

Introduction

1. Three times in the gospel of Mark Jesus predicts His betrayal, death and resurrection:
 - a. The first came immediately after Peter's confession in Mark 8:31 that Jesus is the Christ
 - b. The second is in our passage today
 - c. The third is in our passage for next week
2. What caught my attention about each of these is the context that surrounds them:
 - a. All three are found in a section of Mark's gospel that revolves around the cost, expectations, and qualities necessary to be a disciple of Jesus
 - b. Two of them are immediately followed by the disciples debating over which of them were the greatest disciples
3. Today and next week we look at what it means to be great disciples

A. Jesus predicts His betrayal, death and resurrection for the second time, but the disciples argue over which of them is the greatest disciple (9:30-34)

1. As Jesus and His disciples travel through Galilee, Jesus predicts what's going to happen when He gets to His final destination, Jerusalem (30-31): **"From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it. For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later."**
 - a. This is the second time He revealed this to His disciples—the first was after Peter's confession in 8:31
 - b. In that instance, Peter immediately rebuked Christ for making such a claim—after all, in most Jews' minds the Messiah was going to come as a conquering hero to destroy their Roman oppressors and setup a new Jewish kingdom
 - c. In response, Jesus severely rebuked Peter for looking out for man's interest rather than God's interests
2. This time the disciples' response reveals an inability to accept what Jesus told them (32): **"And they did not understand, and they were afraid to ask Him"**
 - a. The word translated **"understand"** has two primary meanings in the NT:
 - 1) To refuse to think about or pay attention to something
 - 2) To not understand, with the implication of lacking the capacity or ability to understand
 - 3) The second meaning is likely what Mark intended because Luke states that the true meaning of what Jesus shared with them **"was concealed from them so that they might not perceive it"** (Luke 9:45)
 - 4) The implication here might be that the disciples were not ready to accept what Jesus was predicting, and this was certainly evidenced by Peter's response the first time Jesus predicted His death
 - b. Matthew records that they understood enough to be **"grieved"** by it, which may explain why they were afraid to ask Jesus about it

3. The fact that they failed to grasp the significance of what Jesus was teaching them is found in their discussion that followed (33-34):
 - a. So, as you might expect, Jesus's teaching led to a discussion among the disciples as they completed their journey to Capernaum
 - b. What do you suppose they would talk about after Jesus just described how He is going to be betrayed, savagely killed, and then miraculously raise from the dead?
 - c. Jesus was certainly interested so He asked them (33): **"They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?"**
 - 1) Now Jesus is being nice here in referring to it as a **"discussion"** because Luke reveals that it was actually an argument (Luke 9:46)
 - 2) The truth, which they didn't want to reveal to Jesus, was that they were arguing over which one of them was the greatest disciple in this new kingdom Jesus was going to usher in (34): **"But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest."**
 - 3) It must have been a fairly spirited debate because later Jesus has to remind them to be at peace with one another (50)

B. Jesus took advantage of this opportunity to teach His disciples about what it truly meant for them to be great disciples (35-50)

1. A disciple must first be a servant to all (35-37):
 - a. If you want to be first in God's kingdom, you must first be a servant (35): **"Sitting down, He called the twelve and *said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."**
 - 1) Jesus's words here remind me of something Doc told McQueen in that great Pixar classic Cars, "To go right you have to go left!"
 - 2) In other words, it's the opposite of what you might think
 - 3) If you want to be first (e.g. great) in God's kingdom, you don't strive to be first but rather make yourself last and become a servant
 - 4) This was the example Jesus Himself set for us:
 - a) Mark 10:45: **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**
 - b) Luke 22:27: **"For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves."**
 - 5) Jesus explained this truth in a similar fashion in Matthew 20:25-28
 - b. We can't overlook the fact that Jesus here states that we must become a servant **"to all"**, and He illustrates this by using a child (36-37): **"Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."**
 - 1) It's easy to serve those we consider important or significant, but not always so easy to serve those we find less important and significant
 - 2) However, a disciple of Jesus will serve them both the same and that is the point of Jesus's illustration

