**9/22/24**

**Humility in Hiding**

**Mark 9:30-37 (NRSV)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Welcome to Fall Y’all! I know some of you have been waiting for this season, and live for this kind of weather. I know some of you look forward to all the shoobies heading out of town, and the roads and the stores being less packed with people. I know the sun has been going down earlier, and it now seems to get dark so early. I know there is less humidity in the air, and the temperatures out there are much more bearable. So, now we can sit outside, we can sit around the fire at S’mores & Scriptures like we did last night, or we can even take a nice walk and not sweat and be uncomfortable like we did at various times during this summer. I also know for certain that with another season there also comes about change and adjustment for all of us. Seasons bring about change a few times a year. However, we change more frequently in our lives as we make a choice each and every week by walking through those very church doors, or by calling into the conference call. We join a community of believers seeking out a way to continue changing our hearts and minds in an effort to grow humbler as we walk towards the cross with Christ. We all seek out growth and change as we come to love and appreciate all that God has done and continues to do for us. I am thankful that you all make this place one that you come to learn and grow and worship together each week, let alone each season, for sure.

For some reason it took me a lot of time, and even some additional research to come up with the word and focus on humility today. I am not too sure why that was, as it actually was there right in front of me the entire time. I guess I was just as misguided and lost as those very disciples were way back then. I guess I unfortunately had my eye on something else, and eventually needed the message bluntly delivered to me. Humility as we know it is obviously the act of being humble, and being humble means that we are good with where we are at, and do not seek some kind of status or power over one another, or anything for that fact. What we also come to learn is that “humility is having a right view of ourselves in relation to God and others and acting accordingly.” (10) Now, we may not physically have Jesus right in front of us teaching, healing, preaching, and loving on us day in and day out like the disciples had back then. However, we have had many other great examples of this very effort in humility, and those very acts of care compassion, through others that have more recently went on not too long ago before us. The one that was front and center to me quite often while studying this week was that of Mother Teresa. If you do not know a lot about her life or her ministry then I would definitely urge you to take a look into all the things she did, and the various responses and acts of kindness and humility she exhibited throughout her life. Her commitment to love and care for the vulnerable, and to create places of refuge for them was simply remarkable. We are also reminded that we have each other right at this very moment. It is our daily duty and responsibility to learn and grow together, and to empower one another as we experience our very calling by caring for everyone, including the least of these, or the very child we hear about in our Gospel Reading. We do not, or should not, just focus on one’s self and our position like the disciples were doing, but sometimes we unfortunately slip into this worldly bad habit as well. It is then though that Jesus reminds the disciples and us that there indeed is no rank or order in the Kingdom of God, and that we all have equal status, so we need to quit seeking it out or existing like it is present, and get back on track with the mission.

So, let me transition our thought here a little bit more. Now, have you ever experienced times in your life where you really did not think you knew or could recall something? However, then, just then, someone starts talking or telling a story and the good ole memory bank clicks in and you have an ugh huh moment. I would venture to say that there has been a time or two that has happened to you with the Bible and the various stories throughout scripture as well. I am pretty sure we all have had the common misconception that we did not know something, or maybe never even possibly heard it before. Sometimes this may happen just because we were given the book name, chapter, and various verse or verses from the Bible. Sometimes it is because we were only given half of the story. For some reason we just do not admittedly always do well on those real-life quizzes, or with a limited amount of information. However, it is precisely when we hear that familiar story, then we get to experience a sense of confidence and that very ugh huh moment for sure. That confidence far surpasses all things, because it really does confirm that we have been paying attention all this time, and that our hearts and minds were indeed in the right place. Thankfully, God allows for us to have that very reserve, and we are able to reconnect to those stories and scriptures that we have immersed ourselves in at church with this and other communities, or even at home and other places throughout our lives. We actually get to humble ourselves in knowing that we are changing and growing as we come together and continue to study and learn and grow our faith together for sure.

This is precisely where I am thinking that many of you have come to hear and know this story a time or two before as our Gospel Reading unfolded, and then you came to realize that we even got to hear two different stories in one here. We of course hear about Jesus and his fellow disciples while traveling yet again. To top it all off he did not want anyone to know exactly who he was or where he was at as scripture still had to live itself out. It is also in these very travels that he is telling them of what is to come for him. Jesus’ eventual betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection were right on the horizon. Let alone this is now the second time in the book of Mark that we come to know that the disciples are hearing this and still do not seem to be comprehending it. So, with that first part of the story comes some questions from our perspective for sure. Did they try to avoid things and pretend they did not even hear what Jesus was saying? Did they not want to look stupid in front of one another because they asked questions? Were they avoiding getting rebuked and being put in their place like Peter did in our Gospel Reading from last week? Were they possibly afraid of what was to come? Did they possibly not ask more questions and really try to understand things because they were scared of what might also happen to them? Did they just not understand it because they had a different picture painted in their head for what and who the Messiah was to do and be? Did they really miss what the mission and purpose of Jesus was in the first place? Was their faith just lacking despite the time Jesus had spent with them, and all of the education that he had poured into them?

