

**Mark 9:38-41****Introduction**

1. Are you proud to be a Baptist?
  - a. I come from a long line of Baptists on both sides of my family. My mother's father was a Baptist minister. My father was a Baptist deacon. Several uncles and cousins were/are Baptist ministers.
  - b. I was trained in a Southern Baptist seminary; was ordained in a Baptist church; and have served as a minister only in Baptist churches.
  - c. As Baptists, do you think that we have special status and an inside track on serving God? NO!
2. Even within the Baptist family we have different flavors of Baptist (e.g., SBC, CBF, BGAV, SBCV).
  - a. These various Baptist organizations often have different views and policies that sometimes clash.
  - b. Even in LBA, our churches have not always agreed. But as we have come together to meet a need in Mendota, we have received all funds needed and churches have given that have never given before.
3. Besides Baptists there are many other denominations and organizations that are effective in serving God.
  - a. Think about EFIA and the other Main Street Churches with whom we collaborate—Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Catholics. Are we better than they in the eyes of God? NO!
  - b. We may not agree on everything, but we must agree on the main thing—Jesus Christ is Lord!
  - c. When we profess faith in Christ Jesus as Savior and follow Him as Lord, we become members of the family of God, members of the Kingdom of God.
  - d. It is not about who we are denominationally/organizationally but whose we are as followers of Jesus.
4. Akin observes, "The disciples are about to learn that God's kingdom is bigger than their experience of it. It is so large that anyone who is for Christ is with us" (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 195).
5. The twelve disciples believed they had special status as the only ones authorized to act in Jesus' name.
6. **Read Mk 9:38-41.**

**A. A Question About Status (38-40)**

1. Jesus had just completed an intimate time of private teaching with His disciples (cf. Mk 9:30-37).
  - a. He had taught them the kingdom ethic that true greatness comes by humbly serving the least.
  - b. The disciples had listened but not yet heard what Jesus said.
  - c. They were just glad to be privileged members of Jesus' inner circle of disciples, the Twelve.
  - d. William Lane notes, "The assurance that a special and intimate relationship exists between Jesus and the Twelve (verse 37) prompted John to call Jesus' attention to an unsuccessful attempt to prevent an unauthorized use of his power and name by an anonymous exorcist" (William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 342).
2. John had seen another man "driving out (Gk. *ekballonta*) demons in [Jesus'] name" (38a).
  - a. The disciples had had success in the past casting out demons (cf. Mk 6:12-13), but most recently they had been unsuccessful (cf. Mk 9:18).
  - b. Who was this other man? Obviously, he was not one of the Twelve or the inner circle of three—Peter, James, and John—who had witnessed Jesus' transfiguration (cf. Mk 9:2-13).
  - c. James Brooks notes, "Acts 19:13-14 indicates that Jewish exorcists sometimes used the name of Jesus in their work. There the practice was condemned, probably because they had no sympathy with Jesus or his followers and employed the name only as a magical incantation. Here it was approved, probably because the exorcist was a believer" (James Brooks, *Mark*, 151).
3. John's reaction and that of the other disciples, was ". . . we told him to stop (Gk. *ekoluomen*)" (38b).
  - a. Notice John's use of "we" here. He was not alone in his negative reaction to this other man.
  - b. John and the other disciples were still hung up on being first!
    - 1) That is what they argued about earlier and what led Jesus to teach about true kingdom greatness.
    - 2) John and the other disciples had missed the point of Jesus' last teaching in Mk 9:30-37.
  - c. Warren Wiersbe observes, ". . . John felt it necessary to defend the disciples (Mark 9:38-41) by pointing out their zeal. Imagine telling a man to stop casting out demons when the nine disciples had failed to deliver the deaf and mute boy from Satan's power!" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 110)
  - d. The reason that the disciples gave for commanding this man to stop was ". . . because he was not one of us (Gk., *hoti ouk ekolouthei hemin*) – lit. because he was not following us" (38c)
  - e. Following US!? Was he following "us," as in the disciples? No! He was following JESUS.

