**SUNDAY 9/26/21**

**SERMON**

**MARK 9:** **38-50**

For more than 20 years Professor Edwin R. Keedy

          would to start his first class with new law students

          by putting two figures on the blackboard.

The figures were the number 4, and next to it the number 2.

Then he would ask his the students:

“What is the solution?”

One student would always call out: "Six."

Another would say: "Two."

Then several would shout out "Eight!"

Still another said: "Forty-two."

But the Professor would always shake his head: "No."

"You are all wrong" he would say.

          "All of you failed to ask the key question:

          What is the problem?

          Gentlemen, unless you know what the problem is,

          you cannot possibly find the answer."

Professor Keedy knew that in law, as in everyday life,

          too much time is spent trying to solve the wrong problem.

Moses faced a lot of problems as he led the Israelites

          out of slavery in Egypt to the land God had promised them.

The problems became so great he could not do everything all alone.

So God gave him some help.

He selected seventy of the elders and placed some of his Spirit upon them.

The seventy men felt honored and were willing to follow God's directions.

However two of them did not follow the others exactly.

Eldad and Medad did not go to the tent, but prophesied in the camp.

Joshua spoke up and said: "Moses, stop them!

          They aren't doing things the way they are supposed to be done!

          They are not doing things our way!"

Joshua and the others did not really know what the problem was,

          and so they spent all their time and effort trying to solve the wrong problem.

Moses tried to explain there were many ways to prophesy to the people.

Everyone doesn't do things exactly the same way.

Each person has gifts to teach others how to live God's way.

They were not required to repeat the same words in the same way.

They were simply expected to show the people how God wanted them to act.

Moses hoped that they would teach everyone any way they could.

He was tired of all the grumbling and complaining.

He wanted the problems and difficulties to go away.

But the sixty-eight felt special.

They felt honored.

And they believed their way was the only right way.

Because they did not understand what the problem was,

          they spent too much time trying to solve the wrong problem.

Because the people did not understand, Moses continued to have

          difficulties and problems with the people as long as he lived.

How different it would be if the people had simply learned to live God's way.

We humans have not changed down through the centuries.

Thousands of years later, Jesus had to cope with many of the same

          misunderstandings of the time of Moses.

One day John came to Jesus and said:

          "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name,

          and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us."

Because he wasn't doing things exactly the same way they were doing them,

          he must be wrong.

But Jesus said, "Do not stop him.

          He does things differently, but it is not wrong."

Why did the disciples try to stop the man driving out demons?

He wasn't doing anything wrong, and he wasn't misusing Jesus' name.

They told him to stop, simply because the man wasn't one of them.

They wanted the glory, and honor, and recognition for themselves.

It all comes down to:

          What is the problem?

          Unless we know what the problem is,

                    we cannot possibly find the answer.

Jesus tried over and over to teach them:

          whoever gives someone a cup of water to drink is doing God's will,

          but whoever puts a stumbling block in someone's way, is not.

Anything which makes it hard to follow God's will, should be cast aside.

We are to obey God and not make up our own rules.

We should not be seeking honor and fame for ourselves,

          but seeking ways to help others,

          to build one another up,

          to help anyone who needs help,

          to show them God's love and forgiveness.

We need to work together with all people.

Many of us are more capable than some of us,

          but none of us is as capable as all of us together."

Often we look around and say:

          "We can't do this and we can't do that,

          because we are too small,

          we don't have enough money,

          we don't have enough people,

          we don't have enough resources,

          we don't know what to do."

Instead of taking giant steps of faith, we often take tiny baby steps.

But when we trust God, and follow His will, we can do amazing things.

Dr. Karl Menninger, a world-famous psychiatrist,

          was answering questions after giving a lecture on mental health,

          when a person in the audience stood up and asked:

                    "What would you advise someone

                    if he felt a nervous breakdown coming on?"

Most people in the audience expected the doctor to say, "Consult a psychiatrist." But instead he told them:

          "Lock up your house,

          go across the railroad tracks,

          find someone in need,

          and do something to help that person."

Instead of fretting about how many great things we cannot do,

          we ought to be looking for ways we can help one person in need.

A TV news camera crew on assignment in southern Florida

          was filming the widespread destruction of Hurricane Andrew.

Many of the homes were completely destroyed

          and all of the houses suffered severe damage.

All except one.

In the middle of all the destruction one house stood firmly on its foundation.

The owner was asked, "Why is your house the only one still standing?"

He replied "I built this house myself.

          I built it according to the Florida state building code.

          When the code called for 2x6 roof trusses, I used 2x6 roof trusses.

          I was told that a house built according to code could withstand a hurricane."

The blueprint this man used yielded great results.

When the right blueprint is used, the right result follows.

God has given us the blueprint for our lives –

          through the Bible, through Jesus,

          through the Holy Spirit, through one another –

When we follow His blueprint amazing things happen.

It makes all the difference in the world

          when we follow His blueprint

          instead of our own.

AMEN