

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, September 25-October 1 (B) – Mark 9:38-50

Living in Christ: *Commit to Christ*

Focus Question: *How can we be for Christ?*

word of life

“Whoever is not against us is for us.” Mark 9:40 (NRSV)

Read Mark 9:38-50

The disciples have been arguing about who among them is the greatest. (Mark 9:33-37) That argument is followed by complaints about “others” who cast out demons in the name of Jesus. The disciples had tried to stop what they perceived as inappropriate healing by those outside the circle of Jesus’ followers. At this point in the Gospel of Mark, the disciples sound like young children who want to be first and not let anyone else in the game.

1. *How do you explain the attitudes of the disciples?*
2. *What is preventing the disciples from seeing the bigger picture of the mission of Jesus?*
3. *What reaction might the disciples have expected from Jesus?*

Jesus instructs the disciples not to interrupt such healings performed in his name for he knows there is something that happens to the healer in the process of healing the afflicted. The healer who uses the name of Jesus to bring healing and wholeness can no longer speak evil against Jesus.

4. *How do you explain this instruction from Jesus?*

Jesus is quite clear. People are either for the mission of Jesus or against it. The opposite is also true. “Whoever is not against us is for us.” (Mark 9:40 NRSV) Jesus places a positive slant on the situation. There is no room for maybe, undecided, or uncertainty. Even as people experiment with the power of Jesus for healing, Jesus prevails. Lives are changed. Healing occurs. The implication is people can be involved in ministry with Jesus without full knowledge about him. Ultimately, it is not about human effort or understanding but about God.

5. *At this point, what might have been the reaction from the disciples to the words of Jesus?*
6. *How can Jesus make such a claim concerning those for and against him?*

Jesus is probably holding a child used as an example during the previous discussion with his disciples. (Mark 9:33-37) The visual image is striking.

As opportunities arise to nurture and mentor someone who believes or is beginning to believe, Jesus explains there is a responsibility that comes with being a disciple of Jesus. He warns the disciples of becoming a stumbling block or placing a block in the way of others. Despite the good intentions of the disciples to do the right thing, they may have become a stumbling block in dealing with those who healed in the name of Jesus.

7. *What examples does Jesus give about becoming a stumbling block?*
8. *What are ways hands, feet and eyes can become stumbling blocks?*

Jesus concludes with a reference to being “salted with fire.” This is feisty language, yet the teaching ends with a call to have peace with one another.

9. *What does it mean to be “salted with fire”?*
10. *How does the call for peace fit with the disagreements among the disciples?*

word among us

During the fall, football fans of all ages will go to extremes to indicate their loyalty to their team. As the television camera pans the crowd, it is not unusual to see fans with their team colors painted on their faces and bodies.

1. *Give an example of how you have shown your loyalty to a sports team.*
2. *What are other examples of extreme acts of team loyalty?*
3. *What does it mean to be loyal?*

The disciples of Jesus are concerned about the loyalty of those who are healing by using the name of Jesus. To the disciples, it doesn't seem right. Compared to the disciples, these healers haven't invested the time to learn from Jesus. The disciples question the integrity and loyalty of the healer.

4. *What role might jealousy play in this story?*
5. *How might you advise the disciples?*

Take a moment to consider the person who was healed in the name of Jesus. If indeed the name of Jesus was used in the healing, the healed person would associate the healing with Jesus.

6. *What might the healed person say about the inappropriateness of the healer?*
7. *How is possible to be right, but yet be wrong?*

We don't have much information about the person who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. We don't know if this was a well-intended person whose enthusiasm spilled over in such an action. Jesus dismisses the possibility of malice on the part of the healer.

8. *Is it important to know the intentions of a person?*
9. *What is the worst possibility to come from this healing?*
10. *How did the disciples miss the point behind the healing?*
11. *How do we miss the point?*

It can be disheartening to view on national television Christians who speak and act in the name of Jesus, but with whom we totally disagree. We might question their motives and their biblical understandings. Yet, the words of Jesus come through, "Whoever is not against us is for us." It is as if Jesus knows we as humans will mangle his teachings, yet he has the power to bring good from messy and unclear circumstances.

12. *Does this mean we do not hold each other accountable?*
13. *What is our role as disciples to nurture others new in faith?*
14. *What are examples of modern-day millstones?*
15. *How can we be at peace with one another?*

Prayer

Great Healer of wounds, heal our wounds and help us commit to following you. Amen

Dig Deeper

Romans 3:21-26

last word

As you listen to those
with whom you might disagree,
try to discern
God's Spirit at work in that person.



Daily Discipleship

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