

Last of All and Servant of All

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[0 : 00] So, let me start with a question. How do you measure greatness? How do you measure greatness?

You know, we think of, you know, we think often of achievements. So, we might think of a great athlete as somebody who has won several Olympic medals, who has done great things athletically, skill-wise.

They go, oh, so-and-so is great. He's the greatest receiver of all time. Of course, he's from the 49ers. But besides, you know, because he's accomplished.

You know, so we look at numbers. He's caught the most, so therefore he must be the greatest. Or he's done the most, therefore he must be the greatest. Or we think in business, production.

Who's the greatest? Well, we look at production. Have they been successful? What have they produced? If they're big, they must be good. And then we look at size.

[1 : 02] The bigger the store, the bigger the church, the more the numbers. We think, well, they must be great. Right? So, the world defines greatness in terms of bigger. Bigger must mean better.

They must be doing something right. We think of accomplishments. If they've accomplished a lot, then we think, well, they're superior. Jesus does not define greatness that way.

He defines greatness entirely differently than we think. Not according to what, but according to who. His disciples, on the other hand, are still thinking more worldly. They think and desire greatness.

They're arguing with one another about who's the greatest. They're concerned with who's most important. Who's the best? Who has greater value?

[2 : 04] Who gets the power position when Jesus sits on his throne? Who gets the, you know, who's the mover and the shaker? That's what they're thinking of. So, in Mark 9, we have Jesus' disciples revealed as having a couple of problems, which we all share with them.

A couple of natural inclinations, which we as believers must fight against. One is the competitive spirit.

We have a competitive spirit to be better, to be first. To be recognized, to be honored, to be appreciated, whatever form that comes in.

And that leads to a second problem, which is a judgmental spirit. An intolerance for others. Because we want to be better, so we want to kind of keep others away.

And so, Jesus addresses both of these issues, and he teaches not just an attitude adjustment, but a radical transformation.

[3 : 17] He teaches counter-cultural Christianity. That which is not just different from the world, but radically opposite of the world.

And our natural inclinations. So, that's why I say we battle it, because we still have those. Even if we've been saved and we've been transformed, we still carry the flesh.

And we still have those natural tendencies for selfish things, of course. So, in Mark 9, we have seen the context of Mark 9.

They were on the mountain high, remember? Jesus was transformed in front of three of the disciples. So, they're up on the mountain. They see Jesus transfigured, shining in his glory. So, they go from the mountain high to the valley low.

When they come down, the other nine disciples are not having such a good time. They are, in fact, failing at trying to cast out a demon. They're unable to do it. And so, they come to this low of failure and inadequacy, and Jesus addresses that.

[4 : 21] And now we come, now in verse 32, Jesus now has come all the way down from Mount Hermon, all the way down the valley. Now, he's back in Galilee. He returns to Galilee, where he does this second foretelling of his death and resurrection.

So, in verse 30, we see that they went on from there, from up the mountain. They passed through Galilee. And notice what it says. He does not want anyone to know. He does not want anyone. He wants a private time. Galilee is where he's done all these miracles. Galilee is where he has spent three years of ministry and miracle and teaching.

And now, when he comes back through in his last year of ministry, now he's going through privately. Now, and notice why.

Verse 31. Why is he not wanting anyone to know? For he was teaching his disciples. This is private training time. See, Jesus' mission has shifted. It's shifted from public and preaching and exposure and miracles.

[5 : 34] It's not that he's not doing that anymore. He'll still do that. But that's not his focus anymore. Now, his focus is on the 12. Because time's running out. And he's heading toward the cross.

And they have got to get this. And they're not getting it. So, he once again tells them in verse 31. The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.

They will kill him. And when he is killed, he will, after three days, rise again. Remember, we saw that very same prediction or foretelling back in the end of chapter 8. Verse 31.

When he said the Son of Man must suffer many things. He will be rejected by the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people.

He will be killed. And then after three days, he will rise from the dead. So, we have this second retelling with only one little change. Instead of chapter 8 where he says suffer many things and be rejected.

[6 : 33] Here he says the Son of Man must be delivered over. He's going to be handed over. It's the same word that later will mean betray.

To be delivered, to hand over. Judas will deliver Jesus over. Hand him over. Betray him, right? This is probably a more general sense where Jesus is handed over by the Father to the hands of men.

