

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, September 18-24 (B) – Mark 9:30-37

Living in Christ: *Welcome Others*

Focus Question: *Whom might I welcome today as Christ?*

word of life

“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” Mark 9:37 (NRSV)

Read Mark 9:30-37

Jesus continues his travels through Galilee. At this point, he does not want the crowds to know of his presence. His focus is on the disciples as he prepares them for his own death.

When Jesus first told of his future suffering, death, and resurrection in Mark 8:31-34, Peter took Jesus aside to rebuke him. You might recall, Jesus responded with strong words, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” (Mark 8:33 NRSV)

His second prediction does not go much better. In describing his own death, Jesus does not soften his words or change the prediction. Someone will betray him into human hands, and he will be killed. But that is not the end of the story. Jesus will be raised from death. It is not surprising to hear that the disciples still do not understand.

1. *What will it take for the disciples to understand the words of Jesus?*
2. *What makes it so difficult to grasp?*

The disciples are afraid to ask Jesus to explain. Although Jesus is their teacher, the disciples are hesitant to pursue their rabbi’s teaching.

3. *How do you explain their hesitancy and fear?*

After the prediction, we hear of arguing among the disciples. Unfortunately, arguing seems to be all too common. In chapter nine of Mark, the scribes, crowds, and disciples were arguing when Jesus asked someone in the crowd, “What are you arguing about with them?” (Mark 9:16 NRSV) In that case, the argument concerned the disciple’s inability to heal. Jesus became provoked and responded, “You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?” (Mark 9:19 NRSV)

In the safety and comfort of a home in Capernaum, Jesus asks the disciples to explain a second argument among the disciples. (Mark 9:33) The disciples are silent and do not want to admit the reason for the argument. Yet, Jesus already knows the debate is over identifying the greatest among the disciples. Can you hear Jesus sigh?

4. *If Jesus already knew the reason for the arguing, why have the disciples name the argument?*

Jesus’ response is clear: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35 NRSV) This is likely not the pecking order established by the disciples. To make his point, Jesus takes a child, one who is last and least in the first century society, and welcomes that child. In welcoming the outsider, poor, or disfranchised, one welcomes Christ.

5. *Why does Jesus place such importance on welcoming?*

word among us

The disciples of Jesus in the passage got caught in an argument about being the greatest. What a disappointment for Jesus. Jesus is trying to prepare for final things in life, including his own suffering and death. Sacrificing one's own life is not the expected path to power and prestige.

1. *How do people in our society strive to be number one?*
2. *What are typical symbols of being great?*

The argument among the disciples is dealt with immediately. They have missed his instruction and preparation for the sacred days that lie ahead. Instead, the disciples are consumed with themselves.

3. *If you had the opportunity to talk with the disciples, what would you say?*
4. *What do you wish Jesus would have said to them?*
5. *Can you relate to the disciples? How so?*

Consistently, Jesus turns things upside down. The last and first change places. It doesn't seem fair. But, then again, this teacher touches lepers, dines with outcasts, and stoops down to wash the feet of his students. He willingly picks up his cross of death and invites others to do the same.

6. *How does Jesus turn things upside down for the disciples?*
7. *How does Jesus turn things upside down for us?*
8. *How is the teaching of Jesus radical?*

Throughout his life, Jesus invites and welcomes. The disciples are recipients of those attitudes. So are we. In turn, we are invited to welcome others and not just those who are similar to us. Jesus is very intentional. He embraces a child to make his point. This attention to a child would have been a shocking visual illustration of his emphasis.

9. *In order to make a similar point in today's society, whom might Jesus take into his arms?*
10. *Who is God calling you to welcome?*

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina turned the Gulf Coast upside down. Over a million people safely evacuated from the New Orleans area before the levees broke and flooded the city. A second wave of evacuation followed. Some estimated Baton Rouge (60 miles from New Orleans) doubled in population, especially as FEMA, Red Cross, volunteers, and media moved into town. A survey by the sociology department of Louisiana State University shows 50% of Baton Rouge homes became shelters.

Likewise faith communities and public facilities opened their doors for those destitute by the hurricane and flooding. With Hurricane Katrina, people stayed in the shelters of churches, synagogues, and homes for weeks and months.

11. *What would motivate someone to open their home to a stranger?*
12. *When might you extend hospitality in the name of Christ?*

Prayer

Gentle Spirit, shake open our hands and hearts so we might welcome Christ and others. Amen

Dig Deeper

Genesis 18:1-15

last word

This week, be intentional about welcoming those around you.



Daily Discipleship

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