouts.
 - And the reason behind this movement of secrecy becomes known plainly in verse 31.
 - In verse 31 we are told that Jesus’ focus has shifted from public ministry to mostly private teaching with His disciples.
 - Reason being is that as Jesus’ time of death quickly approaches, there are some things that the disciples will need to understand regarding the Kingdom Program.
 - So far, up to this point, the disciples have failed to understand Messiah’s mission regarding His first coming – especially with Elijah having not yet appeared.
 - What has been made clear is Jesus’ identity but their understanding of His death has not yet clicked.
 - So, Jesus will once again reiterate His mission and purpose pertaining to His coming death.
 - Only this time, there is a slight change in the foretelling of His death. He mentions a causation/why into His coming crushing.
 - Check out what Jesus states again in verse 31.

Mark 9:31 For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is

to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.”

- The question that the disciples are wrestling with is “Why does Messiah have to die and how can His death be a part of God’s plan to bring about the Kingdom?”
 - These are very valid questions and thankfully for us, we now have the full council of God through the scriptures to understand what the disciples didn’t at that time. (We have the full picture)
 - For us to grasp a better understanding of the mission, we must first understand – who is the one sending Messiah on this mission to die?
 - The way in which we gain clarity in this matter of mission is found in understanding the term “to be delivered”.
 - “Delivered” in Greek is *paradidomi* which means to be or become subject to detention by an authority figure.
 - It can also mean betrayal and we see this term used of Judas handing Jesus over to the religious leaders.
 - So, within this context, it can be said that Jesus becomes subject to this punishment of death by an authoritative figure.
 - Now from the world’s perspective they will see this betrayal or “handing over” as having been caused by Judas.
 - However, the authority by which is subjecting Jesus to this treatment is not of the hands of men, but rather by the Sovereign Hand of God.
 - This realization of authoritative subjugation brings about a greater clarity as to the role of service as well as Jesus’ full submission to the Father.
 - It seems as if the teachers of that day failed to mention scripture such as Isaiah 53:4. Check out the text.

**Isaiah 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted**

- This idea of Messiah willingly submitting Himself to suffering, betrayal, and death was not the desired outcome for a Jewish hearer.
 - However, it would be this very reality in which the twelve would need to embrace.
 - They needed to abandon their own wants and desired outcomes and needed to embrace the words of Jesus despite what they wanted or how they felt.
 - This plan of a coming and glorious Kingdom would require the Son to die so that victory and glory might be fully known to those who place faith in Jesus.
 - But as verse 32 mentions, there remained a lack of understanding and they wouldn’t understand until after He rose from the dead.
 - Notice in verse 32b and 34 that instead of the disciples seeking to understand the why of suffering, they all kept their mouths closed.

- Mark writes that the twelve were afraid to ask Jesus.
- One question comes to mind at this point and that is: “Why would they be afraid to ask their teacher/Rabbi about His purpose/mission?”
 - Well, in one way, they could probably recall the last time Peter spoke up and was rebuked and called Satan out loud.
 - Therefore, they probably sought not to embarrass themselves with asking anything at that point.
- Or perhaps, Jesus’ telling them a second time about His death served as a hinderance to their hopes of status in the Kingdom.
 - I mention the latter because up to this point, the twelve’s priority has been more centered towards their own ability and opportunity rather than that of Jesus’ proximity and purpose.
- Friends, I believe, and we will see together in Jesus’ teaching that their lack of understanding is directly tied to their unwillingness to accept Jesus’ passion (death).
 - So, in light of that, Jesus plans to get their hearts centered on the right things and that will be to set their minds on God’s plan and purpose.
 - Check out verses 33-35.

Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?”

Mark 9:34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.

Mark 9:35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and *said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”

- Mark tells us that Jesus and the disciples have reached their destination which is where Jesus’ ministry was headquartered – the town of Capernaum.
 - And upon arrival to Capernaum, they enter into a house.
 - Now who’s house the text does not disclose, but it could be safe to assume that this house is the home of Peter and Andrew.
 - Whatever the case, as they enter Jesus pivots from what was a private conversation amongst the twelve to a private conversation with the disciples and Jesus.
 - And before we move past this point, I believe there is something for us to see here and that is: Even when we attempt to hide things from God, He still knows exactly where the issue is located.
 - So, Jesus asks the disciples about what they had been discussing on the journey back home.
 - What we should note at this point is that as Rabbis and their students traveled, they traveled in close proximity.
 - So, one could assume that the conversation amongst the twelve were in soft whispers in their attempt to conceal the conversation.

