

What Hinders Us from Worshipping God?

Ի՞նչ Կարգիլէ զԱստուած Պաշտելէ

Mark 9:38-50

Last Sunday the topic was about the disciples asking each other this question: **“When Jesus leaves us, who will be in charge?”**

Jesus explains about being a servant-leader, to be like a child, empty and poor, without credentials. We all need Jesus, including the kids. However, we can learn from the kids, how desperately they need help to be fed and grow. We need that kind of **desire** to love Jesus, a desire to have an intimate relationship with Jesus. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they will inherit the kingdom of God.

How are you this morning? Are you here to be fed by God, through the Holy Spirit?

Let us continue reading His Word. Remember, the primary task of Jesus was to teach his disciples.

³⁸ John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” ³⁹ But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For the one who is not against us is for us. (Mark 9:38-40 ESV)

“Teacher, we see an ‘*odar*’ group (not one of us) casting out daemons in your name. We tried to stop them.”

-It reminds me of an event from the OT. There were some unauthorized prophets who were prophesying. Joshua came to Moses and said:

“Moses, my lord, stop them!” Moses answered, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” (Num. 11:26–29 NIV).

Are the disciples jealous for Jesus or for themselves?

They are the 12 chosen disciples, as I said before, they felt some kind of privilege about being chosen. So John, the beloved disciple, comes forward this time (not Peter) asking about this issue. Jesus’ response? “Not so fast, disciples.”

I think Jesus is teaching them (and us) that if there are people who do ministry in **the name of Jesus**, why not?

It feels strange that Jesus is allowing this, right?

What are we learning here?

We should not quickly criticize others who also follow Christ but are not like us.

They are not from our group.

However, this does not apply to those who do not follow Christ at all. As Jesus said:

“Whoever is not with me is against me.” (Matthew 12:30a ESV)

-The second observation I want to stress is that, they do ministry in the name of Jesus.

Let us not take this lightly. Some think there is a magical power when they use the name of Jesus. Watch out.

“Jesus makes the point that people can only do miracles in his name if they are in a proper relationship to that name (person).”¹

Let me give you an example from the book of Acts concerning the Name of Jesus:

“ Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:10-12 ESV)

The name of Jesus is not just words we proclaim: we find important beliefs about Jesus: died, rose from dead, he is the stone, the cornerstone which was rejected; he is our only redeemer, and no one else.

-Third observation, Jesus helps the disciples to discern who is “with them” and who is “against them.”

⁴¹ For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. ⁴² “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. (Mark 9:41-42 ESV)

-The first picture is about **someone who recognizes a need**, and it **acts on it**, and simply gives “a cup of water” to followers of Jesus.

Have you been in the mission field and someone who you don’t know who gives you “cup of water?” that person is rewarded according to Jesus.

How important it is to encourage each other, to encourage brothers and sisters who do ministry in the name of Jesus. Once a while an email comes, or a text message, or a visit from someone who encourages you. I recommend that the church body edify each other more than criticize.

-The Fourth picture or observation:

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. (9:42 ESV)

This is “against them”. I understand that the “little ones” are fragile and weak in faith.

Instead of encouragement, to cause someone to sin is a disastrous situation.

Am I stumbling block to a weak brother/sister? Satan enjoys this, because He wants Christians to fall, stumble...

-A **millstone** is big and very heavy. In my childhood, I have seen those in action in Kessab town. A donkey would pull the heavy stone to crush the wheat. What is Jesus saying?

“It is better to drown in the sea with no chance of escape than to face the judgment that God will dish out to those who lead others to sin. One can infer that God shows more concern for the little ones’ fragile faith than for the great ones’ fragile egos, which cause them to lord it over or ignore others.”²

Temptations can come and knock our door. You can open the door and invite it and entertain it, or you can resist it and escape from it. Don’t play with fire.

