

Announcements:

- 1) Evan
- 2) Evan's office
- 3) Praise board
- 4) Community board
- 5) Missions board

Breeding Ground for Faith Mark 9:30-37

This morning I am going to ask you to be violent. This morning I am going to ask you to be aggressive. This morning I am going to ask you to do something that is going to be one of the hardest things you will probably ever have to do. I am going to ask you to violently and aggressively kill your pride, to put to death your quest for greatness and importance, and instead seek humility.

The Christian faith is built upon humility. Humility is the breeding ground of our faith. Humility grows our faith and it gets our faith recognized as worth pursuing by those that don't know Jesus. And, it has a reward.

Listen to this quote by Greater Good Magazine entitled "How Humility Will Make You the Greatest Person Ever":

"In light of the upcoming presidential race and the increase in narcissism amongst our youth, I think it's safe to say that, as a society, we could use a little more humility.

Our culture places so much value on external accomplishments, appearance, and self-aggrandizement—all things that are ephemeral at best—that even a small display of this quiet virtue can make one feel like a drowning man coming up for air.

Yet why can it be so challenging for us to express humility? Is it because we often misinterpret its active demonstration to be a sign of weakness, when in actuality it is an indication of tremendous inner strength?"

When I meet someone who radiates humility, my shoulders relax, my heart beats a little more quietly, and something inside me lets go.

Why? Because I know that I'm being fully seen, heard, and accepted for who I am, warts and all—a precious and rare gift that allows our protective walls to come down.

Truly humble people are able to offer this kind of gift to us because they see and accept their own strengths and limitations without defensiveness or judgment—a core dimension, according to researchers, of humility, and one that cultivates a powerful compassion for humanity."

But the benefits of humility do not extend just to our leaders. Nascent research suggests that this lovely quality is good for us individually and for our relationships. For example, humble people handle stress more effectively and report higher levels of physical and mental well-being. They also show greater generosity, helpfulness, and gratitude—all things that can only serve to draw us closer to others."

This reward of handling stress more effectively and reporting higher levels of physical and mental well-being makes sense. Science reflected a truth of the Bible. Research shows there is a reward for humility. However, humility goes against our nature. Humility requires work.

You and I have a great need to feel greatness. You and I want to be somebody. When sin entered the human race, we opened ourselves up to rejection and fear. The result now is a desperate need for greatness, control, superiority, dominance, and more. In so doing, we aim to make something of ourselves. We aim to build ourselves up. We begin to make more of ourselves through comparison and conquering. The core of this is pride.

Pride is about autonomy and control and greatness. Pride is about making much of me. Pride says I am someone, look at me. Pride says I am entitled. Pride *earns* value, earns status, earns power, and earns importance. Humility *allows* value, status, power, and importance to be given. However, there is false humility which is based on pride.

False humility puts oneself down so someone else will build you up. False humility controls praise given. False humility puts helplessness or lack of

power on stage for someone to see so they will do something to build you up, to gain attention.

Humility is the antithesis of pride. Humility drives selflessness, pride drives our selfishness. Humility gives, pride takes...even when giving. Humility inspires greatness in others, pride seeks greatness in self...maybe through someone else. Humility builds trust, pride causes doubt.

Humility reflects Jesus, pride reflects the self. John 3:30 says, "He [Jesus] must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less." John the Baptist wanted to make much of Jesus and for others to see the greatness of Jesus.

Humility breeds and strengthens unity, pride in the individual breeds discord and strengthens factions. Ephesians 4:3 tells us to "Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace." The previous verse gives us the antidote for this, "Always be humble and gentle."

Humility gives others worth, pride flaunts oneself to get worth. Philippians 2:3 says, "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves."

Humility isn't owed anything, pride deserves. The only thing we deserve is punishment for our sin. Jesus didn't deserve the punishment of our sin, and yet, He humbly went to the cross for us and took what you and I deserved. He then gives those who trust in Him what is not deserved. He gives grace. He forgives and gives His righteousness. Ephesians 2:8 says, "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God." It's a gift. You and I are called to forgive, but it can't happen without humility. Listen to Colossians 3:12-14, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Catch that. "Put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Love for others is the agent that makes it possible to be humble. Jesus's unconditional, perfect love for you and I is what led to our forgiveness. Humility serves, pride seeks to be served. Jesus is the picture of humility. Listen to that familiar passage, Philippians 2:6-8, "who [Jesus], though He

was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a **servant**, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He **humbled** Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Jesus humbled Himself to what? To serve.

Mark 10:45. says, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Jesus came to serve. Serving is the mark of greatness. Listen to the verses just before this, “So Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else.”

That word slave can also be translated bond-servant. A bond-servant isn't someone forced to serve. It is a person who has chosen to be an indentured servant forever. They are willing to 'deny themselves' in order to inspire success and greatness for another.

Let's look at our passage this morning, Mark 9:30-37. It speaks of greatness, but greatness found through servanthood because of humility. Verse 35 is the key verse, “Whoever wants to be first must take the last place and be servant of everyone else.” The corresponding passages are Mathew 17:22-23, 18:1-6, and Luke 9:44-48.

I am going to break our passage into 3 sections, verses 30-32, 33-35, and then 36 and 37.

Verses 30-32

In this first section Jesus speaks about His death. It's the 2nd of three times in chapters 8-10 . In a few weeks when we get to the 3rd time we will spend some time on this revelation He gives the disciples.

