

Not Your Name; My Name

Following Jesus to the Cross: Part 7
Mark 9:36-41 (Mt.1:5, Lk.9:48-50) 10/5/2019

Do you long for a greater experience of the presence of God. In this passage Jesus teaches how to attain that while brining honor to Jesus and accruing eternal reward.

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Introduction

Mark 9:33 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.

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." **36** He took a little child and had the child stand among them.

Taking him 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."

38 "Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not following us." **39** "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "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 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.

What in the world do all those verses have to do with each other? Be first by being last, welcome the children, John pipes up about telling some guy to stop doing exorcisms, reward for giving a cup of water—is this section just a hodgepodge of unrelated ideas? No. It’s all about one topic, and if you want to know what it is, all you have to do is underline each time you see the word, *name*.¹

The Name of Jesus

37 "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name ...

38 ... we saw a man driving out demons in your name

39 "No-one who does a miracle in my name

41 ... anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name

Four times in five verses. Guess how many times we see that in the whole rest of the gospel. Zero.² Mark never talks about ministry in the name of Christ throughout the book, except in this passage where it’s in every verse. So I’m going to go out on a limb and say I think this section is about the name of Christ.

And that’s good because for most of us, the name of Christ is kind of a vague concept. How often do we give any thought to whether our actions are being done in his name? There is a popular praise song titled “There is Power in the Name of Jesus.” It’s not hard to learn. They just repeat that one line a dozen times. But to keep it from becoming too shallow, they add another line. “Break every chain” (36 times). So at the end of 5 minutes of repeating it like a mantra, hopefully you get the point that there is power in the name of Jesus, but what does that mean? Power for what? And how do you get that power? Just say the words—36 times and you’ve got it? What about the sons of Sceva in Acts 19 who said the words but didn’t get the power? They tried to drive out a demon using Jesus’ name in Acts 19 and the demon said, “I know who Jesus is, but who are you?” and beat them all up.³

¹ Most scholars believe this section is a collection of unrelated sayings of Jesus. It is argued that Jesus wouldn’t have said this because no one speaks in random, disconnected sayings like this. But by that same logic we would have to also say that Mark wouldn’t have written it, because people don’t write in random, disconnected statements. Certainly not Mark, whose literary genius is wonder to behold. Just look back at the Transfiguration, where the central climax (God’s words to Jesus) appear in the exact middle of the section with exactly 100 Greek words before it and exactly 100 after, and the ones before summarizing the message of the first half of the book while the ones after sum up the message of the second half of the book, and both point inward to the dramatic pinnacle of God’s Words to Jesus, which encapsulate both messages. Someone who writes like that doesn’t just follow it up with a section of random, incoherent statements.

Imagine I walked up to you and said this: “Hey, remember when I told you that Tracy has been doing some work cleaning houses? Well, guess what? A lot of experts are saying that those drone attacks on Saudi Arabia were sponsored by Iran!” What would you say? Would you be confused? Why? Tracy is cleaning houses—is that hard to understand? No. It makes perfect sense. Iran was behind the drone attacks—is that complicated? Big words? No, makes sense. So why the confusion?

It’s because you didn’t know why I said one right after the other. You wouldn’t hear that and say, “O, Darrell just strung together two unrelated thoughts,” and then continue on your way. You would assume you missed something. We should approach God’s Word the same way. And Mark gives us an indication about the unifying theme by the repetition of the phrase “in my name.”

² There are two mentions of the name of Christ in ch.13, but they are not references to people ministering in his name. Jesus warns of those who will come in his name claiming to be him and deceiving people (13:6). And that all men will hate the disciples because of his name (13:13).

³ The sons of Sceva were just one example of the widespread practice of Jews trying to use Jesus’ name to drive out demons (Acts 19:13).

The Context: Our Great Name

This passage is going to teach us some crucial truths about the name of Christ, and step 1 in understanding them is the context. Remember from last time what's going on here. This is all springing out of the disciples' argument over who was the greatest. And don't forget: we *are* the disciples. The disciples are not unusually slow dullards on the pages of Scripture to give us something to laugh at. They are there as a mirror to show us exactly what we are all like. Last time we looked in that mirror and found that the drive to exalt ourselves and to seek earthly greatness is endemic—permeating our souls. Every one of us is on a quest, every day to establish and promote *our great name*. That's what we are doing when we seek earthly greatness in the eyes of men—we are seeking to elevate our name.