You know, the Father sent the Son into the world, right? God so loved the world that he sent his Son. He delivered him over. Into the hands of men. And he knew what they would do.

They would kill him. But then the Son would rise again. So, he's teaching again intentionally. This is the mission of the Christ. Remember, ever since Peter said, You are the Christ.

You are the Christ. That's when Jesus then began to teach what kind of Christ he is. Not a conquering sit on a throne king, but a come and die king.

[7 : 41] His victory will come in a different way. He will die for our sins. He will pay our debts. And all who believe in him will be saved. You should call his name.

We just heard it Christmas. You should call his name Jesus. Why? We shall save his people from their sins. Not from their problems. From their sins. And so, he's teaching, teaching, teaching.

And so, what's the response? Verse 32. But they did not understand. The disciples still don't get it. In fact, the word for understand there is agnostic.

What's an agnostic? One who doesn't know. I don't know. Does God exist? I don't know. I'm ignorant.

And that's what the disciples are here. They're ignorant. It's over their head. They just don't know. But then notice what it says. They did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask.

[8 : 45] Now, what's that? Maybe they did understand. And they didn't want to know. Because, you know, if you don't know, then, you know, it just pushes the pain back further.

Maybe they kind of want to pretend that they don't know. Maybe they want to live in denial. I don't know. It's just interesting.

He doesn't, Mark doesn't explain. He doesn't explain. He just says they were afraid to ask. Maybe they're afraid to ask because it exposes their ignorance. Don't know.

But here's the other thing. What we find out is they're not just ignorant. The thoughts of the 12 disciples are the opposite of Jesus. He's talking about suffering.

And what are they arguing about? Status. Superiority. He's talking about descending from heaven. Humbling himself.

[9 : 48] They're talking about exalting themselves. They're going opposite directions. Jesus is going to speak a language to them that is just foreign.

They're on this, well, we're over here. They're on this track going up. Jesus is on this track going down. And they can't be further apart. They're not just ignorant.

They're opposite. Now, time's running out. They've been following Jesus, learning from Jesus for over three years now. They still don't get it.

Should we abandon this mission? Jesus is hinging everything on his resurrection. Remember he had told the disciples, don't tell anybody until the resurrection.

Because after I'm raised, then you'll get it. Clearly they don't get it yet. I don't want these guys out preaching now because what are they going to preach about? Who's the greatest? Your best life now, right?

[10:57] It's all about you. And Jesus is going, no, you don't get it. You're not ready to preach the cross. You don't get it. You're going this way and I'm going this way.

Okay? So here's the training. It's a retraining. He's already told them, remember, if you want to follow me, what do you do? Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow me.

Try not loving your soul in this world to save it. All this kind of language that they're just going, huh? Okay?

So retraining. He's still training them. And what I want us to recognize here is what Mark is showing us is that the original disciples, though they're so close with Jesus, they're walking and stalking and seeing him and hearing him and answering and questioning.

They're still slow. And apart from Jesus' resurrection and his opening of their mind and the coming of the Holy Spirit, they're not going to get it.

[12:04] Okay? And so we look at ourselves in terms of our ministry and our progress. Okay? We're slow too. Okay? It's normal. Don't beat yourself up.

All the more pray, Lord. You must open my mind. You must change my heart. I can't do it. Okay? Okay? That's a free lesson.

That's not even part of the notes here. So, okay. So let's look at this. So from verse 33 to 41, there's this retraining. Jesus is reteaching the way of the cross, just like he did at the end of chapter 8.

So to be practical here, now let's ask this question. How do we overcome our natural predispositions to resist the way of the cross? How do we overcome our natural selfish tendencies? And specifically in two ways. How do we overcome our natural tendency to a competitive spirit, a selfish spirit, me first spirit?

[13:08] And how do I overcome a judgmental spirit? One where I'm dismissive or intolerant of others that I don't know or understand. Okay?

How do I do that? And Jesus gives us very helpful stuff here. And this is to retrain us. To get us thinking right.

Because we normally don't think this way. So first of all, in verses 33 to 37, Jesus addresses the first problem. How do we overcome our competitive spirit?

We overcome it by desiring the greatness of servanthood. Doesn't that sound good? Desire the greatness of servanthood.

