

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 26, “The High Calling of a Disciple”

Speaker: Neil Chotai

Passage: Mark 9:30-50

Big idea: Disciples of Christ are called to exhibit 5 qualities of life.



We are continuing on in our series through the book of Mark. Over the last few weeks, we have seen Jesus transfigured on the mountain, and then last week we saw Jesus heal a demon possessed child. Now, Jesus is making his final journey to Jerusalem towards the cross.

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” ³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

³⁶ He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

³⁸ “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

³⁹ “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

⁴² “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire.

⁵⁰ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

Read Mark 9:30-50

A number of years back I was a youth pastor in a church in Whitby, Ontario. At that time, I had a youth named Zach who was going into grade seven (I have Zach’s permission to tell this story). Zach was an interesting kid. When I first met him, he was really shy, and he did not talk like a great seven would. He was almost talking as if he was in grade two. So, I said to him, Zach you are going into grade 7 now and need to talk like you are in grade 7. So, when you are at youth and in my presence, you are going to act like a grade seven student. And when you are not at youth or in my presence you are still going to act like a grade seven who is ready to go to high school in two years. So, we are not going to talk like a child in grade two or complain like a little kid because you are called to something higher.

We are all called to be disciples and there is a high calling on all of us.

In this passage of scripture Jesus shows us the qualities of what He has called us to.

BIG IDEA

Disciples of Christ are called to exhibit **5 Qualities of Life.**



We're going to dig deep into the verses now and find out what those five qualities of life are.

A life of **LEARNING**

Mark 9:30-31, “They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples.”

After the account of the transfiguration and the healing of the demon possessed child Jesus now passes through Galilee but he is going incognito. He does not want anybody to know where he and the disciples are going. He does not want the crowd to be a distraction for the disciples as he teaches them.

It was important for the disciples to be in this one-on-one teaching with Jesus because Jesus time is drawing closer to the cross and he has only a short window of time to pour into their lives.

This is what God wants to do with us, as disciples. It is great coming here on a Sunday morning and having some teaching, it is great being part of a bible study during the week. But there is something about one-on-one time with God in personal discipleship with Him. Allowing the Holy Spirit to illuminate scriptures as you seek God in personal study. This is so important for Christ followers to deepen their relationship with Christ.

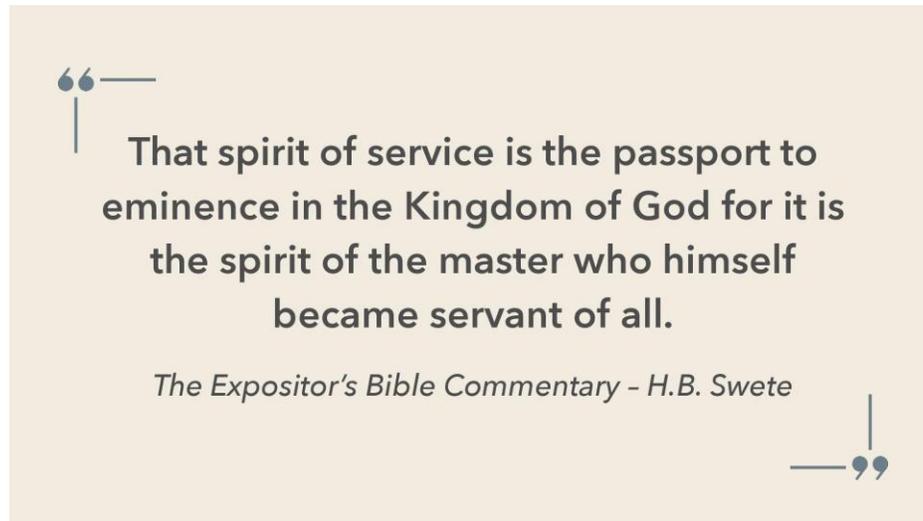
Through a life of learning we obtain wisdom and understanding of God. Proverbs 16:16 states that having wisdom and understanding is better than having silver or gold. This time with God is extremely valuable.

Mark 9:31-32, “He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.’ But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.”

