

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#19: Mark 9:30-50: The Marks of a Jesus Follower

Intro: The Dunning-Kruger Effect

I. Humility Instead of Power-Posturing (v.30-37)

A. The Problem: The Human Desire for Power and Greatness

- The Disciples argued with each other about who was the greatest (v.33-34)
 - They may have felt the need to compete for seats of power and privilege in the messianic kingdom they thought was coming
 - This is an example of the human tendency to lead by focusing on power and one's own position of honor and authority
 - Jesus will warn the disciples about this later: "Rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant." Mark 10:42-43
- The quest for power and greatness is still around, even in the church
 - Throughout history, church leaders have sometimes misused their power
 - Even fishermen can be power hungry!

B. The Solution: Redefine What it Means to be "Great"

- Jesus defines greatness as being "last" not "first" (v.35)
 - Real leadership is defined as lowering ourselves, not raising ourselves
 - We are called to be "servants" (or "slaves") the lowest position in society
- Example #1 of Lowliness: Children
 - Jesus picks up a child as an example of humility and lowliness (v.36-37)
 - Children are small, weaker, and have no real authority of power
 - **To receive a child does not give us anything; instead it costs us something
 - Key point: Giving, not taking, is the key to following Christ
- Example #2 of Lowliness: Jesus himself
 - Jesus is so humble, so willing to be last, that he will sacrifice his own life for his people (v.30-32)
 - "Jesus made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant...humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Phil 2:7-8
 - **Note the disciples are confused and bewildered (v.32). The idea of a suffering messiah was absolutely contrary to everything they expected
- What are Some Practical Ways that We Can "Lower" Ourselves?

II. Charitableness Instead of Tribalism (v.38-41)

A. The Problem: We Are Tempted to Think Only Our Group is Right or Pure

- The disciples did not like someone casting out demons who was not part of their group
- Notice they use the phrase "he was not following us" instead of "he was not following Jesus"

- Denominational/Spiritual tribalism can be a real problem; we can begin to think only our group does things the right way, whether it's church government, or worship practices, or theological emphases
- **Why do think we are tempted to behave this way?

B. The Solution: Christians Should Have a Charitable Spirit to Other Christians

- We should believe that God uses many groups or denominations to build his kingdom
- Even if we have theological disagreements with another group, we can still look for ways that Christ is at work in that group
- We can even look for ways to care for other groups: "whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward" (v.41)

III. Holiness Instead of Comfort (v.42-50)

A. The Problem: We Don't Take our Sin Seriously Enough

- **If people do not understand the good news of the gospel, it's either because they don't understand god, or they don't understand *themselves*
 - We are vastly more sinful than we think because sin is not just outward action
 - Our sin is a problem because it leads others to sin: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung on his neck and he were thrown into the sea" (v.42)
- Fighting sin is hard, painful work
 - It is easier to ignore our sin, and just enjoy the comforts of life
 - Example: like weeds in a garden

B. The Solution: Remember the price of holiness is small compared to the price of sin

- Holiness can be costly
 - It may cost a hand, foot or eye! (v.43-47)
 - **Remember this is hyperbole; Jesus is not literally calling for self-mutilation
 - "Be killing sin, or it will be killing you." –John Owen
- But Sin is more costly
 - Jesus mentions the reality of "hell" for our sins (v.47-48)
 - "Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it." –Jonathan Edwards
 - **This does not mean we are saved by holiness; but it does mean that those who believe in Jesus will pursue holiness

Discussion Groups

1. Have you been concerned about the way the church and its leaders sometimes pursue power and authority rather than humility and servanthood? Discuss a concrete place in your life where you can take on more of a servant role.
2. Do you think tribalism is a problem in the evangelical church today? What are some personal steps you can take to develop a spirit of charitableness to other Christian groups or denominations?
3. When it comes to fighting sin, we need an action plan. For any given sin struggle, what are some things a believer can do to begin to fight against it?