Of last place. Strive to be last. That's what he's saying. It's opposite our language.

[14:10] Desire the greatness. This is how Jesus defines greatness. Servanthood. So he's going to unfold this in three ways.

First, we're going to see the problem exposed in verses 33 and 34. Then Jesus will give the principle in verse 35. And then he will give them a picture in verse 36 and 37 of a child.

It's going to illustrate what he's teaching. Okay? So first he exposes the problem. Verse 33. They come to Capernaum. And when he was in the house, he asked them. Remember, they were afraid to ask him.

Well, he's not afraid to ask. They're not going to ask the question. He's going to ask the question. So he asked them, what were you discussing on the way? As if he probably didn't know, right? But they kept silent.

For on the way, they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. So here's the problem. What are you arguing about? When you're guilty and your parents ask you a question or somebody asks you a question, and you know you're already guilty, what do you do?

[15:21] Not saying anything. I'll get in worse trouble. You know, the silence kind of betrays your guilt. And he knows, of course.

They're arguing, and Mark tells us, they were arguing about who's the greatest, who's first, who's preeminent. And what they want is recognition, esteem, prestige, prominence, acclaim, approval, credit.

And you can imagine, the context is, you had three of them who get to go up on the mountain and see the glory, and the other nine. So the three, you can imagine that naturally thinking, we're more special.

We get to see special stuff. I'm not supposed to tell, but it was pretty cool. Remember, Jesus told them not to tell. And it must have been hard. Oh, man, we're the greatest because, you know, you guys are down here failing.

We get to go up on the mountain and see the glory. I don't know. Mark does not explain it, how this argument comes about who's, you know, Peter's in there, and you know, the sons of thunder, James and John, they're not backing off.

[16:41] You know, they're in there. Simon the zealot, he's not a passive guy. And here we go. Twelve ordinary men arguing about who's the greatest.

And probably taking Jesus' words and twisting them to their benefit. You know, we're born with this competitive spirit.

Just look at a child. Parents, look at your little children. Not Charlotte yet. She's perfect. But look at these little ones.

What do we have to teach them? Now, be nice. No, share your toys. Why? They don't want to share. How do we have to tell them to be nice?

Because they don't want to be nice. Because that one's irritating me, and he pulled my hair. And that's why I kicked him. You know what it's like.

[17:47] This is just what it is. We're born with this competitive nature. We're born with that. We don't have to teach children to disobey. They do it naturally. They learn. It just kind of comes natural.

That's just the way it is. That's our nature. That's why, you know, you've watched the Special Olympics. Isn't it? You see these wonderful little children.

And to me, what picture I get when I think of Special Olympics is the race. And one of them falls down. And what happens? The other ones are all coming back to help him up.

No competitive spirit whatsoever. They're like, oh, man, you fell. And we watch that and we go, oh, man, that's cool. Even the guys are going, oh, he could have won.

Oh, no, that was cool. He could have won, but that was cool. And why do we admire that? Because it's rare.

[18:49] It's rare. Those precious children are God's gift to us in one way of showing us a purer image of God.

So, verse 35, Jesus teaches the principle. He's exposed their argument of greatness. Now he teaches them a principle. And notice how he draws their attention. Because this is a bit of a solemn moment.

Verse 35, Mark says, he sat down and he called the 12. Now, they're already in the house. They're already in discussion. Why would Mark interrupt that and say, now he sat down and called them to him?

You know, most scholars, the liberal scholars are going, oh, see, there's problems here. And it's like, go away. What Mark is calling attention to is Jesus is saying, this is going to be significant. Formal teaching now, boys. Gather around. I'm going to sit down. Formal, you know, when the rabbi sat, that's the formal teaching. That's all Mark's saying.

[19:58] Mark's going, okay, boys, time to pay attention. And then he teaches. If you desire to be first, then you will be last of all and servant of all.

And I can imagine their eyes just going, what? This is ludicrous. No, if you want to be first, you've got to fight and you've got to push and you've got to be last.

Be the servant. The word there, it's the same one that later means deacon. You know, servant. It's one that literally means one who stirs up dust.

Or in the first century, it referred to a table waiter. You know, you go out, you have a, do you go to restaurants where they're expensive enough where you actually have a waiter? We go to places where you order and you sit down.

