



ENCOUNTER

Toward Childhood
Shane Philip
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Discussion Notes
The Crossing Church
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OPENING

We are making a transition on our journey through the Gospel of Mark. While the first half of Mark centers Identity - Who Jesus Is, the second half is about His Purpose. Jesus' ultimate purpose is to give His life on the cross. We are getting up close and personal with the life of Christ on this path that has the potential to change our lives. Remember, the closer we get to Him, the more our lives will change.

SCRIPTURE¹

Mark 9:30-37 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Matthew 18:3-4 And he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Mark 10:13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

OBSERVATION

Jesus introduces the upside down kingdom! "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." (Matthew 20:16) "The greatest among you will be the servant of all." (Matthew 23:11) "Humble yourselves before God and He will exalt you." (James 4:10) "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:13)

Question: Jesus is redefining greatness! Are you great in Jesus' eyes? Why/why not?

Question: How can you leverage your authority for the sake of those under your authority?

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise noted.



APPLICATION

James' and John's mother asked Jesus to place her sons on His right and left hands in heaven (Matthew 20:20). She wanted them to have places of honor and be highly recognized among the saints. Jesus asked her if they were prepared to drink from His cup in order gain such an honor. She didn't understand that Jesus' purpose in coming to us was not to gain honor, but to serve. That takes humility and a childlike approach to others with all of the marvelous qualities that entails.

Question: How do you demonstrate those qualities? How can they be nurtured in you?

Question: What is it about humility and childlikeness? Why doesn't God value independence and intellect and power?

God values children because they are fully dependent on others. They don't produce anything or contribute to society. They trust. On the other hand, we, at times, have self-centered faith. We are me-focused because our faith is based upon our current circumstances. How are our finances; how is our health; what about our relationships? If all is going well, then our faith is strong. But children approach life with abandon. They demonstrate wonder and emotion, they play, dance, hug, kiss, express joy and love Christmas! They are passionate about their lives. Wouldn't you like to have a childlike faith – full of awe and wonder?

Question: How passionate are you about your Christian faith? How is it demonstrated through your daily life?

"We are in a war between dullness and astonishment. The most critical issue facing Christians...today is dullness. We have lost our astonishment. The Good News is no longer good news it is okay news. Christianity is no longer life changing, it is life enhancing. Jesus doesn't change people into wild-eyed radicals anymore, He changes them into nice people."²

Question: Are you pursuing this childlike faith? Where do you see the pride and arrogance and judgmentalism in you? How can you begin to exchange those things for humility tomorrow?

When you follow Jesus you will see Him serving others: working miracles, washing feet, feeding thousands, offering forgiveness, salvation and healing. He isn't defeating the Romans. He is peaceful and kind and loving all people. It is this example He wants us to model as we serve Him and others.

Question: If you determined to become passionate about Jesus again, what would you do tomorrow to make that happen?

Maybe we just need to start asking the question, "How can I serve you?" of everyone around us. Have you been asking this question of your spouse, children, parents, siblings, employees, friends, and people we don't particularly like?

Question: How would asking them what you can do to help them change your relationships?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, give us the heart of a child. You are the mighty God Who teaches us that greatness isn't measured by power and riches, but by the inner beauty of humility and love for others. You sent your Son to show us what that looks like and to provide a way back to You through His sacrifice. We thank You that Jesus was willing to suffer unimaginable pain to make this possible. And we dedicate ourselves anew to serving others in Jesus' name. Amen.

² [Dangerous Wonder](#) by Mike Yaconelli