

The Gospel of Mark- Chapter 9 Part 4

If you would be turning with me in your bibles over to the 9th chapter of Gospel of Mark. For most of you, this chapter should be starting to get very familiar to you as this is our 4th week looking into the events of this chapter.

So far in chapter 9 we have looked at the transfiguration of Jesus and the pronouncement by God the Father from heaven that Jesus was indeed the son of God. Then we saw Jesus and the three apostles with him- Peter, James, and John- return to the other nine apostles to the region of Caesarea Philippi where Jesus cast the unclean spirit from the young boy that the nine had previously been unable to do.

Last week we looked at the conversation of Jesus with the apostles as they were passing through Galilee once again about his death which was the second time Jesus has mentioned that so far in this gospel and then we looked the interesting and convicting topic of who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

We found out of course that the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is not the one that strong and independent, but rather the one that totally dependent on God and was the one who like Christ was willing to lower themselves down to serve others.

The apostles, as we saw, all had a desire to be the number one guy, but they were trying to show they were the right guy because of their strengths. All trying to show one was better than another. Jesus told them if they wanted to be first then they were going to have to become last.

Now today I have found myself in a precarious position that I didn't want to be in as I started this chapter.

I was hoping to cover the piece of scripture we are dealing with this afternoon last week, but there was just not enough time and I don't want to rush through it and include it with the next section beginning that begins in verse 42 because that is certainly a full rich and full paragraph in and of itself.

So, you might be delighted to know, I have just 4 short verses to look at with you today, but I hope that these 4 verses will leave a great impact on us all and our attitudes when we leave here today.

Let's read our verses together.

Mar 9:38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.

Mar 9:39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

Mar 9:40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

Mar 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

The scene of this discussion appears to be in the city of Capernaum where Jesus and the disciples were lodging for a brief period of refuge before they would make their descent through Samaria, Judea, Jericho and eventually to Jerusalem where Jesus would be betrayed by Judas and delivered to elders and priests.

At this point, we are not time wise very far away from that very end. Chapter 11 is the Triumphal Entry that marks the beginning of his last week of his life. That is how close we are getting in this timeline here in Mark. One more good chapter before the last week of his life. We have looked at more than three years of the ministry of Christ so far.

But again, this scene in particular is still taking place in Capernaum because John seems to ask his question in verse 38 immediately after Jesus speaking about the subject of lowering oneself to the point of servitude to be great in the kingdom of heaven.

Now notice again the statement that John makes here in verse 38.

Mar 9:38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.

Something about what Jesus has said has prompted John to speak to Jesus about this situation that took place. Remember we don't have all the words spoken by Christ, but something here has triggered John in his thinking.

He has this event on his mind and he is hoping for confirmation from Jesus that he did the right thing. Now, this incident could have taken place the day before, week before, or months before. We don't know when it took place, but whenever it did John is beginning to have reservations about his response to the situation.

Now, before we go any further in our reading, I think it is necessary for me first inform you a little bit about John and his disposition. That is, his personality. You see, we call him the Apostle of love because of some of the things he writes in his gospel, but especially because of the letters that he wrote that we went through not long ago. So, because of those writings, we tend to think of John that way- a very mild acting and loving guy. A man who touts love of mankind over all.

Well John certainly became the Apostle of Love, but John did not start off that way. In fact, Jesus had a nickname for John and his brother James. You all remember what it was? Mark told us

back in chapter 3. He called them Boanerges which means Sons of Thunder.

Now, Jesus didn't call them that because he had a cool nickname for their father. He called them that because it spoke of their own dispositions. Understand that when Jesus called John and James down by the seashore and they threw down their nets to follow him, at that time they were far from being called Apostles of Love.

Jesus called them that because they weren't exactly the most loving and forgiving guys of the group. He called them that because they were quick to speak up for what they thought was right. Ready to tear into someone who wasn't doing what they thought they should.

In fact, Mark doesn't include this event, but Luke in his gospel records it for us right after this conversation that we are looking at here today in Mark. So fresh of these words we have been reading today and yet it still reveals to us the thunderous personality of these brothers.

Hold, your place here because we are coming right back. But look with me in Luke 9 for a moment.

Luk 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

Luk 9:52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

Luk 9:53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

Luk 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

Luk 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

The Samaritans of course already were not well liked by the Jews. Nothing would have pleased a Jew more than for the Samaritans just to drop out of the picture. James and John wanted to seize on this opportunity of them rejecting Christ to rain down fire on them. Understand what they were saying. They were saying, kill them all. Men, women, children. All of them. That is what the Apostle of Love wanted to do.

