



JESUS: The Servant of God

A verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of Mark

The Gospel Serves

Mark 9:30-50

Message #22

Sermon given on June 7, 2026



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The Gospel Serves

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Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Mark 9**
- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Mark – **JESUS: The Servant of God**
- Let's open this time in our service with a word of prayer. - **Pray**

Teaching

- **The Gospel Serves**
- Our last time in Mark's gospel, Jesus has an interaction with a desperate father who had a son possessed by a demon.
- Jesus challenged him to believe. **Mark 9:23**
²³ **Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."**
- It is faith that releases the Almighty power of God to accomplish all things.
- From here on in the gospel of Mark, we see Jesus making His way toward Jerusalem and His appointment on the cross.
- He talks plainly with the disciples about that.
- **Mark 9:30-31**
- Jesus is the promised and long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of the Jews.
- Most Jews believed the Messiah would save them from their mortal enemies, at that time, the Romans.
- Jesus is telling them that He is about to fulfill His reason for coming down from heaven, to die and rise the third day.
- Jesus did teach about the kingdom of God and work many miracles, but God the Holy Spirit could have done that through anyone.
- The one thing that only God in the flesh could do was die for the sins of the world.
- The disciples didn't understand.
- **Mark 9:32**
- It wouldn't be until after the resurrection that they would finally understand that Jesus was referring to a spiritual enemy, sin.

- The disciples were blinded by their preconceived opinions and prejudices regarding the Messiah.
- People still have the same problem today: they have preconceived opinions about who God is, and their spiritual state.
- The person who says, I am a good person, therefore I am okay with God, has an opinion about their spiritual state that is not based in reality. **Romans 3:11-12**

¹¹There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹²They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.

- If someone doesn't believe they are a sinner in need of a Savior, they won't repent and turn to Jesus.
 - Sadly, there are churches that are teaching that you can have Jesus without repentance.
 - If your sin isn't the reason why Jesus came, then He didn't need to die.
 - But He did die and rise the third day, because your sin and my sin demanded a payment, one we were incapable of giving.
 - You can have your own opinion on lots of things in this life.
 - But if you get this one wrong, the consequences are terrible.
 - Jesus challenges them about their attitude.
 - **Mark 9:33-35**
 - Jesus just told them He was going to be betrayed and die and they are arguing about who is greatest in the kingdom of God.
 - This is probably about who would have the most authority.
 - Elsewhere James and John asked to be seated Christ's right and left side in the kingdom, places of highest authority. **John McKenna**
Ambition has an appetite that can never be satisfied.
 - As is often the case, the disciples are focused on the wrong thing.
 - Jesus says the true measure of greatness in the kingdom of God is, not how many people are serving you, but how many people you are serving.
 - Jesus, the Son of God, lived out this truth. **Mark 10:45**
- ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**
- If anyone deserved to be worshipped and served by every human on earth it was Jesus.

● But that was not what He did or demanded. **Philippians 2:5-8**
⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.

- Notice doesn't say there is anything wrong with desiring to be great in God's kingdom, if you understand what true greatness looks like.
- It looks like Jesus, the Humble Servant of all.
- Jesus then gives them a practical example.

● **Mark 9:36-37**

- As I grow in my faith, I realize more deeply that people don't appear randomly in my life.
- God's sovereign providence brings people across my path for reasons He may or not make clear to me.
- That word "receives" you see in verse 37 four times, means to welcome, or to willingly permit access to one's company.
- How willing are you to welcome the next person the Holy Spirit causes to cross your path.
- The phrase "in My name" means in the character of Jesus.
- Do it like Jesus would do it.
- If you are welcoming to others, you are welcoming Jesus.
- It is my heart's desire that this church would always be a place where people feel welcomed and loved.
- That reminds John of something they had done.

● **Mark 9:38-41**

- Someone is casting out demons, but He is not part of their group.
- He is doing something good, and using Jesus' name, but he might be doing it differently than they were.
- Just because someone is serving Jesus differently than you do, doesn't mean they are doing it wrong.
- Be careful of spiritual pride.
- The main thing is, are they doing good in the name of Jesus?
- Even the smallest act of service in Jesus' name is deserving of a reward.
- Jesus then follows that with a warning.