Jesus is now on His descent towards Jerusalem and the disciples are mentally readying themselves for what is going to lead to their rise to greatness. But, Jesus, their Messiah, king, leader was sending mixed messages.

The disciples still could not believe that this Messiah was going to die. Their pride was so entrenched in what the Messiah coming meant for them that they missed what the scriptures said, because they were looking for a conqueror, a king that would come and take them out of Roman captivity and make them a great, powerful nation where all others were serve them. So, for the Messiah to die didn't make sense. Matthew account says the disciples grieved, they were in great distress. The guy they followed for over the last two years, the guy that loved and watched do things that no man could do, the guy who poured a lot of time into them was leaving. They had great sorrow. They were thinking 'What about us?' They were supposed to be lifted to greatness, but they were afraid to ask Jesus what He had meant in all this.

Verse 33-35

The disciples were arguing about who is greater. Feel the pride that had built up. Peter, James, and John got to go up on the Mount of Transfiguration and the rest of the disciples stayed back. All of them traveled with Jesus and saw Jesus confront the leading groups of the day and come out on top. They were given ability to cast out demons and heal the sick. They were with the guy who would overthrow Rome. These guys were on the inroad to greatness. But, who would be the greatest of them?

Church, we have to be careful we don't take this mentality. We have to be careful that our Christianity doesn't become more about us and what we get out of it, than first our love for God, and second our love for others. Pride is the greatest danger we have as a church. As soon as we think we are better than 'those sinners' our testimony is gone and God's Spirit is restrained, and we now lose our power to reach the community. Pride will destroy growth. Proverbs 21:4 says, "Haughty eyes, a proud heart, and evil actions are all sin". Pride destroys faith.

Jesus pulls the disciples aside to teach them one of the greatest lessons yet, humility. Humility is the breeding ground for faith. Humility is a building block to our access to God. Verse 34 in our text says, "He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to Him." When the teacher sat down to make a point, it was a point to listen too. Mark is the only one to give us this information because He wants the reader to know this is important.

Remember, they were arguing about greatness. Jesus is about to explain what greatness in God's upside Kingdom looks like, "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be servant of everyone else."

Many of the things in God's Kingdom are counterintuitive to our humanity. Look at the beatitudes:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven
- Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth
- Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

And there are other phrases: 'bless those who persecute you', 'love your enemy'. The greatest of these is 'death brings life'. The cross is the ultimate reversal. Death brings life. Ugliness brings beauty. God's wrath upon sin is poured out upon the perfect, holy, son for those that are the imperfect, dishonorable, and the enemy. Jesus says that is greatness. And that is where peace reigns. That is where greatness blossoms. That is where the right to be heard comes. When one is willing to give of themselves for another, when they choose to be last and serve, the message becomes loud and the impact becomes huge.

It isn't a matter of self shaming. It isn't a matter of denying a kind word of praise. It isn't about acknowledging a good job you have done. It isn't about hiding your gifting and abilities. It is a selfless heart attitude.

Humility is not about feeling shame for having status, riches, success, ability or whatever gives you greater opportunity. Humility is not about getting rid of any of it. Humility is realizing it is a gift from God and using it to further on God's Kingdom and using your resources in a way that honors God. Because humility recognizes it's about making more of Jesus Christ with the resources and abilities you have, and doing it with gratitude. A thankful heart breeds humility. A thank-filled heart reveals humility.

In the Christian economy, humility points to Christ because it is about Christ and not about the follower of Christ. This begins by seeing our need for Christ. In order to see our need, we have to be humbled. We have to realize we aren't great. Our sin has absolutely ripped that away from us, it

destroyed that within us, and that is why we search so hard to feel great, to give ourselves worth. That is why there are so many self-help books and psychology has become such a powerful need in our society. But, Jesus can fill that void. And that is what we point to as Christians. Our pride is in who Christ is and what He has done. That we can boast about. Our humility is in realizing our need and that He fills it, redeems it, and restores it. Humility is not about taking value away from yourself, but it is about giving value to others. That is what serving does. That is a by-product of serving. That is why serving others is so powerful and why it has ability to impact the world for Christ.

Verses 36-37

Why does Jesus pull a child over and use a child as a point of comparison? Children did not have much value in society until they were of age and they could work and add to the economy of the family, society, and grow the family.

Men were considered the pinnacle of society. Women were important, but were to serve a purpose. Children were somewhere between woman and a slave.

Jesus gives value to a part of society that is off to the side. He welcomes them.

- Welcome means to receive, to become interested in, to pull them in
- The idea: to give value to people that even won't add to your status.

That is what is meant when Jesus says, "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me not only me but also my Father who sent me." The idea is the 'least of these.'

When we stoop down to raise up another, that has power.

Humility is stepping aside and letting God be the one seen.

How do we become humble?

Let God exalt you. (Luke 14:11, Proverbs 15:33)

Go to the gospel, cherish the gospel

Go to the Scripture, seek to apply it and let it transform you

Make prayer a regular thing, giving it all over God and depend on His providence

Choose to love others as God has loved you, and as you do that, you will begin to understand God's love on a deeper level.

Serve. At the core of all of this, serve.

Proverbs 29:22 "Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor".

Luke 14:11 "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Proverbs 15:33 "Fear of the Lord teaches wisdom; humility precedes honor."

James 4:6 "Fear of the Lord teaches wisdom; humility precedes honor."

James 4:10 "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor."

James 4:1-10

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? 2 You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. 3 And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

4 You adulterers! [a] Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. 5 Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him. [b] 6 And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7 So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your

hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. 9 Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.