

May 5th, 2019
True Discipleship
Mark 9:30-50

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Apr 28	2 Kings 20-22	May 2	1 Chron. 6
Apr 29	2 Kings 23-25	May 3	1 Chron. 7-8
Apr 30	1 Chron. 1-2	May 4	1 Chron. 9-11
May 1	1 Chron. 3-5	May 5	1 Chron. 12-14

Lesson Introduction: *As we have stated before, we are now in the section of Mark where Jesus is preparing His disciples for the fact that He is about to be killed and rise after three days. In our passage this week, Jesus again foretells His death, and then begins to teach His disciples about what is important in the Kingdom of Heaven. What we will see is that Jesus' death and resurrection will transform people from self-centered to self-sacrificing. True disciples of Christ are those who humbly serve, and who boldly wage war against sin.*

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **Humility and service determine greatness in the Kingdom of God (V. 33-41)**
- **True disciples of Christ are marked by hatred of sin (V. 42-47)**
- **The Cristian life is a life of living sacrifice (V. 49-50; Romans 12:1)**

Mark 9:30-50 English Standard Version

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. 35 And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." 36 And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one such child in

my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

38 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." 39 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.

42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' 49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Discussion Section 1: The First Shall be Last (V. 33-41)

-Why did the disciples fail to understand what Jesus was saying about His death and resurrection?

-How did the disciples' discussion contradict what Jesus had just told them in V. 31?

-What do we learn about what is valued as great in the Kingdom of God?

-How does John's question in V. 38 reveal that he failed to get the point of Jesus' teaching in V. 35-37?

Note: *Our passage this week begins with Jesus, once again, foretelling His death and resurrection. We see that the disciples again did not understand. They were perplexed by the idea that the Messiah, the King, would suffer and die. No one associates greatness with death, therefore they had to be wondering, "if Jesus is our rescuer, our Messiah, then why all this talk about death?"*

We see from the next several verses, that the disciples view of how greatness is attained was greatly flawed. For one, they were privately talking about which of them would be the greatest (right after they had not been able to cast out a demon, mind you). And next, we see John wanting to put a stop to the productive ministry of another man because, "**he was not following us.**" Notice that John does not say "he is was not following YOU Lord." To all of this, Jesus makes clear that His view of greatness is far from that of the disciples. Just as He would lay down His life, He calls His followers to do the same, by becoming "**servant of all.**" As we consider Jesus' view of greatness as seen in this passage, we should be challenged to consider how our lives align. Christ has set the example for all believers, by humbling himself, and becoming a servant (**Philippians 2:3-11**). It is vital that we recognize that we are not greater than our master (**John 13:13-17**).

Discussion Section 2: Waging War Against the Flesh (V. 42-48)

-What does V. 42 tell us about our responsibility toward less mature brothers and sisters in Christ?

-What is Jesus getting at with His graphic analogy in V. 47?

-According to this passage, what does embracing sin result in?

Note: In these verses, Jesus makes some very shocking statements about sin, and how we are to war against it. He begins by making it clear that our sin is not simply a personal matter, but that it has effects on others, which we are held accountable for. When we cause a fellow Christian to sin (especially someone younger in the faith), Jesus makes it clear that God takes that very seriously. Jesus is reminded His disciples that we have a responsibility toward one another. Rather than being concerned with being the greatest, we should be considered with how our sinful actions affect our it brothers and sisters.

From there, Jesus makes plain that true Christianity is not about being great in the world's eyes, but rather, it is about living a life pleasing to God at all costs (**Romans 12:1**). Jesus shows us here that following Him means sacrificing the pleasures the world has to offer. What He

is telling us ultimately is that as Christians, we are called to kill sin by the Spirit, no matter the cost (**Romans 8:13**). As we consider this passage, may we be challenged to consider how we might more aggressively war against our sin on a daily basis for the sake of God's glory.

Discussion Section 3: Living Sacrifices (V. 49-50)

-What is the significance of Jesus' comments about "being salted with fire," and concerning salt in general in this context?

Note from James R. Edwards' *The Gospel According to Mark (The Pillar New Testament Commentary)*:

"The most promising interpretation of vv. 49-50 is to understand them against the background of temple sacrifice, in which both fire and salt played indispensable roles. Israelite burnt offerings (an unblemished bull, ram, or bird) were required to be wholly consumed by fire in order to be acceptable. Smoke rising from the consuming fire was a pleasing incense to Yahweh (**Leviticus 1**). Salt, too, was not only a sign of the covenant (**Num 18: 19**), but it was required to accompany all Israelite sacrifices (**Lev 2:13**).

In the present context fire and salt appear to be symbols of the trials and costs of discipleship. Discipleship to Jesus lays a total claim on one's life; in the language of sacrifice, it must be totally consuming or it is worthless. Rather than consuming believers in frustration and failure, however, trials make their walk holy and acceptable to God. The disciple who takes up the cross of Jesus and follows on the way to Jerusalem (**8:34**), who nurtures the faith of another believer (v. 42), who willingly forsakes things precious but injurious to the life of faith is himself a holy sacrifice, a "living sacrifice" according to Paul (**Rom 12:1**).

This helps explain the puzzling phrase "salted with fire" (v. 49). Testing by fire is not simply a painful necessity of discipleship, but an offering itself pleasing to God, a seasoning or salting with fire. If fires of trials and adversity beset the faithful (**1 Pet 1:7; 4:12**), they do so as a consequence of their following the Son of Man who must suffer. In costly discipleship to the Son of Man believers become salt and light to the world (**Matt 5: 13-16**). The willingness of disciples to bear shame and hardship for Christ is a reflection of Christ's redemptive sufferings and a harbinger of hope to the world."