



Sermon Series: Mark: Living Everyday With Jesus

Sermon Title: For Us, Not Against Us

Date: 2/1/2026

Mark 9:38–41 confronts a common problem: we can mistake loyalty to our circle for loyalty to Jesus. John reports that the disciples saw someone casting out demons in Jesus' name and tried to stop him because "he was not following us" (Mark 9:38). The man was not described as opposing Jesus. He was acting in Jesus' name, which points to relying on Jesus' authority. The disciples' concern centered on belonging: he wasn't part of their group.

Jesus corrects them immediately: "**Do not stop him**" (Mark 9:39). He explains that someone who does a mighty work in His name will not soon afterward speak evil of Him (Mark 9:39). Jesus points to a spiritual reality: true ministry in Jesus' name flows from a real work of God, not mere association. This aligns with the principle in **1 Corinthians 12:3**: genuine confession of Jesus as Lord is tied to the Holy Spirit's work.

Jesus then gives the controlling principle: "For the one who is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40). That statement raises a question because Jesus also says, "Whoever is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). The sermon's point is that there is no contradiction because the contexts are different. In Matthew 12:30, Jesus confronts people opposing Him in heart and mind. In Mark 9:40, Jesus confronts His disciples' temptation to exclude someone who is not opposing Jesus, and may genuinely belong to Him.

Jesus also moves from "mighty work" to "small kindness." He teaches that even giving a cup of water "because you belong to Christ" matters and will be rewarded (Mark 9:41). The issue is motive and identity: do they belong to Christ, and are they acting because of that allegiance? The passage teaches that kingdom work is not just about dramatic moments; it also includes ordinary faithfulness offered for Jesus' sake.

Big Idea: Treat other people with grace and refuse to let your assumptions divide you.

From the text come two warnings.

Warning #1: Don't confuse loyalty to “the group” with faith in Jesus.

The disciples tried to stop the man because he was not part of their regular crowd. Jesus pushes them to measure by His name, not their circle. This applies broadly: division often grows when group priorities rise above the truth and mission of Jesus.

Warning #2: Jealousy: If someone strengthens a person’s faith in Jesus, celebrate; don’t criticize.

The sermon exposes how exclusivity and jealousy can pose as discernment. James 3:14–16 warns that jealousy and selfish ambition lead to disorder and destructive outcomes. The danger in Mark 9:38–41 is not mainly false teaching from outsiders, but pride within us.

The sermon then gives practical ways to live the Big Idea.

1. **Celebrate the Lord’s work wherever it appears (Philippians 1:18).**
2. **Practice Emotional Generosity by choosing love and seeking understanding instead of suspicion (John 13:35).**
3. **Cultivate Humility in your life by valuing small acts done for Christ (Mark 9:41; Matthew 25:40).**
4. **Expand Your Definition of “Us.”** The disciples said, “not following us” (Mark 9:38). Jesus said, “not against us” (Mark 9:40). The sermon ties this to welcome: “Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you” (Romans 15:7).

The conclusion centers the mission on Jesus, not platforms or tribes. Jesus welcomes sinners, outsiders, and doubters, and calls His people to the same posture. The sermon also notes that Jesus’ authority extends to His followers (Mark 16:17), but warns against operating in pride rather than dependence. The closing charge is to resist assumption and seek clarity about motives, because God may be working in places we do not expect.

Discussion Questions:

1. In Mark 9:38, why were the disciples so bothered that the man was casting out demons “in Jesus’ name” but not “following us”? What does that reveal about their hearts?
2. How does Jesus’ statement in Mark 9:40 challenge the way we often decide who is “for us” and who is “against us”?
3. What dangers do you see today in confusing loyalty to a group, church, or personality with genuine faith in Jesus? (See Mark 9:39–40; 1 Corinthians 12:3)
4. Why do you think Jesus connects mighty works and small acts like giving a cup of water in Mark 9:41? What does that teach us about how God measures faithfulness?
5. Where are you most tempted to make assumptions about other believers? What would it look like, in practical terms, to treat others with grace and refuse to let assumptions divide you?