And Mark is giving us the remedy for that which is very simple. You can sum it up in five words: *Not your name; Christ's name*. Jesus responds to their argument about who was greatest by saying, "My name ... my name ... my name ... my name. Not your name; my name." The solution to self-importance is not self-deprecation. The solution to self-importance is Christ-importance.

It Endears You to God

The Child

And in making that point Jesus is going to show us three marvelous results that come from ministering in Jesus' name. For the first one he uses that little kid again. You'll remember we left off last time with this little toddler standing there with the 12 Apostles as a symbol of greatness in the kingdom. Now Jesus steps forward and does something very touching. 36 ... Taking the child in his arms, he said to them The word there refers to a hug. He didn't just hold this kid on his hip or something; Jesus embraces this child. One of the sweetest snapshots of Jesus in the gospels. Who doesn't love this?

But it probably seemed a little weird at the time. In that culture, children were not fawned over like they are in our culture, so the disciples may have been wondering, *Why is Jesus so affectionate with this kid? Is he a relative or what?* Then Jesus says this:

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."

To welcome just means to show hospitality—to draw the person in close to you. So what is Jesus saying? If you welcome a lowly person, you're welcoming Jesus? No. That's not what he said. He didn't say, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children welcomes me." He said, **Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me.**

On Behalf of Jesus

If you miss that you miss everything. It's not about welcoming kids because they are cute or because you just love kids. It doesn't apply to caring for your kids just because they are your kids or to help someone out by babysitting. It doesn't apply to caring for kids for any reason except one: to express Jesus' love for that kid on Jesus' behalf. You look at him and think, *Jesus wants to show love to this child, but Jesus isn't physically present, so I'll do it in his name*. And he principle applies to any lowly person. You give a despised, lowly person a hug and say, "This is from Jesus." You give a gift and they thank you and you say, "Thank Jesus—he's the one who sent me to do this." Serve people (especially lowly people—people who are great in the kingdom of God because they have humbled themselves like a child); and welcome them as a stand-in for Jesus so that they know the love is coming from the Lord.

When we are focused on our own name, our attention is on the big names around us. We establish our greatness by getting close to famous people—that's why we name drop. "I met him once ... I shook his hand ..." On the other hand, there are some people who we've got to be careful. Someone who is really hated—if you are seen as being that person's friend, that could really mess up your reputation.

Maybe a criminal—especially a sex offender. That will cost you some earthly greatness. But Jesus says, “Not your name; my name.”

Or maybe it’s not even a conscious decision. It’s not that you’re unwilling to associate with them, you just don’t even notice them because your pride keeps you at a level that doesn’t see that low.

Romans 12:16 ... Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

This principle is something we need to teach our kids, because nowhere in the culture is the caste system more extreme than in elementary, middle school, and high school. Kids get into middle school and they are obsessed with thinking about who they are, what people think about them, whether people like them, how attractive they are, etc. In other words, they are consumed with their own earthly greatness. We can teach our kids and grandkids, “If you really want to be great, all you have to do is befriend the lowliest kids in the school. And let them know you’re doing it because Jesus loves them. And instead of worrying about what people think of you, worry about what they think of Jesus.” Do that, and you’ll be glad you did. Visit someone in prison in Jesus’ name and come Judgment Day you’ll be really, really glad you showed that kindness to Jesus.

Network Down

We teach young people about networking—“You need to get to know him. He has a position—he could help you get a job.” “She’s really well-connected—you want to get to know her at the conference.” Jesus says, “Instead of networking up, network down.” What happens if you do that?

Welcoming God

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."⁴

I told you there are three marvelous results of ministering in Jesus’ name—this is the first one. It endears you to God! It shows hospitality to the Lord and brings him close to you. Any time you show kindness to someone in the name of Christ, you are setting off a chain reaction that goes all the way to the very throne room of God in heaven.

