

Cut it Out!
Mark 9:38-50

Do you remember when you were a kid and would tell other kids on the playground, “My daddy is bigger than your daddy”?

A Bronx Tale is a film about a young man named “C”, who is growing up in the 60's, as he is guided by two father figures; one was his own father and the other was a gangster named Sonny.

There is a scene where “C” is at confession at church and is having a discussion with a priest about a gangster named Sonny.

The priest said, *“Don't be afraid, my son. No one is more powerful than God.”*

'C' replied, *“I don't know about that, father. Your guy may be bigger than my guy up there, but my guy is bigger than your guy down here.”*

While this statement about this gangster may be cute for a movie; we know the Lord is Sovereign, Almighty and nothing can thwart the plans of our God!

Because God is our Father, our Dad is bigger than any other.

Please open your Bibles to **Mark 9**, as we continue in that study.

Last week, Jesus settled an argument among the Disciples about who the greatest was, within Jesus' kingdom.

Jesus told His Disciples about His upcoming Death and Resurrection and how He would be betrayed; yet His Disciples were disputing over who would be the **greatest** in His Kingdom.

If you want to know who the greatest in the Kingdom is; it is Jesus Himself, the argument is settled.

We also learned, if we only seek to get near to those who are “great” by man’s standards; we are not living like our King, nor are we becoming the Kingdom citizens He has called us to be.

Molly Howard has said, *“Having faith like a child means we should have confidence in the promises of Christ and faith even in situations where we cannot see.”*

Jesus exposed the Disciples’ ambition and called His Disciples to receive Him and the Father, by receiving humble children.

Now today, Jesus will warn against offending His Children and also teach on the importance staying away from sin, as His followers are to be like Salt to a lost and dying world.

I. Exclusive followers.

Read *Mark 9:38-41*

Jesus exposed the ambition of the Disciples and He spoke about receiving a child in His name; in *vs. 38* notice the timing, **“Now”**

“Now” John spoke up and said...*“Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he wasn’t following us.”*

Instead of being happy that someone was healed,

John basically said, *“Only we can perform healings in Jesus name; because this man was not a part of their inner circle.”*

BTW: Adam Clarke believes the man in this narrative who is casting out demons, was one of John the Baptist’s disciples.

The Disciples were frustrated and jealous because they couldn’t cast a demon out earlier; but this guy is now casting out demons.

Remember from a few weeks ago in *Mark 9:17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit.*

Mark 9:18 And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." NKJV

This guy was setting human beings free from being tormented and destroyed by demonic entities; but, John is concerned that this man is not a part of their group.

The enemy of our soul hates the Lord and he hates God’s creation as well; so he wants to rob, kill and destroy us.

But Jesus, cares for His creation and His masterpieces.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship (masterpiece), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. NKJV

The Apostle John sees this man casting out demons and instead of celebrating; he becomes petty about the man **not being** part of their group.

William Lane said, “*The Twelve had an unduly narrow perspective toward the work of God.*”

We have to be careful not to place the Lord in a box of our small thinking; but, we also have to be very careful to **test** all things by the Word of God and hold fast to that which is true.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. NKJV

When testing a ministry, first we consult the Word of God, and then we should ask: *Are the people involved genuine believers and do they love the Lord?*

We must remember, there are no denominations in heaven.

Notice Jesus’ statement to John in *vs. 40 he who is not against us is on our side.*

William Lane said, “*If anyone is working for the cause to which Jesus and the Twelve are committed, he cannot work against it at the same time.*”

Jesus said something similar to this in *Matthew 12:30 “he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad”*.

Jesus also said in *John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV*

G. Campbell Morgan has said, “*Only two **forces** are at work in the world, the gathering and the scattering. Whoever does the one contradicts the other.*” (Morgan)

For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name

Jesus is describing the principle of unity within the body of Christ and how it is part of the fruit of the Spirit to show kindness to others in the name of Jesus.

Guzik said, “*Nothing could seem more petty than giving a cup of water. But God remembers the heart, not only the gift itself.*”

II. Little ones caused to stumble.

Read *Mark 9:42*

R. Alan Cole believes this passage is specifically speaking of little children.

But, *who are “these little ones” Jesus refers to in Mark 9:42?*

Like I mention all the time, the proper context of the passage tells us all we need to know; so, we need to let scripture, interpret scripture.

Some interpret this passage to say Jesus was not referring to a literal child, like the one He held in *vs. 36*; but rather, based on *vs. 41*, He is referring to all of those who **belong** to Him.

The Apostle John wrote in *1 John 2:12*, “*I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.*” *NKJV*

Remember Jesus was teaching them about the way greatness is defined in His Kingdom from *Mark 9:35*, “*If anyone wants to be first, he must be last and servant of all.*”

Kingdom greatness involves serving and being last.