- 3) The child in this case represents those who are the most vulnerable and dependent in society, and often the ones we are less inclined to serve
 - 4) We see in 10:13-16 how Jesus rebuked the disciples for becoming annoyed and getting after the parents who brought their children to Jesus
 - 5) This illustration served to teach the disciples that they must learn to serve not just those they deemed worthy, but all people
2. A disciple must not possess a spirit of exclusivism (38-41):
- a. John approaches Jesus out of concern that some outsiders--other than the 12 apostles--were casting out demons in Jesus's name (38): **"John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us."**
 - 1) These individuals were doing ministry in the name of Jesus
 - 2) John and other disciples ("we") tried to stop them
 - 3) The issue wasn't that they were doing was wrong, but rather they weren't a part of the group of 12 ("not following us")
 - b. Jesus, however, didn't have a problem with these folks and told John not to interfere with what they were doing (READ 39-41):
 - 1) They were performing miracles by the authority of Christ ("**in My name**") and wouldn't therefore turn against Christ (speak evil of Him)
 - 2) Since they were not enemies of Christ and His followers ("**against us**"), they were allies ("**is for us**")
 - 3) Since they are sympathetic to the mission of the 12, they will be rewarded (41)

My first exposure to homeschoolers—families at IBC that began to withdraw to themselves and exclude others in the church who weren't homeschooling their children; they became suspicious of those who didn't do the same and questioned their commitment to raising their children Biblically
 - c. Basically, no single individual, group, or church, or denomination, etc. has a monopoly on Christianity
3. A disciple must not cause other believers to sin (42): **"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea."**
- a. "**these little ones**" is better translated here as "**these humble ones**" as suggested by the NASB notes, and probably so in Matthew 18 as well because the emphasis is on humility or humbleness (see Matthew 18:3-6)
 - b. While Matthew attaches this phrase to children, Mark attaches it to the anonymous exorcists in the immediately preceding verses because they both had something in common—a simple, humble faith in Jesus
 - c. Jesus said that such humble faith is critical to being a disciple
 - d. Therefore, anyone who causes those with such faith to stumble (e.g. sin) is in grave danger
 - e. The NT is filled with warnings against causing others to stumble, especially those who are weaker in their faith
4. A disciple must strive to avoid sin him or herself (READ 43-49):

Bumper sticker: Christians aren't perfect just forgiven

Paraphrase of young woman on Who is Jesus video: "For me, I'm a Christian. Jesus is my savior which means I'm forgiven. I can do whatever the #\$\$#^ I want and not worry. He's cool with that."

- a. That's diametrically opposed to how a disciple is to think
 - b. Jesus warns His disciples here that if their hand, foot or eye causes them to sin they should cut them off because it's better to be lame in this life than tormented in Hell for all eternity
 - c. The Bible states that we are to put off the old man and put on the new
 - d. This is why Paul wrote, **"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"** (Ephesians 4:1)
5. A disciple must be committed to preserving peace with other disciples (50): **"Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."**
- a. In the ANE salt was used as a preservative, cleansing agent and flavoring, but unlike today's table salt (which is pure sodium chloride) it was mainly collected from the region around the Dead Sea and was therefore mixed with other minerals. As the sodium chloride would leach out the other minerals were left making the salt "unsalty"
 - b. Salt was also used in the making of legally binding agreements—both parties to an agreement would eat salt together before witnesses and this would secure or bind the contract
 - c. We even see this in the OT:
 - 1) King Abijah referred to the Davidic covenant as a **"covenant of salt"** (2 Chronicles 13:5)
 - 2) God's covenant with the priests was also called a covenant of salt (Numbers 18:19)
 - 3) Certain sacrifices were to be made with salt and the salt was referred to as the **"salt of the covenant"** (Leviticus 2:13)
 - 4) Salt symbolized the preservation of the covenants and maintaining peace with God
 - d. That is likely how Jesus was using the salt metaphor here:
 - 1) Remember, this passage started with the disciples arguing with one another over who was the greatest in the kingdom
 - 2) Each man was more interested in his own status and "greatness" which isn't great for promoting peace with one another
 - 3) Jesus's call to have salt in themselves was a call to preserve unity and peace among one another just as Paul calls us to do in Ephesians 4:2-3: **"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace"** (NIV)

Dad restricting us from playing with our friends until we learned to play with one another in order to preserve peace among us siblings—it worked because we are all still close today

- e. As disciples of Christ we should be committed to one another in peace