How many times do you hear a worship leader start the service by saying, “Lord, we welcome you into this place”? “We welcome you,” and God says, “I’ll see how welcome I am,” and he looks in the nursery. And he looks at how the nobodies in the church are treated—the people who have nothing to offer. They just take up resources. He stands next to the lonely teenager or socially awkward guy with no friends and just waits to be welcomed by someone. We’re crying out, “God, we want your presence among us,” and he’s saying, “I’m right here, standing over here next to this person who smells funny, just waiting to be welcomed.” You’ve heard the story about the poor woman who visited an upper class church and was told, “This may not be the church for you.” She went away heartbroken and cried out to God, and he said, “Don’t feel bad—I’ve been trying to get into that church for 50 years.” Based on what Jesus is saying here, that joke really isn’t far from reality, is it? What a sacred task it is to welcome people in the name of Jesus because doing that draws God close.

And I’ve been applying this to churches, but Jesus doesn’t actually mention churches here. He’s talking to us as individuals. **Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.** Do you want Christ close to you? Do you want his awesome presence in your life? Do you want the Lord to dwell in your heart by faith? Do you want Almighty God to be welcome in your home? Welcome people in Jesus’ name—especially lowly people.

⁴ This is the only time Jesus refers to himself as being sent by the Father in Mark. The idea is implied in the parable in 12:6, but this is the only direct statement to that effect.

Nursery

If we really believed God's Word we would be elbowing each out of the way to be the first to get close to those people. And there would be a waiting list to get into the nursery ministry. When you're new to a church, they don't let you do any significant ministry until you've been there a while and they know you. You can't do anything except for a couple "entry level" ministries you can do right away. Right from day one you can be a greeter, help stack chairs, or work the nursery. Nursery is always on the low end.

And still they struggle to find enough workers. And so they try to recruit more people by saying things like, "You should consider this ministry because you can serve mothers and enable them to worship without distraction." You can get more takers if you use that approach because if I'm serving the mothers in the church, well, then I'm accomplishing something. But if you tell me I should do that ministry just to serve babies, that doesn't have as much appeal because what am I really accomplishing?

We track how many baptisms we have each year. We count of how many Bibles we handed out on the mission trip. We have all kinds of statistics that we keep to document our success in ministry, but when have you ever seen a line in the bulletin showing how many diapers were changed in Jesus' name or how many runny noses were wiped for the sake of Jesus or how much slobber was cleaned off the toys in the nursery on Jesus' behalf? And if that sounds silly ("Of course we're not going to put that in the bulletin"), let me put it a different way: how many times that church welcomed God? Now does it sound worthy of the bulletin?

Think of the ladders people climb in our culture to become great. In the White House, your importance and influence is measured by how close your office is to the Oval Office. Those closer it is, the more powerful you are. If it's right next to the President's office, you might as well be the President. That is a position of tremendous power and influence. If we believe what Jesus is saying here, we will strive just as hard to get close and office next to the King of kings and President of presidents. And to do that, you serve people in Jesus' name. And one great way to know for sure if you're really doing it for Jesus is if you serve people who can't give you anything in return. Children, people in nursing homes, the severely handicapped. How about unborn children? They are the lowest of all in our culture—the only class of people that it's perfectly legal to kill.

There is power in the name of Jesus. But what kind of power? Power to gain control over people or circumstances? Power to change your situation in life or protect yourself against hardships? No. Power to put to death your drive toward self-exaltation and to welcome God himself by serving the lowly.

It Honors Christ

So that's one result of serving in Christ's name. The second begins in v.38 with John's comment.

38 "Teacher," said John,⁵ "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop ..."

Mark doesn't tell us how the conversation got on to this topic. It doesn't matter—Mark just picks up the discussion at the point where something else was said about serving in Jesus' name. Some guy was successfully delivering people from demons in Jesus' name—using Jesus' authority and giving Jesus the credit. And they told him to stop—why?

Guarding the Movement

38 "... we told him to stop, because he was not following us."

⁵ This is the only time John is mentioned individually by Mark. Each of the three times Jesus tells the 12 of his upcoming suffering, it's always members of the inner three who respond with a quest for their greatness.