He continues to teach them about what will occur concerning his death. This is the second prediction of his death, and He includes the new element of betrayal. The phrase “is going to be delivered” is written in the

futuristic present tense. We do not really have anything similar to that in the English, but this is what Jesus means. Even though the betrayal is still in the future it is as good as happening in the right now. This also refers to the fact that it is God who is delivering up this sacrifice through betrayal. God took the initiative in providing humanity's salvation, no human being did that.

As the disciples are hearing this, they still do not understand what Jesus means, and are full of anxiety to ask him about it. Especially in the context of what happened in the passage before when he called them "unbelieving generation".



Mark 9:33-34, "They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest."

As they are going to Capernaum, walking single file and Jesus can hear them. Jesus asked them a question, 'what you guys are talking about?', 'what are you arguing about?'. But they kept quiet.

They were arguing about who the greatest was among them. Jesus needed to address this.

In that time period it was everybody's mindset that you had to work to be the greatest. You had to be first, you had to be the one that everybody looked up to. This was not just in the secular world; it was part of the Jewish religious realm as well.

Remember the teachers of the law would give at the temple with loud and exaggerated gestures to receive acknowledgement from the people. They were showoffs. When they prayed, they prayed loudly, so that people would hear them. It was all about being number one, it was all about being in first position.

This was the disciples' mindset too. They thought they were going to walk into Jerusalem with their shoulders and head held high. Walking in as the greatest in all of Israel.

Mark 9:35, "Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.'"

In verse 35 Jesus calls the disciples together and goes into teacher mode. Whenever the teacher or the rabbi sat down it meant that what they were about to say was very important. This becomes a teaching moment, and Jesus says something that blows the minds of the disciples. Jesus says that anyone who wants to be first, must be last and the servant of all.



A life of **SERVICE**

In the Kingdom of God, the greatest must become the least and must be servant to all. This goes against every single thing that the disciples have been taught. I can just imagine the confusion on their faces.

The kind of service Jesus talking about involves sacrifice.

Mark 9:36-37, “He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.’”

He takes a child who is young enough to be in his arms and shows the disciples his care for the least. Telling the disciples that welcoming the little children in His name is the same as welcoming Him, and whoever welcomes Him welcomes the one who sent Him. You welcome God.

This is another astonishing moment because Jesus is now referencing a child. In that time period, a child had no rights. A child was dependent. A child was hopeless. A child had to have constant supervision. A child was useless until that child grew up and became an adult, then they had some worth.

That was the thinking of the day of children. Here Jesus elevates the care for people, all life has value and deserves respect and when you welcome the ‘least of these’, that is when I am there. So, make sure you serve these people because when you serve the least, that is when you become the greatest.

I can imagine the disciples are just having a meltdown here. They had given Jesus their lives and now He is telling them that they are to be servants. They were not going to be the greatest coming into Jerusalem. I am sure they were all looking at each other wondering what the benefits of following Jesus were.

Jesus was one of the first ever to show how essentially precious a person is, particularly a young child. A concern for children was not invented by the government, concern for children, and the least of society, came from Jesus’ teaching.

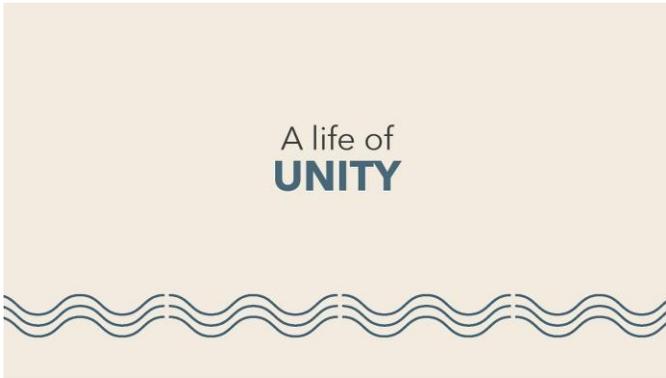
The disciples must live a life of sacrificial service. We are the ones who are the extension of Jesus serving those least in our communities. That is what disciples do. It is about self sacrifice.

