

SRM14033

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"The Road to Resurrection:
Honoring Other Christians"
Mark 9:38-50

Do you know what "friendly fire" is? Its when you are in a battle, and you get wounded by something that came from your own side.

The Bible describes the Christian life as Spiritual warfare, but there isn't a one of us that hasn't at times taken a pot shot at someone on our own side.

In her recent book, "Wounded by God's People", Anne Graham Lotz writes of the way Christians are sometimes wounded by people in the church. She tells how her deacon / Sunday School teacher husband was voted out of his leadership positions by their church for teaching from a biblical inerrancy position; and when she was a teenager, and a woman at church confronted Anne's mother about Anne's hair color, make-up, and hat.

She also tells of times when she has unintentionally been the wounder of others.

As Jesus was walking his Road to the Resurrection, he taught his disciples how to keep alive the new life to which he had introduced them.

From the time of the Transfiguration until the last week of his life, his message shifted from who he was to his work of redeeming, which would bring Peace with God and new life.

As he started out his journey toward Jerusalem, and they argued about who was greatest, he first taught them the importance of an attitude of humility that would make them willing to serve one another in love: Mark 9:35b " . . . If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

As we saw last week, God wants us to seek greatness, but some seek it by trying to be great in the eyes of other people.

Greatness in the eyes of God is the one who humbles himself before God and others and becomes the servant of all, including the least of all.

In Mk 9:38-50 he continued this teaching when their pride led them to criticize someone they should have been encouraging.

1. Jesus corrected the sin of rejecting a brother (or sister) who is not like us. v. 38-42

A. Jesus' disciples rejected one of His own.
v. 38 (ESV) "John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us."

You can imagine how they felt to hear that someone outside the 12 was casting out demons, while some of them had recently failed to do so.

Their pride had led them to think that what was important was their prestige at being close to the famous Jesus, and then Jesus pulls the rug out.

Jesus says what is important is bringing glory to himself and the one who sent him: vv. 39-41 "But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 For the one who is not against us is for us. 41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward."

Now generous acceptance does not apply to those who do not follow Christ at all; see Matt. 12:30 "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."

But in this case, the Father has indicated His acceptance by answering with a healing.

In other words, Jesus is saying, "I and the Father have accepted him as one of us, who are you to reject him?"

You and I are as guilty as they when we reject or bad mouth other Christians or Christian groups.

It is our own prideful way of saying, "We are Jesus' inner circle, and we are shutting you out, because you are not like us."

We do it over worship styles, racial differences, economic status, musical tastes, and debatable Bible interpretations to name only a few.

B. The Spirit of Christ is to accept the "little ones" v. 42 (NKJV) "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."

"Little ones" could refer to the children in vv. 36-37 or the disciple in v. 38, which is more likely.

To the twelve, who had been with Jesus almost three years, he was a spiritual child in his understanding, but he was a precious loved one to Jesus.

By rejecting his ministry, John was possibly causing him to be discouraged, and to therefore stop ministering in Jesus name!

trans: What does Jesus say about this spirit?

2. Jesus says that the road to Resurrection is to turn our critical spirit on ourselves. (v. 43-48)

A. Jesus warns the disciples of the seriousness of such sin and the need for total dedication to God's commandments, including loving one another.

Mark 9:43-47 "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-- 44 where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.' 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-- 46 where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.' 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire".

ESVSB: Jesus uses hyperbole (intentional overstatement) to show the seriousness of sin and the fact that nothing, even things of greatest importance to humans such as a hand, foot, or eye, can be more important than God... Of course, Jesus does not mean that people should literally cut off those body parts, for the literal removal of them cannot remove the root of sin in the heart.

Jesus' words serve as a sober warning concerning the severity of sin, which can lead to hell

Because of the context, I believe that Jesus is speaking not only of all sin, but especially of sins which are against other Christians!

With the hands, we harm others

With the feet, we go here and there doing so.

With the eyes, we look for someone to look down upon.