But once in a while, we get a gift card and we go to a place where there's actually waiters and they serve you. And they, you know, you tell them what you want and they bring it to you and they come back and check on you and, you know, that kind of stuff.

[21 : 14] That's the servant. It's all about you. They're serving you. They're checking on you. That's what Jesus defines as greatness.

And it's opposite what we naturally think. It's not, as I said, it's not just an attitude adjustment. This is countercultural. This is overwrite.

Is this computer language? You overwrite a program, right? Because the program's bad, so you've got to overwrite it. Well, if we could just push a button and overwrite.

We can't. Because it's in there. And we're not computers. In that way. Where you can just delete, erase, reboot. We have to, every morning, okay, reboot.

Next morning, or that afternoon, reboot. You know? We wish it was automatic. As believers, we wish it was automatic.

[22 : 23] We wish that came easy. This is radical. This is not how we think. Then he gives us a picture. He takes a child.

And he puts the child in front of them. But then he does more. Then he takes the child in his arms. You just picture Jesus holding a little child. I don't know what the child is.

Now, they're in Capernaum in a house. Probably Peter and Andrew's house. Okay? That was the place they always went. So maybe Peter's child. Maybe Andrew's child. Peter's going, yeah, yeah, it's my boy.

I don't know. Jesus takes the boy. And notice what he says. He doesn't say, be like the child. That's another lesson. That's another context.

He will say that at another time. Be like a child. Here he doesn't say, be like a child. He says what? Verse 37. Whoever receives one such child.

[23 : 28] So he's talking about how I act toward the child. And the child is a representative. Whoever receives someone like this. Someone just like this.

Whoever receives someone like this is not just receiving them. They're receiving me. And they're not just receiving me.

They're receiving him who sent me. So it's bigger than attitude adjustment. Bigger than just serving people.

You are literally, when you serve someone like the child. And get to that. You're serving Jesus himself. You're serving the father himself.

Okay? So, big question. What is it about this child? What are the characteristics of this child that he's talking about?

[24 : 27] To receive them. And by the way, receive means to embrace. Because that's exactly what he's doing. He's embracing. He's taking it.

He's serving it. Why the child? Well, think about this child. What is a child? And not just in our century. Let's not read in from us. Because we elevate children more than they did in the first century.

Okay? We're a little more child conscious. Okay? Especially compared to the Greeks and the Roman society. Jewish society was a little better.

But not great. So what was a child in the first century? Worker. Helpless. Least of society.

No rights. No power. No power. Someone who was vulnerable. No. Weak. Lowly. No status.

[25 : 27] Opposite. Of the world's value scale. They're at the end. So he's saying, you know what great is? You know what great is?

You know what servanthood is? Where's the child? Where's the child? Okay, Charlotte's right here. Focus on her. That's your target group.

Your target group as a Christian, as a church, our target group is not the movers and shakers. Our target group is not the people that got it all together. Remember Jesus said the gospel's not, I don't have any good news for the righteous.

I don't have any good news for people who are well. I only have good news for people who are sick. I only have good news for people who are sinners. I only have good news for people who cannot fix themselves.

Who are broken, vulnerable, weak, least, childlike. Who need help and are absolutely dependent.

[26 : 29] Not just need a little help from God. I don't have good news for those people. You just want a little help, I don't got any good news for you. I only got good news for people that cannot, absolutely cannot fix themselves.

They're broken. They're like a child. They're absolutely dependent if I don't feed them. If I don't clothe them. If I don't care for them.

Right? This is the target group. Where have our churches gone? Right?

What are we aiming at? I used to sit through the church growth seminars. Here's the target. You got to get the 20s and the 30s. Because there's the movers and the shakers. And there's the givers and there's the doers. And when I left my home church.

After my father had died. I approached the pastor. He was a good friend of mine. It's a big church. I said, you're going to take care of my mom, right? Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Year later. Nobody visits.

[27 : 34] Nobody's concerned. Why? She's not a mover and shaker anymore. The poor widow sits at home. I can tell you stories.

I won't do that. Where has the church gone? Jesus' vision. See, what greatness is, is not what gets the spotlights. What greatness is, is serving the lowly and the vulnerable.

And the helpless and the broken. That's what greatness is. Because by doing that, you're actually serving Jesus himself. And isn't that the gospel?