Last week we learned that during that time, children had a low place in culture and that is why, Jesus used a child to illustrate His teaching to these Disciples.

Embracing the role of a servant involves identifying with the lowly, as well as extending the kindness of Jesus, to the lowly.

If Jesus remembers such small acts of kindness like offering a glass of water to others, in Jesus’ name; He will also remember acts that caused others to stumble.

Notice, Jesus said, “*It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.*”

The Millstones which used to grind wheat were so large that they used oxen or donkeys to turn them.

Jesus said to cause one of His little ones to stumble is so bad in God’s eyes; it would be better if someone tied one of these huge millstones around your neck and threw themselves into the sea.

III. Nothing worse than hell.

Read *Mark 9:43-48*

Jesus was intentionally being graphic here because of the important lesson of how damaging sin can be.

In April 2003 climber Aaron Ralston entered Utah's Blue John Canyon only to become trapped when an 800-pound boulder shifted, crushed his hand, and pinned him to the canyon wall.

For six days, Aaron Ralston struggled to free himself while trying to avoid dehydration and hypothermia.

Facing certain death, Mr. Ralston chose a final option: He used a multi-tool to amputate his right hand, and then rappel to freedom.

This climber believed it was better to go through life without one of his hands, than to die in the wilderness.

William Lane said, *“This (vs. 43) was not a demand for physical self-mutilation, but in the strongest manner possible Jesus speaks of the costliest sacrifices.”*

Notice vs. 43, ***“It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell***

Jesus is stating that it is better to be physically impaired on earth, than to **forfeit** your eternity apart from Christ.

But is Jesus really asking us to pluck out one of our eyes? If a man has a lust problem, would plucking out his eye really solve the issue?

In ***Matthew 5***, Jesus said something similar to this: ***If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out:***

Jesus was using a figure of speech, and was not speaking literally.

Jesus used these disturbing images to communicate how serious sin is, how deadly sin is, and how sin can keep us from fellowship with God; as well as out of the kingdom of God!

Basically, it is better to remove anything out of your life, no matter how vital you think it is, than to keep a besetting sin.

Most Christians are good at pointing out the sin of others, while they somehow believe their sin is not that serious.

I have said in the past, sin takes us further than we ever wanted to go, and cost us way more than we ever wanted to spend.

Sin is a hindrance to Spiritual growth; so, if you have a habitual sin issue and wonder why you are stuck in a rut spiritually, wonder no more.

David Guzik said, “*Jesus warns us that we must be willing to sacrifice in fighting against sin, that nothing is worse than facing the wrath of a righteous God.*” (Guzik)

When we allow **sin** to remain in our mind, it will grow and ruin things within our lives; whether death of a relationship with someone else, or damage to our relationship with the Lord.

We should not tolerate or play with sin within our lives.

A modern day interpretation of **Mark 9:43** might be; if the **internet** causes you to stumble, unplug it no matter how much you think you need it.

If the people you associate with are an issue with your walk with Christ; leave them behind, because it is better to not have those relationships than to remain out of fellowship with the Lord.

The cure for sin is our need to be transformed from the inside out, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to make us able to resist it.

Here in *Mark 9*, the similes of our eyes, our hands, and our feet; represent what we see, what we do, where we go.

Warren Wiersbe said, *“This solemn message about hell carries a warning to all of us to deal drastically with sin.*

Whatever in our lives makes us stumble, and therefore causes others to stumble, must be removed as if by surgery.”

Imagine if you had some sort of growth and went to see the surgeon and they told you the growth was cancer and it needed to be removed immediately to save your life.

Maybe you would say; *“I don’t want the surgery because it will be painful, so let’s leave the growth alone.”*

R. Kent Hughes said, *“There has to be a severing, a gouging out if there is to be victory.”*

If there is anything we view; anything we do, or anywhere we go that hinders our fellowship or love for Jesus; we need to remove it from our lives, for our spiritual wellbeing.

IV. Fire and Salt.

Read *Mark 9:49-50*

Notice, *For everyone will be seasoned with fire*

Paul said in *1 Corinthians 3:12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,*

1 Corinthians 3:13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. NKJV

KEY: The Bema or judgment seat of Christ does not determine salvation;

Our salvation was paid for, by Christ dying on the cross for us and now we are told to completely trust in, i.e., place our faith in, His sacrifice in order to be saved.

The judgment seat of Christ is where God rewards us for the service we do here on earth for the Lord; we will be rewarded based on how faithfully we have served Christ.

Paul's metaphor in *1 Corinthians*, pictures the works of a Christian, as a structure that can be raised with either high-quality or poor building materials.

Our spiritual works will be tested to reveal the quality of our spiritual works and determine whether they were done by the power of Holy Spirit or by our flesh.