4. Perhaps John and the disciples expected Jesus' approval of their action toward this unauthorized man and affirmation of their special status in His kingdom.
  - a. That is not what they received.
  - b. In fact, Jesus' reaction was just the opposite. "Do not stop him . . ." (39a).
  - c. Instead of restraining him they should have released him. Instead of hindering him they should have helped him.
  - d. Akin notes, "And here is a nobody exalting Somebody while the somebodies are worried about who is following a bunch of nobodies! Who in these verses is on the road to true greatness?" (Akin, 196)
5. Jesus gave them two reasons why they should not have stopped him.
  - a. Reason 1: ". . . For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me . . ." (39b)
    - 1) Lane notes, ". . . the name of Jesus discloses its authentic power only when a man joins Jesus in faith and obedience to the will of God" (Lane, 343).
    - 2) The man that the disciples had confronted would have had no power apart from his faith in Jesus.
    - 3) The disciples had failed to cast out the boy's demon because they were trusting in themselves. This man had success because he trusted in Jesus.
    - 4) The man was effective because he trusted Jesus. His actions honored Jesus' name!
  - b. Reason 2: ". . . for whoever is not against us is for us." (40)
    - 1) In Mt 12:30 Jesus gave a corollary statement to this one: "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."
    - 2) Wiersbe concludes that "Both statements declare the impossibility of neutrality when it comes to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Since we cannot be neutral, if we are not for Him, we must be against Him; if we are not against Him, we must be for Him. The anonymous exorcist was bringing glory to His name, so he had to be for the Savior and not against Him" (Wiersbe, 110-11).

## **B. An Eternal Truth (41)**

1. Jesus made a concluding statement of truth—"Truly I tell you (Gk., *amen lego*) . . ." (41).
2. Jesus summarized His conversation with John and the disciples by proclaiming another critical kingdom truth: ". . . anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward" (41).
  - a. Giving a cup of cold water seems to be a small action.
  - b. It is symbolic of any kind gesture or act of hospitality shown to one in need.
  - c. It is being the water-boy, the lowly servant, of one in need.
  - d. This statement stands in parallel and reinforces Jesus' earlier teaching about kingdom greatness: ". . . Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all. . . . Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me . . ." (Mk 9:35,37)
3. Wiersbe observes, ". . . it is not necessary to perform great miracles to prove your love for Christ. When we lovingly receive a child or compassionately share a cup of cold water, we are giving evidence that we have the humble heart of a servant. After all, we are serving Christ, and that is the highest service in the world" (Wiersbe, 111).
4. Humbly serving one who belongs to Jesus is the same as serving Jesus Himself (cf. Mk 9:37).
5. Jesus concluded that the one rendering such humble service ". . . will certainly not lose their reward (Gk., *misthon*)" (41).
  - a. The action of the one serving another in Jesus' name confirms the belief in that one's heart.
  - b. The one who serves others in Jesus' name serves Jesus and so is part of the Kingdom of God—the greatest reward possible.
  - c. Lane notes, "The reference to 'his reward' carries no thought of deserving or of merit, for there is no way in which a cup of water may be conceived as *meriting* participation in the Kingdom. It serves rather to stress God's awareness of all who share in the extension of Jesus' work and to emphasize that there are no distinctions between 'trivial' and 'important' tasks. There is only faith and obedience, shown in devotion to Jesus, and wherever these qualities exist they call forth the approval of God" (Lane, 344-45).

### **C. Reflections**

1. James Brooks notes, “The lesson for the church today is that tolerance, acceptance, and recognition should be extended to other denominations and to persons of other theological persuasions. Sadly, few individual Christians and Christian groups throughout the history of the church have followed this teaching of Jesus. Exclusiveness rather than inclusiveness has been the rule” (Brooks, 151).
2. The ground at the foot of the cross is level. There is no hierarchy of greatness in God’s kingdom only a hierarchy of humble service, and Jesus has rendered the greatest service to all of us.
3. All who come by faith to Jesus are welcome and called to serve others in Jesus’ name.
  - a. Don’t think that your service is less important than that of another believer.
  - b. Don’t think that your service is more important than that of another believer.
  - c. There are many ways to serve others, but all who believe are called to serve as God guides, gifts, and empowers them.
4. What “cup of water” is needed by someone that you see/know? Will you share a “cup of water” with them today, tomorrow?