



New City Church: Sermon Discussion Notes

“Sacrifice for the City” – Mark 9:30-37

Purpose: These discussion questions are designed to help you apply the sermon to your personal life, church life or your city’s life. You can use these for personal, family, or small group reflection. To review the sermon, go to www.newcitychurch.ca/sermons.

Introduction

Pray – Take a moment to pray, asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture.

Read – Mark 9:30-37

Sermon Summary – Chapters 8-10 are known as the “discipleship chapters” because in this section Jesus seems very intent on teaching his disciples what it means to live as his followers. This section is punctuated by 3 passion predictions that are followed by 3 misunderstandings/rejections by the disciples, and then 3 intentional teaching moments. In this passage (9:30-37), we see the disciples struggling to understand what it means to follow a Messiah whose mission seems to be to die.

First we are introduced to the disciples’ fear. They are afraid to ask about Jesus’ comments about his death and resurrection. They are probably afraid to look foolish and don’t want to be rebuked as Peter was in chapter 8. But there is also a possibility (only hinted at in the Greek) that the disciples are becoming aware that following Jesus might mean they will experience death for their following. After all, the students will experience all that the master experiences. It is almost like they are afraid to ask for details for fear that they might be implicated in the death that Jesus seems to be preoccupied with. Disciples are called to follow, and not just anywhere, but to follow Jesus to the cross, to die.

In this passage, the specific part of us that we are called to put to death is our pride. The disciples are aware that their preoccupation with their greatness is at odds with Jesus’ preoccupation with dying for others, so they are silent when asked what they were talking about “on the way”. The issue is not that the disciples want to be great, but that their sense of what greatness is has been distorted. They (and we) know we cannot be “great” on our own, so we settle for being “known as great”. This desire to be known as not just great, but greater than others, is a problem. This desire to compete with others, to not just be rich, but to be “richer” than others, to not just be healthy, but to let people know we are healthier than them, is sinful and the disciple is to see that journeying with Jesus is journeying to the cross where our pride (among other parts of us) will be put to death.

To show the disciples what this “putting to death” looks like, he uses a child as an illustration. Children were not romantically seen in the Roman world. Children were a drain on resources and could not repay generosity and kindness, so in a world ruled by a patronage system (where you only serve others in hopes that they will repay you) children had no social capital. In selecting a young boy and embracing him and telling the disciples to embrace children, Jesus is telling them to get their eyes off themselves and on to the lowest people in the society. Jesus adds that it is not just receiving the lowly that marks the disciple, but receiving them “in Jesus’ name”. We are being told that Jesus has commended his followers to all the lowly people of the world, and vice versa. That when the lowly are looking for support and care, they should look to the church, God’s people. And that when the church is met by these people, it is to

respond like Jesus did – by embracing them. We are to do so because they come to us *in Jesus' name*. He is sovereign and send the world to the Church. And to be a people that sacrifice our pride and self-interest for the marginalized and those outside of grace, we need to embrace the cross and the One who hung on it, giving everything for those who could never pay Him back.

Questions

1. Review the passage (Mark 9:30-37) How does this speak to your life?
 - What comes to mind when you think about *the Cross*? What does it mean for you as a follower of Jesus?
 - How does the cross put to death your pride, greed, etc.?
2. What implications does Mark 9:30-37 have for us as a church community?
 - Discipleship is not an individual calling, but a corporate one. We are called “together” to journey together, to serve together. But how do we march to the cross together? How do we help one another to submit to the death of our sinful natures?
3. How does this text speak to our city?
 - If the call of this passage is to take our eyes off of our greatness and comfort and to be willing to endure hardship and even a loss of respect in the world’s eyes in order to embrace those who Jesus embraced – what does this mean for New City’s ministry to its immediate geographical context (i.e. the neighbourhood the church is located in)?

Concluding Question

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

Prayer

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