As the disciples are processing all of this information, they are probably looking at one another thinking about what is going on here. It is during this time that John says something to Jesus. It is almost as if it is the last grasp of greatness, and the disciples agree with what John has to say.

Mark 9:38, “‘Teacher,’ said John, ‘we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.’”

There was someone driving out demons in Jesus’ name and the disciples told them to stop. The reason? They were not one of the disciples.

The disciples have prideful hearts, and they were the ones that wanted to monopolize the market on ministry, even though they had just failed in the last passage of scripture. Jesus' view is not division it is something different and this is what disciples of Christ must live out.



Disciples of Christ must have a life of unity.

It should never just be about us. We should not have the arrogance that we are the best disciples and nobody else is.

We are in this together as one body of believers in this world.

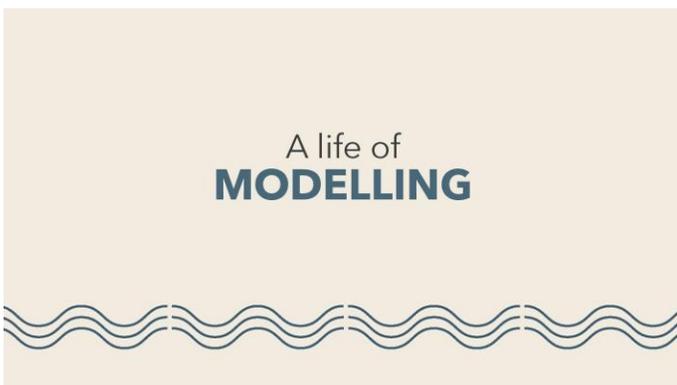
Mark 9:39-40 “Do not stop him,’ Jesus said. ‘For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us.’”

Jesus immediately rebukes John on three points. Firstly, don't stop them because they're ministering in my name. Secondly, the one that is not against us is with us. Thirdly, all of this is done in the name of Jesus.

Mark 9:41, “Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.”

The passage reaches its climax in verse 41 where the actual name is explicitly spelled out, when Jesus says you belong to the Messiah.

It is not about setting up our own little kingdoms here on earth but working together as the body of believers as Romans 12:5 states.



Mark 9:42, “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck, and they were thrown into the sea.”

When Jesus uses “anyone” he is referring to any believer. “Little ones” is not a reference to the children that was talked about in the previous verse but to of those who are fragile in their faith, the weaker brother or sister in the faith. This is further reinforced with the phrase those who believe in me.

Jesus then gives this word picture and says that it would be better for a large millstone to be put around their neck and to be thrown into the sea.

Israelite society was an agricultural society, so when he said a large millstone, the disciples would have understood what he meant.

The majority of Israelites were inland, and they were not near the water areas. The sea, like the sea of Galilee, was feared because the winds would pick up and large waves would form.

We have seen the disciples in the boat struggling many times in the book of Mark. Mark is not painting in nice picture here.

Life might be better under the sea for Ariel, Flounder and Sebastian, but not for us.

If you, a disciple of Christ, make a weaker brother or sister fail in their walk or harm their walk, this is a big deal. We are all called to be role models.

What are the ways we cause a younger one in the faith to stumble?

Directly: when we engage in lying, gossiping, cheating, loving the world more than God's people.

Indirectly: when we provoke people into jealousy and anger.

Deliberately: when we are not living a life of righteousness.

Those are the ways that we make younger ones in the faith stumble. But we need to be role models that is what God has called.

In my house my oldest child is a role model to the middle child and the middle child is a role model to the youngest child and my wife and I are role models to all of them. We have to live a life to the high calling that God has called us to.

In the next few paragraphs Jesus is very graphic when he talks about our lives and what makes us. Look what Jesus says:

Mark 9:43-47, "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell"

This is pretty graphic and is probably one of the most sobering images Jesus gives to his disciples. It is about how we stumble. And what to do about it. Now he is not actually saying amputate yourself physically, it is how we handle things in our life when it comes to who we are.

- **The hand:** anything that you do don't let it stumble.
- **The feet:** wherever you go make sure you do not stumble in the way that you are headed.
- **In the eyes:** everything that you see make sure it does not need lure you into sin.