The gospel is God himself descending. From exaltation, descending to humility. And humiliation and suffering. In order to come to us who are broken and vulnerable and least.

And can't fix themselves. And who are epitomically depressed. And he takes us and he cradles us in his arms. And he takes us on the cross. Right? Because he does take our sins on the cross with us. Right?

[28 : 41] And he takes care of our brokenness. And then in exchange for nothing, he gives us all his righteousness. We're righteous, but we're righteous because we're clothed in his clothes.

So it's not be like the child. Be like Jesus who embraces the child. So, how do we overcome our natural desire to be served? How do we walk the way of the cross?

It's so unnatural. How do we change our selfish mindset? Listen to Paul in Philippians chapter 2. He addresses the same thing. He says, do nothing from rivalry or conceit.

But in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Stop there. Okay, we all doing that? You counting others as more significant than yourselves? Is that how you think? Not, well, no.

No. Do I really believe others are more significant than myself? Working on it. No, I should. Right?

[29 : 46] Okay, so already impossible. Let each of you not look only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Okay, yeah, I got that. I can still take care of me though, right? And then he says, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, now here's the example, Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, which in Greek literally means he was God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped or literally as a thing to be held on to and not let go of.

What he did instead was let go. He did not recount equality with God, which he already had as a thing to keep holding on to, but made himself nothing. He emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, by being born in the likeness of men, and by being found in human form, he humbled himself.

By becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, therefore God highly exalted him. Because that's God's principle.

Who does he exalt? The humble. Who does he humble? The exalted. He's opposed to the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. Right?

So his son exhibited humility, and when he was done, woo-hoo, right hand. You take it, son.

[31 : 09] You got it from here. Right? So how do you do this? How do we have that kind of mindset? Well, the key is have this mind that was in Christ.

The term there means to direct your mind. It's not just an attitude adjustment. It's an intentional directing of the mind. It's an act of faith.

It's a reboot in the morning. Reboot in the afternoon. Reboot when I come home from work.

Husbands.

And wives. Right? Shift here. Not about me. Shift. How do I do that?

I just snap the button, right? Oh, it's by prayer. It's by daily, deliberate act of prayer and surrender to Christ. It's not just learning this as an idea.

[32 : 08] That's a nice idea. I like that. To know it and memorize it. I can recite it. I can teach others that. No, it's to learn it by applying it every day through prayer. It's saying, Lord, enable me to serve others.

Enable me to think of others. Enable me to deny myself. Give me eyes to see who is that child today. So, first issue.

Overcomes competitive spirit by desiring the greatness of servanthood. Second issue, verse 38 to 41, is this competitive spirit leads to another kind of spirit, a judgmental, intolerant kind of spirit, which we see reflected in John.

So, the second lesson here could be stated this way. To overcome judgmental spirit, do that by rejoicing in all work done in Christ's name.

Rejoice in all work that is done in Christ's name. So, let's look at this in three ways. We see the problem again. We'll see Jesus give a correction.

[33 : 17] So, verse 38. John. Who's John? It's not John the Baptist. He's already been killed. What Johns do we have left? There's a James and John.

So, it's probably that John. The John who later wrote the fourth gospel. Who's called this lover of men. He's not that John yet.

Okay? This is early John. This is John who's still known as son of thunder. This is John of James and John who on another incident when the crowd did not respond favorably to Jesus said to Jesus, Lord, shall we call down fire from heaven on them?

It's that John. Sweetheart. Okay? He's not the John of the gospel yet. He's going to be a very, he's going to be a sweetheart later.

Okay? He's going to be transformed. He's not there yet. He wants to judge and kill and, okay? And so, he sees something and he asks an honest question.

[34 : 27] Verse 38. John said to him, teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name. And we tried to stop him. Why? Because he's not following us.

Doesn't say you. Us. He's not in our group. He's not in our church. He's not in our denomination. Whatever boundary you want to call it. It's kind of an us and them thing. Us and them. We don't really know them.

In fact, we know very little about them. But, they're not us. It's kind of an attitude of a protective exclusiveness. A presumptiveness that we do it right, we have it right, and they couldn't have it right.

Because they're not with us. It's a judgmental spirit. And it's natural. We all do it.

