

The disciples showed in the previous passage by their attempt to drive out a demon without praying, that they have completely misunderstood the values of the Kingdom of God. They thought that they themselves were great enough to overpower a demon in their own strength! So, here Jesus patiently offered a further lesson about how the values of the Kingdom are the opposite of what they would naturally expect.

### **Jesus trained His disciples how to be great.**

#### **1. Die to self. (v.30-32)**

In verse 30, Jesus and His 12 disciples “*passed through Galilee...*” Jesus was well-known in this area, and so we would expect crowds. Why did the crowds not gather? It was because in verse 30, Jesus Himself “*...did not want anyone to know...*” that Jesus was passing through Galilee. Jesus was focused on the 12 disciples. Verse 31 informed us that Jesus “*...was teaching His disciples...*”

What did Jesus need to teach His disciples? How to be great in the kingdom. This is the second time that Jesus was telling them. The first time was in chapter 8:31, saying He must be killed. That was when Peter rebuked Jesus, and Jesus rebuked Peter back, and called him Satan. Remember? Here in chapter 9:31, Jesus taught a second time the need for Jesus to be killed. The turn of phrase that Jesus used this time was a play on words that you can see in English in verse 31. The Son of man...the hands of men. Man – men. Ironic, especially the way that the phrase “Son of Man” is used in the Book of Daniel. Listen to Daniel 7:13-14, “*...behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man...to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom [is] one that shall not be destroyed.*” That is the Son of Man. And Jesus said that the Son of Man end up in the hands of men.

How will one with such power end up arrested by men? The key word is “*delivered.*” Verse 31, Jesus said, “*The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men...*”

Back in Mark 1:15, John the Baptist was arrested. (same Greek word for delivered).

Back in Mark 3:19, Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. (same Greek word for delivered!).

Later in Mark 10:33, Jesus will be delivered over. (same Greek word for delivered!).

Later what Judas did to Jesus in chapter 14, in seven instances, in verses 10, 11, 18, 21, 41, 42, and 44, each time translated with our English word “*betrayed,*” and yet each time Mark chose the same Greek word for delivered!

In Mark 15:1, the Sanhedrin bound Jesus and “*delivered Him over to Pilate.*” (same Greek word for delivered.)

In Mark 15:10, Pilate repeated that it was the chief priests who “had *delivered [Jesus] up.*” (same Greek word!)

Finally, in Mark 15:15, near the end of the Gospel of Mark, it was Pilate who after having scourged Jesus, also “...*delivered Him to be crucified.*” (same Greek word.)

Back to our study in Mark 9:32. After this blunt and clear statement about Jesus being killed and rising again from the dead, we are told sadly in Mark 9, verse 32, two things about the disciples 1) They did not understand and 2) they were afraid to ask Jesus.

Why were the disciples afraid now to ask Jesus what He meant? Because they were afraid to die! Because their leader Jesus was talking about being killed, and they could sense that they were being summoned eventually to share His fate. The message of the cross was a stumbling point for them.

The same disciples who tried to cast out a demon without praying, were now trying to understand without asking, and trying to follow a Savior committed to being killed, without these disciples dying to themselves. They were wanting to be great, without following step one toward Kingdom greatness. Get yourself out of the way. Die to self.

Even while they remained these sort of sinners, Jesus was openly discussing His willingness to die for them. Jesus was willing to die to Himself, to be killed for them. Jesus was willing to be delivered by them to His crucifixion.

## **2. Serve others. (v.33-35)**

While the eyes of Jesus were fixed on His own martyrdom, the disciples were preoccupied with the question of their status. While Jesus was repeatedly speaking to them about rejection and death, the disciples were apparently thinking of a continuing influential movement in which they will rise to power and recognition. Those close to Jesus were most likely to have cabinet positions.

Listen to the presentation by Mark in verse 33, “*And they came to Capernaum. And when [Jesus] was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’*”

Being in the house was an indicator of the absence of the crowds, the place and time in which it was safe and private for the disciples to ask questions or for the rabbi to ask question of His disciples. Since the disciples were silent, too proud and fearful to ask Him questions, the rabbi asked the first question.

In verse 34, “*But they were silent....*” Imagine the way that the disciples looked at the floor, while Jesus looked at each of them one by one? Why?

Mark reveals that next “*But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.*”

Jesus had been talking about being rejected violently and fatally. God's kingship will come about through defeat, not through victory. God's kingdom comes about through the King being killed, not through the king being crowned and seated on the throne.

The process of Jesus re-training His disciples must continue. What does a good teacher do when the class is behind? The good teacher teaches from where the class is, to where the class needs to be. Mark shows us that is exactly what Jesus did next. For these silent disciples, when a lesser teacher might have quit, Jesus their rabbi held an immediate tutoring session.

Verse 35, "*And [Jesus] sat down and called the twelve.*" The vocabulary chosen here by Mark for the location of the event and the choreography, things such as in the house, rabbi was seated, officially summoning His students to gather around Him, and even the phrase The Twelve, all show that this lesson was a deliberate, even formal, piece of instruction. "*And [Jesus] said to them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.'*"

If you want to be great, you will be a great servant.