He's not authorized. You can't just act on someone's behalf unless you're authorized. If I went to some foreign leader and said, "I'm here to negotiate on behalf of President Trump," they would say, "Did he send you?" If the answer was no, I'll be shown the door. The disciples have been with Jesus from the beginning so they know who has and hasn't been sent and empowered by Jesus. The disciples have had years of training under Jesus; this guy hasn't had any training. He just launched himself into ministry totally on his own.

So this is understandable. This movement they are a part of—its a big deal. It's the messianic kingdom. If Jesus has devoted this much time training the 12, obviously it's a work that requires a great deal of intensive training, and there's a lot at stake. And so the disciples see themselves as guardians of the movement.

This guy comes out of nowhere and now he's trying to glom on to the use of Jesus' name? Does he even understand who Jesus is? Who knows if this guy is even fit for ministry? He might be like the sons of Sceva. Or he could have been one of the Matthew 7 types.

Matthew 7:22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not ... drive out demons in your name? ...' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

So this random, untrained guy comes out of the blue and starts throwing Jesus' name around, he might be an evildoer, he might be a fraud, and so John says "**We told him to stop**"—they all agreed this was the right course of action. What is Jesus going to say? John thinks he's got a winner.

38 "Teacher," ... "we told him to stop." 39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said.⁶

Wrong again.

The Claim is Enough

Why were they wrong to stop this guy?

39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No-one who does a miracle⁷ (casting out demons is 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."^{8 9}

If this guy is attributing the power to Jesus, obviously he isn't going to side with the scribes who were saying Jesus got his power from Satan—at least not any time soon. Jesus says, "**... in the next moment ...**" He probably won't blaspheme Jesus any time soon.

That's the standard? That's all you have to do to be authorized is not be likely to blaspheme Jesus any time soon? It doesn't matter if he's saved or lost, doesn't matter whether he's a fraud, qualified or unqualified, skilled or unskilled, doesn't matter what his motives are—all that matters is he claims to be operating in Jesus' name? Yep. That's how great Jesus' name is. His name is so great, so important, so

⁶ When Jesus tells them not to stop him, he says it in what's called a gnomic present tense, which has the force of a policy. This is how the church is to operate: do no forbid people like this. Don't hinder them, don't try to stop them, don't tell them they can't continue.

⁷ Jesus places driving out demons in the category of a miracle.

⁸ It's possible that Jesus was quoting a well-known proverb of the day. In Cicero, Lig. xi, Cicero says to Caesar: "Let that maxim of yours, which won you your victory, hold good. For we have often heard you say that, while we considered all who were not with us as our enemies, you considered all who were not against you your friends." (cited by Cranfield, 310).

⁹ How do we reconcile that with **Luke 11:23 He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters?**

Answer: the man in question fulfills both requirements. He was not explicitly against Jesus, and he was most definitely "with" Jesus (ministering in his name placed him squarely in the camp of those who are on Jesus' side). The reason the statements differ is because of the purpose of each. The statement in Mark is aimed at the disciples and their overly strict judgment of a fellow servant. The statement in Luke was aimed at people who were explicitly against Jesus and needed to be warned. We should apply Mark 9:40 to our judgment of others and Luke 11:23 to our judgment of ourselves.

supreme, that if anyone does a ministry in his name, they must be allowed to continue on that fact alone. That's how big a deal it is when Jesus' name is honored, even if it's only verbally.

What people claim publicly matters. If people praise you publicly, you like that, right? You don't conduct a big investigation to discover how sincere they are. And if people slander you publicly, you don't like that. So if people's public words about you matter to you, their words about Jesus should too. Because what's important is not your name, but his name.¹⁰

Enough for Us

So if the person is ministering in Jesus' name, that's enough. Is that enough for him to be saved? No, we saw that in Mt.7. Is it enough to satisfy God? No, not by itself. God looks at the heart. It's not enough for him to be saved; it's not enough to satisfy God, but is it enough for us? Yes. It's plenty for us. We're not God, so we can't see the heart. What we can see is that he is publicly honoring Christ, and there is massive value in that.