[35 : 33] We all do it. Especially toward others that we don't really know. We only know a little bit. And the little bit we know takes us over here.

Because we've learned over time we can't trust people. And so we quickly go to, you know, we've been hurt and scarred, and so we do that to protect ourselves.

So we become sectarian, denominational. We become cliquish. Remember that junior high, high school thing? You guys don't have that, right? You don't have cliques, right? Good.

I hated that. You can't get in. You're not cool enough or whatever. Speak the right language or have the right clothes. Now, give John some credit here.

Maybe John is thinking, hey, they're casting out demons in your name. We do that, and you authorized us to do that. You didn't authorize them. They're not authorized. He might be coming at it that way, and that's, okay, that's an honest question.

[36 : 37] You know, because remember back in chapter 6, he gave them authority to cast out demons. Now, here are these guys doing it. We don't know them, and they're doing that.

Even then, what's Jesus going to say? Leave them alone. There's a similar story in the Old Testament, Numbers 11, where God had just transferred the spirit that was on Moses to the 70 elders, right?

So he's spreading the ministry so that Moses wasn't doing everything. He's spreading it out so the spirit's on these 70 men, and they were all meeting in a tent. They were all supposed to go to the tent, and there were two guys that didn't go to the meeting, and they're back prophesying in the camp.

And when Joshua hears it, he comes, you know, Joshua's the faithful assistant to Moses. He's the good guy. He's the protector. So he comes to Moses and says, Moses, you've got to stop them. Same language.

They're not authorized to stop them. And Moses says, are you jealous for me? I would that everyone could prophesy. Take that burden off of me.

[37 : 55] I'd be glad for others to do it. I got no problem. They weren't prophesying me falsely. The text even tells us these two guys had the spirit of God on them.

And they just didn't go to the meeting. Leave them alone, Josh. They're okay. I'm not offended. Be jealous for God, not for me.

So what does Jesus say? Verse 39, Jesus says to John, stop hindering. He didn't just say, do not stop him.

He literally said in the Greek, stop hindering him. And then he gives three reasons. Three grounds for tolerance. How do we know when to be gracious toward others that we don't know?

Okay. How do we know when to draw lines and say, no, we're going to. Because there are times we as Christians must draw lines. We can't say we're united with everybody who says, I love Jesus.

[39 : 02] Because their Jesus may be a totally different Jesus. Okay. He's not talking about that here. All we know in this case is that they're casting out demons in the name of Jesus.

That's all we know. We don't know what their message is. All we know is casting out demons in Jesus' name. So first round of tolerance, verse 39.

Jesus says, don't stop them. Why? For no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. They've associated themselves with me.

They're using my name. I'm getting the credit. It's the name of Jesus that is recognized as the power that casts out the demon. Okay.

Anything negative in that? No, that's okay. No bad. Demons cast. Somebody set free. Cool.

[40 : 07] Common enemy. Devil's loses. I think we're okay with that. Jesus says he's okay with that. Okay.

And notice how he talks about it. They've done this. It doesn't mean they're with me. It doesn't mean they're believers in me yet. Because he says, even though they're doing this in my name, they will not be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.

So wherever they're at, once they experience the power of my name, that's not going to send them to a negative place. It's going to send them to a positive place.

Wherever they're at. So what he's saying about this tolerance here is he's not saying they're on the same team as we are. Okay. He's not saying that.

Because recognize, remember what Jesus says in Matthew 7. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Just because they profess my name does not mean they're a true Christian.

[41 : 06] Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. And then, oh, you'll say to me, did we not do powers in your name? Did we not cast out demons in your name? Did we not prophesy in your name?

And Jesus will say to them, I never knew you. Yeah, you did the works. That doesn't mean you knew me. That doesn't mean you're a true believer. So, okay, that's the balance here.

Jesus is not saying just because they did that means they're totally on our side. What it does say is they're not against us, which is what he says now in verse 40. If they're for us, they're not against us.

They're positive. Let it alone. Be good. In another place, he's going to say if they're not for us, they're against us.

Okay, there's another side. If they're just neutral, then they're not for us. They're actually against us. These guys, though, hey, they're definitely not against us because they're moving in a positive direction.

[42 : 09] Okay, with me? Okay, and then lastly, verse 41, he says, here's another reason, verse 41. For the one who is not, oh, 41, sorry. 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.