Then notice, *every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt...*

With Temple sacrifices, the Jews were required to place salt on the sacrifices that were to be burned.

Salt was used here as a simile telling followers of Christ are to be like salt.

The world we live in is filled with every kind of **spiritual** and **moral** rottenness, decay, and pollution.

This world is fallen, sinful, and is evil; so followers of Christ are to be like salt.

Wiersbe said, “*The disciples were God’s salt, but they were in danger of losing their flavor and becoming worthless.*”

Let’s talk about attributes of salt...

a. Salt Preserves.

Salt is a preserving agent, it prevents things from spoiling and rotting.

In that day, there was no refrigeration or vacuum packing systems to preserve meat.

So whenever there was meat left over when they butchered an animal, they would heavily salt it in order to cure it and not waste it.

This was similar to what they do to corned beef or jerky today.

The salt killed the surface bacteria, and then acted as a preservative, which kept the meat from rotting.

The disciple of Christ is to be salt, as a **preserving influence** in the world where we live.

Throughout history, wherever true followers of Jesus have gone, there has been a preserving influence in that society.

Where ever there is a strong Christian influence and voice, that society has been preserved.

And the opposite is also true; where the Christian witness **has diminished**, that society began to deteriorate and ultimately ended up destroyed.

As the Christian witness here in America is getting weaker and weaker; we can see clearer and clearer the rotting away at the very fiber of our country's morals and roots.

So Salt Preserves; but also...

b. Salt Purifies.

Salt is one of the earliest Cathartic agents known to man. A Cathartic agent is something that “purges” and “purifies” a wound.

Salt on an open wound stings; but it can prevent infection as well.

Christ followers are to be a purifying agent in the world.

Sometimes our most loving words to others will sting, and sometimes your very presence in a sinful world will be like salt on an open wound.

Oswald Chambers said, *“A Christian is salt...Salt preserves wholesomeness and prevents decay.*

It is a disadvantage to be salt. If you get salt into a wound, it hurts, and when God's children are amongst those who are "raw" toward God, their presence hurts." Salt also...

c. Salt provides flavor.

A Christ-follower not only acts as a preserving agent and a purifying agent in the world, we also **add Flavor** to the world.

We are to be an active ingredient in the fabric of life; we are to sweeten the world in which we live.

We are not supposed to get our **ticket to heaven** and then just wait passively by until Jesus comes back for us.

We are to add a new and wholesome flavor to human existence.

After all, there is no sense saving the salt for heaven; there will be no need for it there. Heaven is perfect, so there is no need to preserve or purify anything there.

The believer's mission is to permeate this world and provide some heavenly flavor while here on earth.

d. Salt provokes thirst.

Again, the very nature, or natural result of the person described by Jesus **causes a response** from the world.

For some, the response will be negative, and possibly even hostile. For others, the life of the Christ follower **will stimulate a thirst** to have a relationship just like that disciple has.

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. NKJV

The Lord tells us that we should hunger and thirst for things He can offer that will satisfy our deepest cravings.

The person who has a deep hunger for the Lord will cause others to have this hunger and thirst when they witness this true overflow from the Spirit of God in believers.

As individuals that have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit; we are now totally different than this world,

So we are to have this life preserving, life giving influence, upon this world. Our presence here is to have an effect!

If our lives DO NOT have a preserving, purifying effect, which provides flavor and provokes thirst; *what does Jesus say?*

Mark 9:50 Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? NKJV

Is Christianity salty here in America?

John Stott, a leading Reformed theologian from Great Britain, said, “*Whose fault is it for the way America looks with its corruption and debauchery?*”

Let me put it like this: if the house is dark at night, there is no sense in blaming the house.

That’s what happens when the sun goes down. The question to ask is, “Where is the light?”

“If meat goes bad, there is no sense in blaming the meat. That is what happens when the bacteria are allowed to breed unchecked.

“Where is the salt?” “If society becomes corrupt like a dark night or stinking fish, there’s no sense in blaming society.

*That’s what happens when fallen human society is **left to itself** and human evil is unrestrained and unchecked.*

*The question to ask is ‘**Where is the church?**’” The church needs to get our Saltiness back!*

Because Jesus is our Lord and Savior, we know we are His **masterpiece**; so we need to represent Him as salt, in a lost, sinful, and dying world.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship (masterpiece), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. NKJV

May we cut out sin, cut out favoritism, and avoid causing people to stumble. May we live like His Salt until He comes to take us home. *Why?* Because we are on Jesus’ side.

Do you remember when you were kids and would tell other kids on the playground, “My daddy is bigger than your daddy”?

Because God is our Father, our Dad is bigger...And now we are to live as His children and be salty for Jesus because Jesus is on our side and we are on His side!