- And I can only imagine that Jesus is aware of the conversation but carries on as if nothing is wrong.
- What becomes clear is that the content of the conversation is one that they feel is too trivial to bring to the Lord, to the point they remain quiet about it.
 - As we move into verse 34b it becomes apparent that their conversation was indeed trivial – and it reads quite comically.
 - Mark reveals in verse 34b that they were discussing who among them was considered the greatest.
- Their quietness explains a lot. It was a result of, yet again, more embarrassment and shame which would reveal the issue of their hearts concerning their mission.
 - Friends, this question of who is greater, if we were to consider its origins, is rooted in a paganistic worldview and exists to this day.
 - It's the question of who is the most talented or who can achieve the best position or gain more status.
- If we were to examine social media as a whole and how the algorithms are set up we find that the focus is on who and what is most trendy or likable.
 - You may even notice this natural bent of comparison or competition within you from time to time.
 - We naturally do it in conversation with new people we meet. We begin with the question, “So what do you do for a living?”
- So seeking or desiring who is or will be great is how we in our fallen nature ascribe value to ourselves and others versus submitting all things unto God's authority and say.
 - And what the text is showing us is that the disciples, although they have done great things for the Kingdom Program, they too had their shortcomings.
- One question you might be pondering on is: “What caused this line of questioning to come about in the first place?”
 - Well, it wasn't too long ago that Jesus selected Peter, James, and John for a special revelatory moment.
 - This could have very well caused jealousy and envy, but most especially competition amongst the group.
- Can you imagine how that conversation started?
 - “So Peter, what did you guys do up there with Jesus?”
 - And Peter might reply something to this effect, “We can't tell you brothers, private matters you know, inside “inside” matters”.
- So Jesus perceiving this issue of status and position, all rooted in pride, sits down with these men to discuss the issue.
 - It's going to be in this next moment (v.35) that Jesus is going to sit and instruct the disciples on what true greatness in the Kingdom looks like.
- He states that to become first, one must become last of all and servant of all.
 - In other words, the way in which one becomes great begins with the journey of humility and service.

- The reality is, to the disciples, and to the average person, the concept of greatness according to Jesus made no sense to them.
 - Leadership in this world values the idea of greatness as something to pursue but not as a means to serve.
 - If I were to speak plainly, Jesus is saying: “Where there is no humility there can be no greatness.”
- Notice that as Jesus is speaking here, the context is centered upon the Kingdom and one’s position and opportunities in the Kingdom.
 - There are a few things in which we should consider and that is the fact that how we live here in this world now and how we serve now as believers, determines the responsibility we will receive in the coming Kingdom.
 - And in the case of the disciples, their status in the Kingdom first begins with their ability to serve those around them in humility.
 - And what better way to provide this picture to understand how one becomes great in the Kingdom than with a true picture of service.
 - Check out verses 36-37.

Mark 9:36 Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,

Mark 9:37 “Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.”

- So Jesus now moves to illustrate for His disciples what He means regarding one becoming great in the Kingdom through the use of a child.
 - What would have been the reasoning for Jesus using a child in this illustration as a picture of service?
 - Within antiquity, a child was deemed the “least significant person in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman world”.
 - So we can gather a greater appreciation of Jesus’ illustration by looking at the Aramaic word *pais*.
 - “*Pais*” means a child (boy or girl) but it also means a servant or slave.
 - So what Jesus is saying is whoever receives (welcomes) the least of these, those considered the lowly in society, the vulnerable, they receive Christ.
 - They accept Christ, not in the sense of doing these things equating to salvation, but rather doing these things in acts of serving as Christ has. (This is shaping our Christian character)
 - And it will be from this act of serving the least of these in which one begins to embrace the sense of what Christ has come to do and that is to serve according to the Father’s plan. (Through incarnation comes salvation)
 - Jesus makes this same appeal in Mark 10:45 as He is speaking with James and John. Check out what He says regarding greatness:

Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,

and to give His life a ransom for many.”