These very questions seem to highlight the very distractions and fears that manage to throw us off in our very own lives as well. They throw us off from our very focus, or they create some kind of avoidance factor despite what really is to be whether we try and avoid it or not. As we think about those questions and the first part of the story, we then transition into the second part of our story today. I mean how ridiculous it really must have been for a bunch of grown men to be arguing about something like who was the greatest when there were so many other things to deal with and experience right in front of them. The funnier part of their entire argument and bickering was that they acted like Jesus had no clue what they were arguing about, and they kind of even try hiding it or denying it. We all have undoubtedly done this a time or two when we were in front of our parents in the past, I am sure. We actually think that our parents had no clue, and the disciples think that Jesus had no clue either. This is precisely where I believe one of the most popular sayings in this particular scripture surfaces for us in verse 35, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” (2) What possibly could this mean to them following their bickering and all of the comparisons they were making? Well, Jesus even takes them for a further ride and expands their thinking, just like our parents had done for us time and again in the past. While bringing about a child our Gospel Reading ends today with the statement in verse 37, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” (2) There is no question in my mind that probably even confused them a bit more initially, as it may have done for us. That is part in take that they might not have expected it, nor did we. It may have been very well due to the thought process that he was imparting on them about a child being someone who is indeed vulnerable, and needs cared for and watched over constantly. It may have also been because they were still not listening and grasping things the way they should, or the way we should, because we all seem to get focused on other things.

So, let us explore things a little deeper here. It is in this that we come to realize that Jesus again flips every conventional thought process upside down. He takes the disciples and all of us entirely out of our normal mindset, and delivers the alternative. “Saying that the way to gain honor is to receive those who are without honor goes against the logic of the ancient society. The Kingdom of God assesses and assigns value differently than the human realm. God will receive those who receive the child. This will give access to true power, the power of the one who sent Jesus.” (7) It is precisely here that we come to realize that the very “Actions we take every day may have ramifications on “the least” that we might never consider. Taking seriously the vision of the kingdom of God here in Mark’s gospel might cause us to consider those with whom we socialize, what food we eat, and whether we ought to water our lawns — decisions about which can impact the least among us.” (7) It is also here that we come to the very realization that “We are to welcome those who are vulnerable, manipulated, discarded, as was Jesus himself.” (1) We often forget that in all the glory was also the man that became the least of these too on his route to the cross.

Let us honor one another, let us respect one another, let us love one another, and let humility be the guiding light in our lives and our actions. Let this new season of fall that has come about us allow for continual change and growth in ourselves, and not just the outward world. Let us be disciples and go out there in the world and show a little bit of Christ to others.

Amen and Amen.

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year B 2024

 September 22nd, 2024

 18th Sunday After Pentecost

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

 © 2018

 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Those who share the way of love without self-interest and hidden agendas partake in

 the realm of God

 September 22, 2024

 Commentary on Mark 9:30-37

 Courtney V. Buggs

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus keeps trying to escape notice.

 September 23, 2018

 Commentary on Mark 9:30-37

 Elisabeth Johnson

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Discipleship in Mark is hard to accept

 September 19, 2021

 Commentary on Mark 9:30-37

 C. Clifton Black

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Mark’s intercalations (also known as “sandwiches”) are well known

 (e.g., Mark 5:21-43).

 September 20, 2015

 Commentary on Mark 9:30-37

 Micah D. Kiel

(8) WorkingPreacher.org

 Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

 First, I assume you will read the excellent commentary on this passage from

 workingpreacher.org 2009.

 Please do.

 September 23, 2012

 Commentary on Mark 9:30-37

 Amy G. Oden

(9) WorkingPreacher.org

 Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 This is the third week of our “What if?” approach to texts from Mark.

 September 20, 2009

 Commentary on Mark 9:30-37

 Alyce M. McKenzie

(10) Pride and Humility

 By Thomas A. Tarrants

 December 4, 2011

 Knowing and Doing

 https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/pride-and-humility/

**Mark 9:30-37 (NRSV)**

 Jesus’ teaching and action in this text are directed to the church whenever it is

 seduced by the world’s definition of greatness: prestige, power, influence, and

 money. The antidote to such a concern for greatness is servanthood.

 30[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want

 anyone to know it;31for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son

 of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days

 after being killed, he will rise again.” 32But they did not understand what he was

 saying and were afraid to ask him.

 33Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them,

 “What were you arguing about on the way?” 34But they were silent, for on the

 way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35He sat down,

 called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all

 and servant of all.” 36Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking

 it in his arms, he said to them, 37“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name

 welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who

 sent me.”

**Theme Statement: What is God doing in or behind this text?**

**(Active verb, saving or empowering action, complete thought, and a simple short sentence)**

**Four Page Method**

**Page One (Trouble in the Text) (Characters Only)**

**Page Two (Trouble in the World) (Us Only)**

**Page Three (Grace in the Text) (God & Characters)**

**Page Four (Grace in the World) (God & Us)**

**Sermon Unity Elements: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine**

**Text (41-42):** Mark 9:30-37 (NRSV)

**Theme (42-48):** Equal Status

**Doctrine (48-50):** Humility

**Need (50-52):** To feel loved

**Image (52-56):** A Little Child

**Mission (56-57):** To remind everyone that they are loved and are never forgotten by God.