If you want to be the greatest, you will be the greatest servant of all.

It is tough to imagine a more inappropriate question to discuss than what the disciples had been discussing – who was the greatest.

### **3. Care for little people. (v.36-37)**

Jesus now wisely presented a child as a teaching aid. Verse 36, "*And [Jesus] took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,...*"

The point is the status of the child, not any other character traits typical of children. The lesson is for us to reverse the conventional value-scale by assigning importance to an unimportant person.

Verse 37, "*Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me, receives not Me, but Him who sent Me.*"

The idea here is hidden representation. It takes Kingdom thinking to understand that the little people represent someone. Whom do they represent? They represent whomever sent them. Just as God the Father sent Jesus the Son of God, and whomever receives Jesus receives God the Father, so also whoever receives a child in the name of Jesus, also receives Jesus.

A sure-fire test for how we understand the values of the kingdom of God is how we treat little people.

It is only when we have learned to relate well to those who have no standing in our society, that we have learned to welcome Christ into our lives, with the values of His kingdom. Only then are we actually walking with God.

We are to welcome all people without thought of their accomplishments, their influence, their fame or their gifts, but simply because they are children of God.

The apostle James wrote about this in James 2:1-4, *“my brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”*

We are called to receive others, without being conscious of their status. We love and accept everyone!

**Concluding applications:** The applications are the same 3 points of the sermon.

1. Die to ourselves. We are worse than we think we are. We needed a Savior to die for us. Jesus did not simply come to teach us, to preach messages we study, and to work miracles that amaze us to review. Jesus came to make satisfaction to a holy God for our wrongdoing by His own blood and suffering on the cross. He rose again, and that is our only source of hope. Dying to ourselves is remembering this central kingdom element of the cross. The grand object that demands our focus in our study of the Gospel accounts is Christ's death on Calvary for us. Die to that part of ourselves that wants to minimize this, or graduate from it. Walking with God is all about the cross to save our sinful selves from a fiery judgment and the never-ending wrath of God. If we want to be great, our first step is to camp out here, and stay here permanently, in the full recognition of our dreadful sin status requiring the suffering servant. We always keep in mind the twin truth that His resurrection which secures our glorious status in the realm of the risen and reigning Son of Man. Paul expresses the heart-cry of each of us in Galatians 2:20, *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* Because Jesus died for me, I am dead. I no longer live. Why am I still here? Christ! Christ lives in me. Anything I am, anything I say, anything I do, is all the Son of God. I only live by faith in him. That is it. I have no agenda. I have no ambition. I am not climbing. I am not maneuvering. I am not searching. I am not waiting for my 15 minutes of fame and attention. I don't want it. For me to live five more minutes or 50 more years, is Christ, Christ, Christ. There is no self. There is no me. I believe that I am a worm and I deserve death, but Christ has given me life and everything else. My whole life is all about Christ. That is dying to ourselves.

2. Serve others. The world's idea of how to be great is to rule over others.

Christ's idea how to be great is to serve others.

This is a non-negotiable aspect of following Jesus. We must serve others.

SI - a Spanish philosopher, tells about the Roman aqueduct at Segovia, in his native Spain. It was built in 109 A.D. For eighteen hundred years, it carried cool water from the mountains to the hot and thirsty city. Generations of people drank

from its flow. Then came another generation, a recent one, who said, "This aqueduct is so great a marvel that it ought to be preserved for our children, as a museum piece. We shall relieve it of its centuries-long labor." They did; they installed modern iron pipes. They gave the ancient bricks and mortar a reverent rest. They were surprised how soon the aqueduct began to fall apart. The sun beating on the dry mortar caused it to crumble. The bricks and stone sagged and threatened to fall. What ages of service could not destroy, idleness disintegrated.

We do not retire from serving others.

### 3. Care for little people.

Jesus touched Mark. Jesus taught Mark in a way that Mark never forgot.

Jesus put a little child in the middle of them, and Mark became a changed man.

The world sees the path to greatness is crowns, fame and wealth.

The Christian sees that the path to greatness is in devoting ourselves to the weakest and most neglected. The misfits. The old man that no one cares for. The annoying woman. The homeless. The mentally impaired. The physically disabled. The elderly. The victims of mistreatment.

We serve neglected people not because of their worth. Rather because of the worth of Jesus.

We care for these people in Jesus' name. In doing that, we are obeying Jesus.

In doing that, we are receiving God the Father and God the Son.

These 3 steps (die to self, serve others, care for little people) are clear, but they are not easy steps!

In fact, these steps are so difficult, that we constantly need the power of Christ in order to do them.

Look around you in your life. The people who are living this way, are the truly great people in your life. And you know that.

1 John 4:11, "*whoever loves God, must also love his brother.*"

As we close, let me add that our tone in living like this is one of gladness. Philippians 2, *Jesus "...emptied Himself... and God exalted Him. Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* Within that same chapter of Philippians 2, Paul added this in verses 17-18, which shows the tone of gladness, "*Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you. Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*"