In other words, any act done in the name of Christ is supportive and good and is worthy. God is using. It's done in the name of Christ. Leave it alone.

Be tolerant. Be gracious. See, so how do we apply all this? What's the point? Well, one, it's a caution to us against a premature intolerance.

A quick judgment of others. In other words, it's calling us to be predisposed to grace. To not be critical.

We know there's ones out there that we will have to draw lines with. We know that. Don't be in a rush to draw the line. If you hear something good, thank God.

[43 : 22] Find out more. Be hopeful. Okay? The point is, be predisposed to grace. We're fighting the same common enemy. Rejoice that the captive is set free.

All we know is Christ is exalted. Leave it alone. So how do we overcome a judgmental spirit? That natural disposition in us to kind of be suspicious and judgmental and kind of keep people at our distance.

Especially kind of to be cliquish and, you know, protect our security and our group. How do we do that? Well, Paul in Philippians 1 shows us how.

Paul had enemies. Not just non-Christian enemies. He had Christian enemies. There were other Christian preachers that loved to scandalize Paul.

There were other Christians who, out of envy and have a rivalry with Paul, they would preach slanderously about Paul because he was in prison.

[44 : 35] So how does Paul respond to that? Look at this wonderful response of Philippians 1. He says, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me, in other words, his imprisonment, what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become well known throughout the whole imperial guard.

In other words, Paul's in prison and there's the imperial Roman guard around him. Guess what? Captive audience. Okay? So Paul's in prison. It doesn't mean he stops preaching.

Okay? Poor guards. They've got to sit there. You take Paul. He's trying to convert me. So throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest of it, my imprisonment is for Christ.

And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. That's a good thing. See, in other words, my imprisonment has helped advance the gospel.

It's not a bad thing. God's using it. Then he says, some, some, some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill.

[45 : 45] The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am here for the defense of the gospel. But the former, those other guys, they proclaim Christ out of rivalry against me.

Not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. So what's Paul's response? What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed.

And in that I rejoice. Yes, I will rejoice. Whoa. Bottom line, Christ is preached. Yeah, but their motives are bad.

Paul says, don't care. Christ is preached. Jesus will deal with their motives. Christ is preached. That's what matters.

Yeah, but it's hurting you, Paul. They're slandering you. I'm already in prison. What are they going to do? What matters most?

[46 : 51] Christ proclaimed gospel advances. Motives are secondary. And God still uses those with bad motives. The motives of others are not our first concern.

Now, if they're in our flock, those are things that we want to help each other with. But in terms of this kind of thing, that's Christ's concern, not mine. If Christ is preached and honored, I'll rejoice.

Even if others are hurting me out of it. Okay, so let's apply this, if we haven't already. What difference does all this make? How do we apply it? Well, one, Christian, are you fighting against your own natural tendency of a competitive spirit?

Do you fight it? Do you recognize it? Do you see it? That desire for recognition, the desire for esteem, can come in all kinds of subtle ways.

It doesn't mean you're pushing and shoving, trying to be first. It can mean something else. You just want to be seen. You just want to get some credit. You just want to be honored. Those are natural things.

[47 : 56] How do you fight that? Well, let me ask you, are you daily confessing and seeking the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome this desire for self-promotion? Secondly, are you fighting against your own natural tendency of a judgmental spirit?

Do you struggle with that? We all struggle with it. But we can go into seasons of really struggling with it, can't we? We can be hurt. We can be discouraged. And that's our lash pack.

That's our kind of defense reaction. Are you fighting it? Are you learning to be tolerant and gracious? And beloved, it is a process, not an instant change.

Look at John. Are you becoming more jealous for Jesus and less jealous for yourself? Jesus has called his followers not just to a different way.

He's called us to a radically counter-cultural way. The way of the cross, which denies ourself, takes up our own cross, follows him.

[49 : 09] Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that through this text you look at us and you expose us.

We see ourselves in John. We see ourselves in the 12 disciples. We know, Father, our own natural tendencies, which are selfish and not serving.

And so, Father, help us. Help us recognize it. Help us confess it. Help us fight. And then, Father, help us to see the progress as you, by your spirit, work in our hearts and our minds.

To daily surrender ourselves to you. To be a servant of all and therefore a servant of you. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.