So, this was the hot-headed nature of James and John and really it is that same behavior that they reacted with in what we read back here in Mark 9. Turn back there if you haven't already and let your eyes revisit verse 38.

John and those with him saw this man. We don't know his name or anything else about him, but this man was casting out not one devil, but devils- plural. He was doing what they had done when Jesus sent them out two by two with authority to do these kinds of works. In fact, the unknown man was doing what the 9 apostles couldn't do earlier in the chapter. That's a pretty sobering thought isn't it?

Now, at first would think they would be glad to see that someone was being made free from the affliction of these devils, be ready to celebrate one that was being made whole in the name of Jesus, but that is not the response that John and the others had. They were angry.

Why? They were angry because this man was doing works in the name of Jesus without authority, without being part of that first great traveling church. This unknown man was not one of the 12. This guy wasn't one of the 70 that Jesus sent out. This guy wasn't even one of the disciples that followed Jesus around.

So again, John and whomever was with him took offense to what this man was doing because he was speaking in the name of Jesus and as far as they were concerned, he had no authority to do what he was doing. He hadn't been commissioned by Christ and yet had the

audacity to preach Christ and heal in his name. Let that sink into some of your minds for a moment.

So, John says upon seeing this man do the things he did that they forbade him. That is to say, they tried to stop this man from doing what he was doing. It didn't matter in the eyes of John if someone was getting better of an affliction. Didn't matter that demons were being cast out in the name of Jesus. The only thing that mattered to the apostles was this guy didn't have the authority to do what he was doing and without that authority he needed to be stopped.

Now look at the response of Jesus again.

Mar 9:39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

I'm just going to say, this is not the response that John was hoping to hear. Jesus says don't stop the guy. You let him continue on doing what he is doing whether you know him or not, whether he was directly commissioned by me or not. Whether he follows us from place to place or not. Let him be.

Now certainly I understand this is a strange situation for us to read about this afternoon as these gifts like we are reading about here of casting demons out and healing the sick are signs that faded away during the apostolic period, but this was something the apostles were used to seeing and doing, but it was only with them that these things were going on. No one else was doing these same works in the name of Jesus. So, they are ready to put a stop to this guy. He had no right in their eyes.

But again, Jesus says no. Let him go. Says that one who speaks in his name and does a miracle like this can't be against him. In fact, if this person without a direct commission of Christ was able to cast out a demon it was only because it was the will of the Father above wasn't it?

His power certainly wasn't coming from the Devil. As Jesus reminded us in chapter 3 Satan can't cast out Satan. Anything this man was doing was because it was the will of the Father in heaven.

So, here is a man that has seen Jesus and the Apostles in action. He has faith enough in the name of Jesus that he believes he can do the same thing- and through the name of Jesus he has through the will of the Father. Again, let that sink into your heads.

Now let's look at the next response of Jesus again.

Mar 9:40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

Jesus has made it clear to them that this man was not opposed to the work of the kingdom. In fact, the very thought that this man was out there speaking the name of Jesus was something that was actually promoting the kingdom.

This is not the first time we have a situation like this in scripture. We actually have a very similar event take place with Moses. And the response was very similar. Again, hold your place here and look with me to the book of Numbers.

Num 11:25 And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

Num 11:26 But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

Num 11:27 And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

Num 11:28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

Num 11:29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

Did you catch the similarities? Moses of course was a prophet that prefigured Christ. Here we have a 70 mentioned. The 70 elders who were at times indwelt with the spirit in such a way that they prophesied.

In the New Testament we have the seventy sent out by Christ that were enabled by the Holy Spirit to prophesy concerning Christ and do miracles in his name.

Now in this event in the wilderness we have an event outside of Moses and these seventy commissioned men taking place. Here, we have two men in the camp that were out there in the congregation on their own, not being appointed by the people or Moses- with seemingly no commission, but were doing the same kind of works the seventy were.

Well this was just the kind of thing that some thought needed to be put to a stop. Working outside the realm of clear authority. This was the kind of thing that would in their minds no doubt get you dragged out of the camp and stoned. Some were probably hunting for a good stone to throw already.

The response of Moses though was not what was expected. Moses says do you think I should be jealous over the fact that God is working outside of my little world? He says he wished the Holy Spirit would come and work through everyone.

Moses could have just as easily had said, he who is not against us is for us. The thoughts Moses expressed in this event is the same thoughts expressed at this encounter that we are reading

of here in Mark. Leave the one alone that is showing forth fruit that the Spirit is working through them.