B. How serious are such things? If you are able to act this way regularly, it may indicate that your status before God is that you are still unredeemed.

Jesus speaks here of hell: v. 47-48 "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire-- 48 where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'"

Verses 44 and 46 do not appear in the best ancient copies, so NIV et. al. eliminate them, but it is no loss, for they are the same as v. 48.

The word for "hell" here is "Gehenna". It is derived from the valley of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem, where children had been sacrificed to the god Molech until the time of Josiah.

After that it became a garbage dump, where trash and human waste were burned constantly, and where all that lived were maggots & the like.

Because of this, it became associated with the place of eternal suffering.

Jesus is speaking in extremes, because God's judgment of failure to love others is severe.

He also emphasized this in reference to the 6th Commandment in the Sermon on the mount: Matthew 5:21-22 (NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."

trans: So Jesus says that the road to Resurrection is to turn our critical spirit on ourselves.

3.To Honor Christ, we must be salt to the world, and make peace with all who follow Him.

Mark 9:49-50 (NKJV) "For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."

Verse 49 is difficult. the last part of it in KJV has weak manuscript support, & was probably an early explanatory note, but it is probably helpful.

It says, "and every sacrifice was salted with salt"

It reminds us that in the OT, the sacrifices were salted, then burned. It probably points to the fact that every Christian can expect to go thru trials, but that they will have a purifying effect.

ESVSB: "In other words, "Be willing to give up anything (vv. 43–48), and also to suffer for Christ's sake, for something costly and painful will come into everyone's life (v. 49).

And as salt does not destroy but preserves food, so the suffering will not destroy the believer.

In v. 50 then, Jesus is warning his disciples not to lose their spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to Jesus and the gospel, as spoken of in v. 37.

The "be at peace" even goes back to vv. 33-35, where they had argued about who was greatest

In the kingdom of Christ, there is only one way to Greatness!!!

Does this mean we should never rebuke another believer? No, but do it in love and because of love.

Strife between Christians is resolved and peace is restored when we affirm a common commitment to Jesus and the gospel, together with other Christians.

Then we will be the salt of the earth. Salt preserves and purifies. Salt gives flavor & zest to life. It is what the world needs desperately.

Christians are called to follow Christ by honoring all people, and especially other Christians.

Joe McKeever is a retired pastor who preaches in a different church almost every Sunday. From his experience, he came up with "Ten ways churches signal newcomers they are not wanted."

1. The front door is locked.
2. The functioning entrance is opened late.
3. The church bulletin gives inadequate information.
4. The pulpit style is unfriendly to first-timers.
5. The congregation sends its own signals.

Did you get the impression that you were sitting in someone else's pew today?

Did anyone make an effort to learn your name and see if you have a question?

Such signs are read in the faces, smiles (or lack of one), and tone of voice of members.

6. The insider language keeps outsiders away.
7. No attempt is made to get information on visitors.
8. No one follows up on first-timers.
9. Intangibles often send the signals loud and clear. Often, it's nothing more than a great smile that seals the deal. Or a warm, genuinely friendly handshake.
10. What happens following the service can make the difference. "I've been in churches where within 5 minutes after the benediction, the place was deserted. People were so eager to leave, they hardly spoke to one another, much less guests. The signal they send the visitor is clear: "We don't care for our church and you wouldn't either."

Honoring is more than respecting. It involves giving to others.

What should you do when you have been wounded? What did Christ do? He prayed for them, then laid down His life for them.

He prayed for their forgiveness. We must forgive in our hearts. Then make a gesture that indicates your forgiving spirit.

When you and I realize we have wounded others, we need to humbly ask forgiveness.

Brothers and sisters, there is no doubt, we have wounded one another. Jesus calls us to forgive and reconcile.

What will you and I answer to Jesus Christ?

Action: Ask God to show you the wounds you have failed to forgive.

Ask God to show you where you may have wounded another believer.

Choose to take at least one specific, concrete step toward reconciliation with someone.