Again, Jesus is not demanding that we mutilate our bodies, but he demands us to live our lives intentionally to our higher calling. It requires radical spiritual surgery on our part.

Mark 9:48, "where 'the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.'"

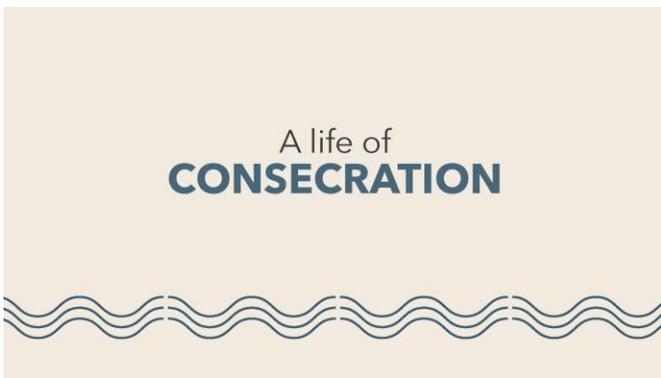
In verse 48 he continues to talk about hell. Where worms do not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Multiple times Jesus uses the word hell which is the word Gehenna. It comes from the Hebrew word Hinnom, or the "valley of Hinnom". It was in the dark days of the Kingdom of Judah, which the prophet Jeremiah records

the evil that took place there. The evil king Ahaz, and his son Manasseh turned their back on the living God. They embraced the detestable worship of the false god, the idol called Molech, which required human sacrifices of children.

It was an evil place; it did not stop until king Josiah became king. After that this valley was then used as a garbage dump for human waste, including animal carcasses. The fire of Gehenna never went out because they were perpetually burning the waste, and the worms never died because they had enough carcasses to eat. So, it became a symbolic image of the place of divine punishment “with an unquenchable fire”. Some translations will call it eternal fire. Jesus speaks of it in very strong words. It is interesting to note that Jesus spoke of hell to the professed saints. He speaks of this incredible judgment. And whenever we see in scripture that he spoke to this kind of judgment Jesus wept as in Luke 19:41. Jesus gives a stern warning of what hell is, it is a real place. This Gehenna was an example of it, a small, brief example.

In this sober teaching that Jesus gives, he is longing for his disciples to be good examples, to be models of the higher standard of living because what is at stake? It is not our earthly life, but it is our everlasting life. For one who is a follower and disciple of Christ it is heaven for those we are not in Christ it is eternal damnation. What kind of a model are we? These are the words of Christ himself. It is very sobering when you realize what is really at stake.



Mark 9:49-50, “Everyone will be salted with fire. ‘Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.’”

Verse 49 the phrase salted with fire comes from the Old Testament sacrificial system. Offerings to God were not only burnt with fire but also seasoned and purified with salt. In Exodus 30:35, salt represented the covenant with God. It is the commitment that God had made to be faithful to his people and the commitment that the people had made to live according to God’s ways.

When you look at this through the eyes of the new covenant, the followers of Jesus are living sacrifices, purified with salt, and marked by the purity that comes from committing our lives to Jesus. For our saltiness resists the moral decay of the world. We counteract the evil of the world around us.

However, in verse 50 Jesus gives a warning that salt can lose its saltiness and it cannot be salty again. The salt that he is referring to is not the salt that we use every day in the 21st century. The salt Jesus is talking about came from the sea and the only way it could stay pure was if it was free from any other minerals that could be in it. So, Jesus saying be pure, and do not mix with the world. He further encourages us that we must have peace with each other as the body of Christ.

As disciples of Christ, we must consecrate our lives continually. We should be individuals of self-sacrifice and devotion to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. There should be no self-interest in this.

Being a disciple of God is a high calling. Christianity is not an easy faith. We will always be in the minority as we stand firm in what we believe. That is, Jesus is the son of God, he is the one who brings redemption, he is the one who brings reconciliation to humanity. He calls us, and we are privileged and honoured individuals to be called children of God and to live our lives the way he wants us to live as his disciples.