● **Mark 9:42**

- As a follower of Christ, at some point, we should realize that God called us to serve Him in some way.
- Some people are motivated by the carrot, the promise of rewards, blessings,
- Even if it is to give a cup of cold water to drink in the name of Christ will receive his reward.
- We should be willing to serve Christ with our whole life solely because of what He has done for us.
- But then He also promises rewards for faithful service.
- We don't serve Christ for the reward; it is just a blessing to know that it is there.
- Maybe you have heard of the concept of the carrot and the stick. **The "carrot and stick" is a metaphorical idiom that describes a behavioral approach utilizing a combination of rewards (the "carrot") and punishments (the "stick") to induce desired behavior.**
- Some people are motivated to do good by the carrot, the promise of blessings or rewards.
- These are incentives to do what is good and right.
- Others are motivated to do what is right out of fear of punishment.
- These are consequences for doing what is wicked or wrong.
- These little ones can be interpreted as children but also applies to new believers or believers with immature faith.
- These little ones believe in Christ but are vulnerable to being misled.
- To cause them to stumble is to do something that encourages or causes them to sin.
- Mature believers have a responsibility to protect and guide those who are spiritually less mature than they are.
- Jesus uses hyperbolic language to call believers to a radical commitment to Christ and to the shepherding of young believers.
- **Mark 9:43-48**
- Jesus is not calling us to maim ourselves.
- He is calling us to make an extreme commitment to Him.
- A simple example of this is drinking alcohol.
- There are differing opinions, even within the church, about whether Christians should drink alcohol.
- It is universally agreed that Christians should not get drunk.

- It is my belief that this is an area where we have license to decide for ourselves.
- I don't believe the Bible forbids having a beer or a glass of wine.
- Personally, I don't drink.
- It is not that I am not allowed, I choose not to drink.
- And these verses are one of the reasons why.
- The thought that my enjoyment of a beer or a glass of wine would cause another believer to stumble makes it so that I wouldn't enjoy it.
- I have no fear of being cast into hell fire; that is hyperbole to make a point.
- I would rather never have another drop of alcohol for the rest of my life than to stumble another believer.
- Before we move away from these verses, we should notice the description of hell we are given.
- "Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."
- Hell is real, just as heaven is real.
- Hell is a place of eternal suffering and torment.
- The worm is a picture of decay and corruption, and fire is a picture of suffering and judgment.
- As believers, hell is not something we need be concerned about for ourselves.
- On the other hand, we ought to be terrified for those we love who don't know Jesus.
- This is the eternal destiny they are headed for.
- Someone needs to share the gospel with them and help them draw near to Jesus.
- God might want that someone to be you.
- But it will be hard for you to do that if you are causing them to stumble into sin.
- To help us with that, the Holy Spirit will work on us to make us better.
- **Mark 9:49-50**
- Jesus is speaking to believers.
- Everyone will be seasoned with fire.
- Fire is used symbolically a couple of ways in the Bible.
- One way is for judgment – always directed at unbelievers.

- For believers, fire is symbolic of purification.
- If you watch a craftsman making a knife or a sword, you will see them using fire to heat the metal to a point where it is easier to shape.
- Once hot, they pound on it with a heavy tool and then cool it in water.
- They repeat that process until the blade is the shape and strength they are looking for.
- Once that is done, they grind the edge to make it as sharp as they desire.
- And then they polish it until they can see their reflection in the metal.
- Very often, the fire believers experience are trials, tribulations, and suffering.
- The Holy Spirit will use those things to shape us into the tool God needs to do the work He wants us to do in the world.
- Salt symbolizes healing, purification, and preservation.
- Salt loses its flavor in the life of a believer when they disconnect from the Word of God, prayer, and fellowship with the body of Christ.
- Notice, Jesus says have salt in yourselves.
- It is a choice!
- And He closes with have peace with one another.
- Peace, the absence of conflict, ought to be a characteristic feature of Christian relationships and church.
- God created us to serve Him, Jesus saved us and gave us an example of how to serve God, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to serve God.
- It is in serving God that we find the fulfillment that most people seek and rarely find.
- Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us make a radical commitment of faith and service to God as an expression of gratitude for what Jesus did for us.
- **Pray – Last Song**