- Jesus’ example of serving in Mark 10:45 points to one truth we should embrace and that is that Christ is not asking us to do something that He Himself didn’t do.
 - In other words, if you want to understand what the true meaning of service is regarding what you do for God, it is found in following Jesus.
 - But we must not miss what Jesus says in the latter half of this verse regarding what it means to be the last.
 - He mentions that as we embrace this sense of humility and embracing Jesus’ method and means of serving those in need (like a child), that we embrace the Father.
 - This revelation of truth is so huge because it relates to this idea of true leadership as defined by scripture!
 - This not only further establishes the unity within the Godhead by the submission of the Son.
 - Remember that it was the Father’s predetermined plan to send the Son as a means to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)
 - Friends, this means that there is a “Why” behind our need to not only submit to the teachings of Jesus but also to serve like Jesus served.
 - And that answer is found in the fact that this service has been given to us by an authoritative mandate from God-Himself.
 - Consider for a moment the imagery here: Christ, by the will of the Father, submits Himself fully to the Father’s redemptive plan by means of becoming a man.
 - Christ condescends in the form of a human to live a perfect, sinless life so that men and women who could not attain right fellowship with God could be saved.
 - Therefore, with Christ becoming our vicarious substitute, those who place faith in Christ can be saved.
 - So, what we see in this picture is that as Christ humbled Himself, even to the point of death, this was accomplished that we might live fully in Him.
 - Friends, if this isn’t an act of servant leadership to the fullest, I don’t know what is!
 - This is why Paul states the following in Philippians 2:1-11. Check out the text.

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

Philippians 2:2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

Philippians 2:4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
Philippians 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
Philippians 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
Philippians 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
Philippians 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
Philippians 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
Philippians 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Jesus' priority in this moment in Peter's home was to set these men's hearts and minds upon one thing – the mission that is ahead.
 - This would require the disciples to completely abandon this pursuit of being great for the sake of attaining position and status and embrace God's plan.
 - For it would be in embracing the Father's plan which was found in the fulfillment of Christ's mission to serve the least of these that the disciples would find their mission as well.
 - Lastly, as Paul pointed out in Philippians 2 and Jesus prioritized in His teaching, is this focus on unity amongst the group.
 - What benefit would the disciples have been to the Kingdom Program if they were more focused on their position in the Kingdom rather than their service to the King after His departure.
 - One thing that we must see as a clear point in the text is the unity necessary to accomplish the mission that laid ahead for these men.
 - Friends, when pride sets root within the hearts of men and women, it breeds competition.
 - We naturally want to be the center of attention as if you or I are the apple of God's eye.
 - We must get rid of this notion that God's plan revolves around your happiness or how talented you are.
 - God's plan is centered upon His Son and the means by which Christ would perfectly face humiliation so that we would be lifted out from the clutches of sin and death and have placed upon us His perfect righteousness.
 - In other words, the way to become great begins with the descent to become small.

2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- This way and means of achieving greatness will not be found in your New York number

one best seller's list.

- This means of achieving status will not be discussed around the conference room table.
- This concept of greatness doesn't seem to provide immediate satisfaction and that's because the things of Christ are foolishness to man.
- One South African Pastor described humility this way:

“Humility is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all.”

- ○ You want to become great, prioritize God's instructions over your entitlement.
 - You want to become great, exhaust Christ over your convenience.
 - You want to become great, bend the knee to the will of your heavenly Father.
- Friends, the only way up is down!
 - The greatest example that we can find of the greatest servant of all who made Himself least of all is Jesus Christ Himself.
- He did not come with pomp and circumstances; He came wrapped in flesh.
 - He did not come upon the back of a valiant steed but rather He rode on the back of a donkey.
 - And before He would usher in the Kingdom to come, He would first taste death in nails in His hands.
 - He would not first take on a crown of beauty before He took on a crown of thorns.
- This King, My King, humbled Himself so that you and I would be made right before God.
 - I'd rather be dependent upon the Father and last in the eyes of the world than stand independently against a Holy God and be damned for all eternity.
 - Let's Pray.

Citation

- Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, s.v. "pau," by Albrecht Oepke, 5(1967):636-54