Unauthorized, not Unorthodox

You say, "What if the person is preaching a false gospel?" That's different. If he's contradicting Jesus' message then he's not doing ministry in Jesus' name, so none of this would apply. In Galatians 1 Paul called for the curse of God on anyone who preaches another gospel or another Jesus. So if someone departs from orthodoxy, we don't accept that. But that's not this guy. The problem with this guy was not that he was *unorthodox*; it was that he was *unauthorized*. John doesn't say, "We told him to stop because he was teaching another Jesus." He said: **38 ...we told him to stop, because he was not following us."**

So how is this relevant for you? You may not be going around trying to get people to stop doing ministry in Jesus' name, but consider this: think about the reason Jesus gave. If the public honoring of Jesus name is such a good thing that should not be prevented or forbidden, would you agree that it shouldn't be hindered or undermined or even criticized? Again, if you're warning people about false teaching, that's different. But other than that, if some person or church or organization is doing ministry in Jesus' name, if that's as great a thing as Jesus makes it out to be here, I don't want to undermine it in any way, even if it's just through criticism.

What if He Is Unqualified?

What if we know the person and we know for a fact he is unfit for ministry? His character is bad. That exact situation is addressed in Philippians 1. If a person is teaching a false gospel, go to Galatians 1—the person is cursed (Gal.1:8). But if he's unqualified on character or has bad behavior or bad motives, then go to Philippians 1.

Philippians 1:15 ... some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry... 17 They preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

Talk about unqualified—these guys are horrible. So what do you do in a case like that?¹¹ You rejoice!

¹⁰ And once the persecution heated up, these men would come to appreciate anyone who wasn't actively against them. The time wasn't far off when these disciples would be tortured and killed by the enemies of Christ, and in times like that, you appreciate a guy who sides with you and isn't part of the mob. You don't run him through a gauntlet to prove he's really genuine. You're just glad he's not one of the ones out to kill you.

¹¹ If he's in your church and you're in leadership, then you need to deal with the character issue—working to humbly restore what is broken (Gal.6:1). But if not, then just rejoice that he's honoring the name of Christ in his ministry. The issue at hand here has to do with people ministering outside of your area of responsibility ("not following us").

Philippians 1:18 ... What does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

If someone is doing ministry who hasn't been vetted, he's unaccredited, unofficial, unsanctioned, even unqualified with poor character and bad motives, but he's ministering in Jesus' name, praise God!¹² It's the same reaction Moses had when Joshua came and said, "Hey, you've got some unauthorized men prophesying. Tell them to stop." And Moses said, "They're prophesying? They are bringing God's Word to people? Praise God! I wish everyone would do that."¹³

Moses valued the Word of God way more than he worried about which human mouth was bringing it. Paul valued the preaching of the gospel way more than he worried about what kind of human mouth was preaching it. And what Jesus is teaching us here is to value his name way more than we worry about which human mouth is honoring it.

And he helps us along down in v.41 by changing the type of ministry. Instead of delivering from demons, it's giving water. Everyone can see the value of that, right? Suppose you're working relief for hurricane victims and you've got truckloads of water bottles. Are you going to make a big deal about making sure only authorized personnel hand out the water? Are you going to make a bunch of people go thirsty because the volunteer doesn't have a proper badge? No. Why? Because you understand how important it is that the people get the water.

Another thing Jesus does in v.41 that helps is he switches it around so that the disciples are the ones receiving the ministry—someone is giving them water. If you're the one dying of thirst and someone has some water, do you want them to be vetted six ways from Sunday before they are allowed to give you a drink?

It's easy to understand the importance of water, but what's more important, water or honoring the name of Christ? If we really believe that's important, we'll rejoice whenever we see it. If someone was doing the greatest possible action in the universe—brining honor to Jesus, do you want to be on record as opposing that? How is that going to go on Judgment Day?

How would you feel if you heard one of your kids using Jesus' name in vain? They drop something on the floor and say, "Of for Christ's sake! Jesus H Christ ..." You'd be horrified, right? What's worse—uttering Christ's name in vain, or criticizing ministry done in his name? Isn't that just as dishonoring to him?

Requires Humility

Why is it so hard for us to rejoice over other people's ministries? Because we're on a quest for earthly greatness, and so our natural reflex is to press others down—especially when they are succeeding in our area of ministry.