But how about if **you are the one** who is bringing the temptation:

Jesus warned them:

“Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!
(Matthew 18:7 ESV)

-The Fifth Picture or Observation:

Then Jesus adds further warnings concerning things that hinder us to follow Jesus:

⁴³ And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of

God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,⁴⁸ 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' (Mark 9:43-48 ESV)

Jesus is talking allegorically; he is using exaggerated statements (*Hyperbole*) or claims not meant to be taken literally.

Anything that hinders you from following Jesus, take it away. If the computer, internet, TV, overbusyness, sports, money, job, fame, prestige, car, expensive hobbies... anything that will make you fall into sin, remove it, deal with it.

Saying that, here I like to stress about an issue that Jesus dealt before:

²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery...." (Mark 7:20, 21 ESV)

This is a heart issue. The issue is not the hand, eye, foot. (*Although each one can say something about our life: hands can do some habits that dangerous, feet can take us places we should not go, and eyes can read, watch things that are harmful*). Even if you cut them, **your heart is the source of the sin.** Our body parts do not act on their own, we need transformation of the heart, the soul.

-Brothers and sisters, this is a serious issue. We need to deal with sin; it is a tumor in our body. If you don't check it, it will spread all over you. And we need Jesus to deal with the heart. You cannot do it on your own. Through Jesus God grants us a new heart.

Jesus gives us a choice where do you want to spend your life, in the Kingdom of God, or in Hell (Gehenna). For the local people of Jerusalem, they understood what **Gehenna** was. It was a garbage dumpster outside Jerusalem. It is a terrible place; always there is fire there because of the fermentation of the garbage, and I don't need to describe it further to you.

There was a time preachers spoke too much about hell. People had nightmares hearing sermons about it, and fear became the reason to come to Jesus. Then we stopped talking about it.

Well, hell is a reality. Besides being forever away from God's presence, we will forever be under the wrath of God. When we refuse Jesus, we are under the curse of sin and in hell.

-The Sixth picture or observation:

How did Jesus end this section of his teaching:

⁴⁹ For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." (Mark 9:49-50 ESV)

Salt and Fire. Two important words for purification.

I will stress on **Salt losing its saltiness** and not being effective. Pure Salt NaCl cannot lose its saltiness. During the time of Jesus salt was mixed with other ingredients. "Salt might lose its flavor under certain conditions when it contains chemical impurities. Or salt might have absorbed humidity and eventually evaporated and left behind a substance that looked like salt but did not taste like it."³

Same with our Christian life. Jesus requires a holy life from us. Our hearts need to be purified daily; our feet get dirty needs to be washed by Jesus daily. Otherwise, we will not be effective. (Like the salt)

Second part of the image is **having salt in yourselves and be at peace.**

Which means let us have bread and salt together, let us break bread together. It is the table of peace. "To have salt among yourselves" means to share salt, a reference to having meals together in the context of fellowship and peace (Ezra 4:14; Acts 1:4).⁴

The discourse began, however, with the disciples disputing among themselves about their status (9:33–37) and objecting to a stranger's right to use Jesus' name.

It continued with Jesus' warning about causing other believers to stumble.

These concluding sayings present peaceful fellowship as the model for disciples' relations. (Fledderman, "Discipleship," 73.)

What can we learn and do?

1. Stop judging other Christians who do not worship like us.

We should differentiate essentials from the secondary.

2. Am I a stumbling block for the "little ones"?

Think if you are edifying the body of the Christ.

3. Stay away from "obstacles" who will lead you to temptation

4. Have a heart examination often. Jesus can renew your heart

Ken Gire in his book *The Reflective Life*, writes: "Most of us, I think, genuinely want humility. But who of us is willing to be humiliated in order to get it? We are told in the Scriptures that God gives grace...people who have been brought low and humbled (James 4:6). If that is true, then whatever happens in our lives to

humble us is, in the long run, a good thing, because it paves the road over which the grace of God comes to us.”

- 1 Donald English, *Bible Speaks Today* Mark 171
2. David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 369
3. <https://www.koyuncusalt.com/en/salt-library/how-long-does-salt-keep-its-flavor>
4. David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 370