

## **The Gospel of Mark**

### **Mark 9.30-37**

November 16, 2014

Rick Watts

#### **Introduction**

Rick began by sharing the story of his ex-student Aaron who had befriended an African pastor. This pastor opened up his home to children he found on the streets, currently he has 25 children living with his family. One day he called Aaron and asked him to adopt a little girl who was in desperate need of medical help that she could not get in her home country. Aaron responded as most of us would, he needed time to think about it! His African friend replied quite bluntly that he didn't understand North Americans. We have so much and yet we have to think about sharing it with the less fortunate! Aaron adopted this little girl and she has since had about 20 operations in the span of 7 to 8 months.

What is the true character of Christian Holiness?

Looking like Jesus? Asking "What would Jesus do?" Many Biblical scholars scoffed at the bracelets people used to wear, but really it's a pretty good question to ask ourselves.

What do we actually know about Jesus?

Many of us know bits and pieces, "sound bites" bookended by Christmas and Easter. Problem – how do we get to know a person? By listening to their stories.

Jesus is a person and we can only get to know him through his story.

Mark is a carefully crafted narrative, written this way to attract us and change us; nothing is written by accident. If we really want to know Jesus we need to know his story inside out.

- Stories shape us, drive us, and define us.
- Stories shape our emotions.
- Stories shape our deepest ethical and moral values.

This is why the Bible is full of story; it is God's way of integrating us into a new narrative. The gospels put us into a new story.

- Holy Spirit inspired this narrative – its entire literary shape

If we don't take it seriously we may be treating the work of the Holy Spirit with disrespect or even contempt.

We have a problem – living the Christian life is in opposition to the culture, it goes against the grain because we have been brought into the narrative. That's why we have such a difficult time.

We cannot be a Christian and be Canadian; we cannot live out of two narratives. Many of us know more about the Canucks than we do Scripture! We have not internalized the gospel narrative.

### **Understanding Mark 8-10**

Mark began talking about the long awaited presence of God. The Israelites knew about this – their great hope was that God would return to them after the exile. They built the second temple but the glory never returned, no cloud, no presence. 400 years of waiting.

But God's presence really shows up at the transfiguration. **The new Mount Sinai.**

- Jesus: The Lord's very presence
- No one expected God to show up in human form

The Way of the Lord: John the Baptist came to prepare the way of the Lord.

In these chapters Mark is revealing walking in the way of the Lord himself, the way of true holiness. What it means to reflect God's character. But there are problems:

- The danger of the leaven of Herod and the Pharisees

Jesus gives three predictions of the cross, the disciples don't understand. This is not what they had signed up for.

### **Text: Mark 9: 30-32 - Jesus wants to focus on the disciples**

*30 Leaving that region, they traveled through Galilee. Jesus didn't want anyone to know he was there, 31 for he wanted to spend more time with his disciples and teach them. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead." 32 They didn't understand what he was saying, however, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.*

From where? Mark is connecting the story to what just happened – the transfiguration and the failure of the disciples to cast out the unclean spirit. They had not aligned themselves with the cross. You can even be an apostle and still not get it!

Pentecostals love the power of the Holy Spirit but we cannot forget the cross. True holiness is about looking like God. This is why the disciples lost spiritual authority because they rejected the cross.

Jesus needed to focus on his disciples because they had to grasp this!

What is Jesus saying when he uses the term ‘Son of Man’ and “human hands”? The term Son of Man is only used when Jesus is doing things only God can do, and yet he can still be given into the hands of man.

Jesus has incredible spiritual authority (cast out legion), yet a handful of villagers afraid to lose their livelihood can do what demons couldn’t – cast Jesus out.

- Disciples think the Messiah is a military figure – to take Jerusalem by might and power
- To think like this is to bow down and worship Satan!
- The desire to be first and to be great is from the enemy
- The way to defeat the enemy is not to imitate him

### **Mark 9: 33-34 – Disciples incomprehension**

*33 After they arrived at Capernaum and settled in a house, Jesus asked his disciples, “What were you discussing out on the road?” 34 But they didn’t answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest.*

Have you ever been talking about someone behind his or her back and then suddenly they are there in the room? This is what happened to the disciples, Jesus caught them arguing with each other about who among them was the greatest!

Watch out for the leaven of Herod and the Pharisees!

In the Jewish tradition there was no suffering Messiah; even though Psalm 22 clearly speaks of this, they could not see it because of their idolatry. They were more concerned with status and power. The disciples were no different at this point.

### **Mark 9: 35-37 – Jesus’ response**

*35 He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to him, and said, “Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.” 36 Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me.”*

God’s Kingdom is upside down: Whoever wants to be first must be last and the servant of all. Choosing the “greatest” path leads to crucifying Jesus. If we want to

kill the work of God then all we have to do is play the “greatest” game.

True greatness lies on being:

- A servant (Mark 10:45)
- Welcoming the least of these

In the ancient world children were believed to be little adults except they had no rights, power or status; they were completely vulnerable having nothing to bring to the table – the least.

A mark of holiness is how we treat the least. In God’s Kingdom the least are welcomed. We are to do this in Jesus name, meaning we are to be as his ambassador; to speak for him and act as he did. Our lives are not about what we want to do they are about what God wants to do through us.

## **Conclusion**

What does this mean for us?

- It is not about how I am welcomed but how I welcome others
- At Living Waters we have all been welcomed, there is no “greatness” here which is why the church is growing.
- It is impossible to live this way of holiness without cross bearing – it is not our agenda but God’s

When the disciples lived this way they changed the Roman world. If we want to see our communities changed we need to take a lesson out of Mark’s Gospel and adapt the character of true holiness.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. What stands out to you in this passage? Does it raise any questions for you?
2. Have you fully grasped what the cross means for you and how you live your life?
3. Why is it so hard for us not to want to be the greatest and be the servant of all?
4. How have you welcomed the least recently?

