

The Lord's Message: Who Is the Greatest?

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Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Mark 9:33-37

Can you name the Champion Heavy Weight Boxer that said, "I am the Greatest?" Muhammad Ali. If we are honest, we have to fight against pride. Pride is something that is part of our sinful nature. We have this inert to believe that we are the best. Confidence is one thing, but pride is on a different level. Pride assumes that only we can achieve some goal that no one else can achieve. It rears its ugliest head quite often. The Bible warns against pride in **Proverbs 16:18-20**. Even the disciples were not immune from pride. We should be careful not to be pride-filled.

Let us pray.

Chapter 9 in the Book of Mark is about who has the Power. The chapter starts off with the Transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up to a mountain. Jesus is transfigured, "His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. Then Elijah, the prophet of God who defeated 450 prophets of Baal, and Moses, the receiver of God's law and the one who led the Israelites out of Egypt and through the desert, appear. A cloud appears and God speaks out of the cloud, "This is My Son, whom I love, Listen to Him!" The cloud, Elijah and Moses all disappear. Jesus turns back into His earthly body and suppresses His glory. The disciples cannot believe what they have seen. Jesus tells them to not tell anybody about what they have witnessed.

Next in the chapter, we come to a boy that is possessed with an evil spirit. The disciples remember the power that they had earlier on to drive out demons and heal many people, we studied this back a couple weeks ago in **Chapter 6: 12-13**. They tried to drive out this evil spirit in their own power and failed. The boy's father comes to Jesus and ask, "If you can do anything, take pity on us, and help us. Jesus responds with, "If you can?" "Everything is possible for him who believes." At which the father responds, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" Jesus commands the demons the come out and never enter him again. The demon shrieked and the boy's body convulses violently, and the demon comes out. The boy is healed at Jesus' command.

The disciples are wondering why they were not able to heal the boy. Jesus responds, "This kind can come out only by prayer." The disciples forgot that it is not by their power that they were able to heal and drive out demons, but in God's power. We should be very careful not to be prideful, but to know that it is in God's power that we are able to accomplish what God wants. I humble pray every day, because I do not have the power, but God does. If I ever get prideful, God has every right to knock me down to my knees. I want God to knock me down to my knees.

This situation must have saddened Jesus greatly. The reason that I say this is because Jesus knows that He is facing the cross. He repeats again to the disciples in verses 30-32.

They have completed the journey and now are back in Capernaum, Jesus' ministry base. Jesus must have been very upset with them. They are not grasping the ministry from His perspective but are still focusing on earthly gain. He says to them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" Even though Jesus knew what they were arguing about, **Luke 5:22**. This maybe shocking to you, but God knows our every thought. That is why Paul says in **2 Corinthians 10:5**, that we need to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ. In verse 34, Jesus knows what they were thinking. Their pride is getting in the way of ministry. Nothing could be more contrary to the two great laws of the Kingdom of God which are humility and love. The disciples know this because they are ashamed to answer Jesus' question. We know when we have sinned. We feel shame, which is a good thing for believers in Jesus. This shame humbles us to repent of our sin and seek God's forgiveness. We know that only God can forgive us.

Jesus continues confronting them with their sin of pride in verse 35. The first will be the very last and be a servant of all. If you want to follow Jesus it is not because of receiving some power to wield over others. I remember the poem by Carol Wimmer *When I say I am a Christian*.

Jesus does not tell them this poem, because it was only written in 1988, instead He gives them a demonstration. He takes a small child and places this child in the center of their circle. Children are a precious gift from God. In **Psalms 127:3-5**, children are a blessing from God. In **Jeremiah 1:4-5**, we are told that they are a creation of God. Jesus says in **Matthew 18:10**, God watches over children with His angels. So, children should not be abused or destroyed, but loved, nurtured, and cared for.

Jesus tells the disciples to accept this child because the child is of the lowest social status and is completely without power. During Jesus' time, the servants had more authority than the child. The child had no power and was completely vulnerable. That is why we need to protect our children from others that would want to do them harm.

In verse 37, Jesus is telling the disciples not to think about themselves and their prestige, but to think of the most vulnerable. If we are filled with pride and are striving to be the greatest, then we will not see the needs of others.

We live in a culture that is filled with pride. It is all about me. Reverend Robert Holmes says that "Pride is perhaps the one thing above all things that we have no right to have because we did not create ourselves. Pride by its very nature set itself up in competition with God who made us. It supplants who God is and what He has done to redeem us on Christ's cross and replaces it with a me-first mentality."

Who is the greatest? Jesus. We all need to humble ourselves at the foot of the cross. That, my friends, is how we grow together in Faith. Amen.

When I Say, "I am a Christian."
By Carol Wimmer

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I'm not shouting, "I've been saved!"
I'm whispering, "I get lost sometimes
That's why I chose this way."

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I don't speak with human pride
I'm confessing that I stumble –
needing God to be my guide.

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I'm not trying to be strong
I'm professing that I'm weak
and pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I'm not bragging of success
I'm admitting that I've failed
and cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I don't think I know it all
I submit to my confusion
asking humbly to be taught.

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I'm not claiming to be perfect
My flaws are far too visible
but God believes I'm worth it.

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I still feel the sting of pain
I have my share of heartache
which is why I seek God's name.

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I do not wish to judge
I have no authority
I only know I'm loved.