Envy and Rivalry

Remember, the disciples had failed to drive out a demon; now this unauthorized yahoo is succeeding in driving out demons. The disciples wouldn't be human if they weren't tempted to be suspicious and negative toward this guy, because he was showing them up.¹⁴

¹² Alexander Maclaren: "The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped"; but the mouth that begins to stammer His name is to be taught and cherished."

¹³ **Numbers 11:27** A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." **28** Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' assistant since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" **29** But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

¹⁴ We are all naturally like Diotrefes in 3 John 9 who loved to be first—especially people in leadership. That's why when Peter finally learned these lessons about being last and the servant of all, he wrote to his fellow pastors.

I Peter 5:2 Be shepherds of God's flock ... eager to serve; **3** not lording it over those entrusted to you.... **5** you who are

Pride of Privilege

And not only that—not only do we have envy and rivalry, but we also have attitudes of superiority. There's something in us that, once we get a position of privilege, we think we need to police which other people get that position. We can't just let every Tom, Dick and Harry ascend to our level, especially if it took a lot of time and effort to get to that level. "I have full, official authorization to be here—who said you could be here? You're just appointing yourself? I don't think so—not before you go through what I went through."

The Desire to Judge

We have the pride of envy and rivalry, we have the pride of privilege and superiority, and one more: we have the pride of judgment. We want to be the judges of our fellow servants. We laugh at the disciples for arguing over who was the greatest, but isn't that exactly what we are doing every time we pass judgment on someone? We're placing ourselves in a position above them.

Romans 14:4 Who are you to judge another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.

Jesus says, "You think that guy's not authorized? You're not authorized to stop him." When you judge a fellow servant for being unauthorized, you're the one usurping a position that isn't yours.

John says, "We stopped him because he was not one of us," and Jesus says, "Not your name; my name." His name is what matters—and it's the only thing that makes anything matter.

What Makes Ministry Matter?

Did you notice the drastic drop off in the level of ministry from v.38 to v.41? It goes from the most spectacular kind of ministry to the least spectacular. In v.38 the guy is performing miracles—driving out demons. In v.41 someone is sharing some water. Do those two things really belong in the same category?

Imagine we all went to church together tomorrow and you witness two things. First, you overhear me tell Tracy, "Hey, can I have a sip of your water?" and she says, "Sure, because I love Jesus." Then you hear a mass panic out in the foyer and find out there's someone out there with a gun shooting people. By the time you get out there, three people are dead. And Ruth walks over there and raises her hand and says, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I tell you, get up," and all three people come back to life and get up without any wounds or injuries. So then after church you go out to lunch with some friends and they ask you, "what happened at church today?" Would you mention those two events as if they were in the same category—Tracy got Darrell some water and Ruth raised three people from the dead?

No question, raising people from the dead is much more unusual and interesting to talk about. But is it greater? No. The only thing that would make the resurrections have any value would be if she did it in the name of Christ. And that's the same thing that gives value to sharing some water.

How great is the name of Christ? Mopping a floor in his name matters more in the grand scheme of things than curing cancer and ending world hunger not in his name. There are common tasks and there are unusual tasks, but there are no distinctions between "trivial" and "important" tasks if they are done in the name of Christ. The most common, menial task in the world, if done in the name of Christ, is exceedingly great and important. And how do I know that for sure? Because God will reward it, and God doesn't reward trivia. That's the third result of ministry in Christ's name.

It Accrues Reward

younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

- 1) It Endears God to You
 - 2) It Honors Christ
- And #3 is in v.41.

41 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ¹⁵ will certainly not lose his reward.

It accrues reward in heaven for the person who does it.

Hair Trigger

As usual, we see God's rewarding hand is on a hair trigger. I mean, a cup of water? Come on. Have you ever seen someone in the military with a medal on his chest for giving someone a drink of water? Do you know anyone with a plaque on his wall for sharing his iced tea? Now a days we give children blue ribbons for just about everything—every single kid that shows up to the race gets a ribbon, and yet even in that ribbon-happy system kids don't get awards for giving someone a drink. But anything done to honor Christ will be rewarded by God. And if God's rewarding hand is on a hair trigger; shouldn't our acceptance of others be on at least as light a trigger? If God, the perfect Judge, is that free with his rewards what excuse do you and I have for being stingy and reluctant with our acceptance?