Before we look to out next verse in Mark, I want to take you to another place in the New Testament about one is was happy the word of God was being preached.

Turn with me to the book of Philippians.

Php 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

Php 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

Php 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Php 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

Php 1:16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Php 1:17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Php 1:18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Here we have an interesting scenario. Paul is writing these words from jail. You know there were a lot of Christians that were in great prayer over Paul and his situation and desired for him to be free.

Believe it or not though, there were some that were happy that Paul was in prison. You see there were some who were preaching Christ that were Judiazers. The kind of people that wanted the Gentiles to keep portions of the law. Now these men hadn't been ordained of Paul. Hadn't been ordained and sent out by Jerusalem. We know they came from Jerusalem and they went

places preaching Jesus, but Jesus plus works. They didn't like the message of Paul. They were happy he was in jail. There may have been others who were not happy with the message of Paul because it wasn't what they had been taught.

Here's the thing though. Instead of being upset that there were others who were preaching against the things Paul preached or attacking his own character. Paul instead was happy that Christ was being preached.

Paul said he would rejoice that Jesus was being preached and he would continue to rejoice wherever Christ was being preached, whether it was someone who was for him or someone who was against him. Whether it was someone that he agreed with right down the line or not.

Now keep all that in your minds as we travel back to Mark, because we are going to have to come back to some of these thoughts as we make application later.

Let's read.

Mar 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

You know every time I hear this verse quoted it is quoted outside the context of these verses. The thought we usually associate with this verse is the smallest act of kindness done in Jesus name will be rewarded of God.

That is no doubt a true statement. But the greater context has to do with this man that is being spoken of here that was casting out devils. You see, this man seemed to be working outside of the ecclesiastical authority and the apostles wanted to put an end to it. They couldn't reason that God would be happy with what he was doing.

Jesus is saying don't stop him. The word of my name is going out and that's a good thing. But don't miss what Jesus is also saying here. He's saying, by the way, anyone that does anything to promote the kingdom is going to be rewarded.

This man was doing far more than serving up physical water in the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus, he was sharing the word from a well that will cause people never to thirst again.

I hope you understand what I'm saying. This man who in the eyes of the apostles had no authority was serving others in the name of Christ and would be rewarded.

Now then we have come to the end of our four verses, but where does that leave us at today. Where is the application of all those things I told you to keep in the back of your minds?

Well, I have to tell you this has been a convicting piece of scripture to me over the last few years. You see I grew up in that strict Baptist culture where the word authority was used a lot. Typically, along the lines of we have got and no one else does. I have heard preachers commonly refer to every other denomination as Synagogues of Satan. They speak about everyone else as if they are angry about people going to church there.

Recently, I went to a lunch with several brothers of the faith and if I heard the word authority once I heard it 50 times. They don't have authority for this. They don't have authority for that. It would make them happy if the Baptist Church that isn't just like us or the Methodist Church or the Presbyterian Church down the street had to close their doors because they, after all, aren't the divinely commissioned group for carrying out the gospel. That alone belongs to the Landmark Baptist.

The words of Jesus echoed in the back of my mind during the meal.

Mar 9:39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

Mar 9:40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

I left with a saddened heart because I know I have echoed the same words as those men in years past.

You might say well Brother John, you know how those groups persecuted Baptist's in the past? Yeah I do. I know of how Baptist were flogged and imprisoned for preaching truth. I know ho some were even killed by some of those groups. And you might say how can you forget that history?

I haven't. But I also remember the words of Paul.

Php 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

Php 1:16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Php 1:17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Php 1:18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Folks what I'm preaching isn't popular among some of our Baptist's, but it is the Bible nonetheless. Far too often we are too happy to sit around slapping each other on the back and telling each other that we are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven because we have the authority while others are out there serving far more than us.

I'm not so sure that is that attitude of we are the greatest and Christ loves us best is the attitude we need to go out in the world with based on the passages we have read the last couple of weeks.

Perhaps we should just attempt to preach the word and practice the word and let God work out who's greatest knowing that no deed no matter how small done in his name by anyone is going to be rewarded. Again, not just us, but all who preach Christ.

Let's remember, those who are not against us are for us.

Now before I end, I do want to offer up one little caveat. In saying these things, I'm not saying we don't speak out and warn against those who preach a corrupt gospel. Scripture gives us examples to do that as well.

But again, we may differ on points of theology or practice and still preach the same Christ. So, let's rejoice that Christ is being preached.