How Important Are We?

But again, we can't appreciate this until we give up our quest for earthly greatness. Verse 41 is a great place to be if you're humble enough to put yourself there—where God is rewarding people who serve you because it puts us in the place of the lowly. A couple verses ago Jesus had the disciples welcoming the kids in spite of the kids' lowliness. And now he puts us down there with the kids. Why should people be nice to us and give us water when we need it? Only for the sake of Christ.

Our pride doesn't like that. We want people to give us a cup of water because of our value and dignity and importance. Jesus says, "No, you're greatness isn't even enough to make you deserve a cup of water." Jesus has to offer us rewards and incentives in order to get us to work the nursery and welcome little babies, and in the same way he has to offer other people all kinds of eternal rewards and incentives to show kindness to us.

And even then, it's not even a good deed unless the person does it in Jesus' name. If someone gets to Judgment Day and says, "Darrell Ferguson was dying of thirst, and I gave him some water," God will say, "Did you do it for Darrell? Or for Jesus?" "I did it for Darrell. I wanted to help him out." "Oh, well, in that case, you wasted your time. That action was worthless. Next!" That's how great I am. If you only did it for me, as far as rewards go you might as well have served a cockroach. But if you show me the slightest kindness for the sake of Christ's name, you will receive eternal reward, you will bring honor to Christ which is the best thing that can ever happen in the grand scheme of things, and you will welcome Almighty God into your church, into your house, and into your life.

Not your name, Christ's name.

¹⁵ This is the only time in Mark Jesus refers to himself as the Christ.

Appendix: High Standard; Low Standard

So how do we harmonize this passage with Matthew 7:22? Jesus says if they are casting out demons in Jesus' name, they are on our side. But in Mt.7 he said:

Matthew 7:22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not ... drive out demons and perform many miracles in your name?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Very simple. Passages like Mt.7:22 are for people to assess their own heart. Passages like Mk.9:39 are for us when we are assessing other ministers. For your own heart, the standard is very high and very strict. For others, it's very low and gracious. That's a principle you see throughout the Christian life. For example, think of the standards for repentance. When you judge your own repentance, the standard is high, right? It's very thorough. Scripture calls us to examine our motives and attitudes and private thoughts and leave no stone unturned in seeking out hidden sins in our hearts. That's the high, strict, thorough standard for our own repentance. But what about other people's repentance—how strict is our standard for judging that?

Luke 17:4 If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

All he has to do is say the words, "I repent," and that's all we require. What if he's not genuine? He probably isn't if he's committing that same sin 6 more times that same day after saying he repented. But still, if he so much as says those words, that's all we require and we assume it's real. The standard for us goes deep into the heart and the standard for others is only external because the only heart you can see is your own. In fact, you can barely see that. How often have you been confused about what's going on even inside your own heart? Even the wise, insightful, inspired Apostle Paul said:

1 Corinthians 4:4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 ... He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts.

Think about it—you spend all day every day in your own head, and you still don't understand half the stuff that goes on in there, right? How many times have you thought, "Why did I do that?" "Why did I say that?" "Why do I feel this way?" If we're that clueless about our own inner man, what on earth makes us think we can accurately judge someone else's heart? So when it comes to my own faith, Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.

But for other people, if they claim to be Christians, assume they are true Christians until they prove otherwise. When you're judging yourself, assume you are lost until your faith proves otherwise. Jesus will show us that in the very next paragraph, where he shows us how to deal with our own sin down in vv.43-48. You put this passage alongside that passage and you'll see—when you judge other people, be super generous and give a lot of credit for externals. But when you're judging yourself, be very strict and don't focus at all on externals, but on the heart. Our tendency is the opposite of that. We're lenient on ourselves, coming up with all kinds of excuses, and we make much of our external good deeds even though they might be contaminated with countless bad motives. And then we get really suspicious of others' motives downplay their good deeds because of what might be in their hearts. We get it exactly backwards.

Summary

So great is the name of Christ that it endears you to God (welcoming a child in his name = welcoming God), it brings Christ honor (the mere claim that power comes from Christ is all the reason needed to allow someone to continue in ministry), and it accrues reward.