

THE SCROLLS

Meeting The Messiah | Mark 9:42-50

Life Lesson

Following Jesus is costly. It calls us to love others intentionally and radically, to pursue personal holiness, and to live a life of unconditional sacrifice. We are to live in a way that guides others away from sin and toward righteousness, not out of fear of judgment, but out of a desire to reflect the glory of Christ.

Mt. Zion's Mission

*Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to **MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY** disciples of Jesus Christ.*

Turning A Blind Eye

“Be at peace with one another” (v. 50). This is how Mark 9 ends. Yet, as we have seen, this chapter is full of anything but peace. After the Transfiguration, Jesus reveals to His disciples that “the Son of Man must suffer many things and be treated with contempt” (v. 12). The disciples argue over how to cast out a demon (vs. 14-18). Again, in (vs. 30-32), Jesus reveals the suffering and death that He will endure. Even after this revelation of His impending suffering and death, His disciples argue over who will be first among them (vs. 33-37). In (vs. 38-41), the disciples show their prideful and competitive nature by wanting to forbid others from doing great things for the Kingdom of God. So, this chapter has been anything but “peace.” Yet, as only Christ can do, from the midst of chaos, argument, suffering, and death, He delivers the hope of peace.

However, this peace comes with a price. It is costly. It demands complete devotion and discipleship; in other words, a radical pursuit of Christ. In our text, Jesus issues a warning and challenge to His disciples and all followers to live fully for His glory. He uses passionate, radical, and even intimidating language to show His demand for full and undivided discipleship. Outside of the Gospel, His mercy and grace, these words might seem like the words of a vengeful and restrictive God. But, wrapped in grace and mercy and rooted in the Gospel, we see these radical words and demanding requirements as a small price to pay for expressing our total devotion to Christ. Such dedication is demonstrated through our intentional love for others, a radical pursuit of personal holiness, and unconditional sacrifice in service.

V. 42

In this verse, Jesus calls us to show intentional love for others, especially for the “little ones who believe in me.” Who are these little ones? Look back to (Mark 9:33-37) and (Mark 10:15): those who receive the Kingdom of God must do so with childlike faith. Here, Jesus continues to refer to his followers as children or “little ones.” What does intentional love for others look like? It involves making a conscious effort to live in such a way that you not only intentionally

Mt. Zion's Motives

1. Gospel Transformation

We believe real change begins with Jesus Christ.
(2 Corinthians 5:17, CSB)

2. Spiritual Development

We believe that spiritual growth is essential to our journey with Jesus Christ.
(1 Timothy 4:15, CSB)

3. Authentic Relationships

We believe we are stronger together and called to walk in love and accountability.
(Galatians 6:2, CSB)

4. Community Involvement

We believe our faith should be visible through love and service.
(Matthew 5:16, CSB)

5. Kingdom Partnership

We believe in advancing the Gospel together—locally and globally.
(Acts 1:8, CSB)

share the Gospel, but also avoid leading others into sin, whether intentionally or not. The Greek word for “fall away” is “skandalizomai,” which conveys the idea of scandal—or being caught in sin. Jesus warns us not to lead others into sin. This warning has serious consequences: “it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.” (Matthew 18:6) This passage parallels the previous verse, and in (Matt. 18:7), Matthew adds a warning: “Woe to the world because of offenses. For offenses will inevitably come, but woe to that person by whom the offense comes.” While the world will attempt to lead Christians into sin and judgment will come to the world for this, Jesus’s words are even more severe when He speaks about causing fellow believers to stumble. He says it would be “better” for someone to have a heavy millstone tied around their neck and be cast into the sea than to lead others into sin. This is a severe warning.

But why does Jesus use such intense language? What is the result? Are we meant to live cautiously, walking on eggshells? No, Jesus is calling us to intentional love for others. He calls us to live in such a way that we are never a deliberate or unintentional source of sin and temptation for others. This could range from a “major” sin, like luring others with false theology and a false Gospel, to a “minor” one, like enticing gossip with “words like choice food that goes down to one’s innermost being” (Prov. 18:8). Regardless, we must live with intentional love for others—not stirring sin within them, but “to provoke love and good works” (Heb. 10:24). Our goal, as followers of Christ, is to lead others toward righteousness, not sin.

Vs. 43-48

Next, Jesus calls us to a radical pursuit of personal holiness. We cannot lead others to righteousness if we neglect our own personal holiness. If your heart is sinful, you will lead others to sin, but if your heart is seeking purity and holiness, you will help others seek the same.

However, as highlighted through the use of hyperbole and exaggeration, Jesus urges us to move beyond a lazy pursuit of holiness to a radical and passionate quest for it. His language is strong and direct, leaving no space for biased interpretation. Again, Jesus employs hyperbole; He is not advocating self-harm, but the message is clear. If you truly desire to seek personal holiness, you must radically eliminate sin and temptation from your life. In our culture, even within the Church, we are taught to come as close to the edge of the cliff as possible without falling off. The problem is that we often don't realize how far we've gone until we actually fall.

In fact, notice the intentionality of Jesus’ words: hands, feet, eyes. Jesus warns us about what we hold, where we go, and what we see.

Mt. Zion's Map

UP - IN - OUT



Mt. Zion's Marks

1. MAKING Disciples

- Am I interceding for those in my circle of influence?
- Am I intentionally investing in them?
- Am I inviting them to know Jesus Christ?

2. MATURING in Faith

- Am I discovering the fruit of the Spirit through prayer and the Word?
- Am I seeing the fruit of the Spirit developed in my life?
- Am I displaying the fruit of the Spirit in my daily walk?

3. MULTIPLYING Disciples

- Am I growing as a learner of Jesus Christ?
- Am I encouraging others in their walk?
- Am I helping teach and disciple others?

Does this sound familiar? John reminds us in (1 John 2:16): “For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world.” Everything in the world that causes us to sin is found in the lust of the flesh (feet—where we go), the lust of the eyes (eyes—what we look at), and the pride of life (hands—what we hold). In fact, this is not a new struggle. These three areas of attack on personal holiness have been around as long as Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve walked toward the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (lust of the flesh—feet—where we go), saw that the fruit was good to eat (lust of the eyes—eyes—what we see), and they took and ate (pride of life—hands—what we hold). Even James refers to this in (James 1:14): “But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire.”

Therefore, our only choice is to pursue personal holiness passionately, not just to avoid sin but to become more like Christ. This is our sanctification. Look at (1 Peter 1:14-16): “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance. But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” Also, in (Heb. 12:14), we read “Pursue... holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.”

In (vs. 41-48), Jesus provides a vivid picture of eternal judgment. In a world focused on lighter sentences, we need to remember the fiery judgment awaiting those who reject Jesus. Hell is real, and it surpasses any nightmares we can imagine. Jesus describes Hell as “unquenchable fire” and “where their worm never dies.” It is a literal place of ongoing pain and torment for those who reject the Gospel. Using hyperbole again, Jesus says, “Is it not better to lose a hand or a foot or even an eye, walking this earth maimed and scarred than to spend eternity in constant torment, pain, experiencing God’s full wrath on sin? In other words, no sin is worth risking an eternity in Hell! Yet, neither is anything worth more than knowing Christ!”

Vs. 49

As if the previous verses weren't complicated enough, we now encounter an enigma. In (v. 49), Jesus states, “For everyone will be salted with fire.” Most commentators agree that Jesus is referencing the use of salt in temple sacrifices. Such references to salt being offered and used in burnt offerings and sacrifices are seen in (Ezra 6:9) and (Ezekiel 43:23-24). The most explicit reference is likely in (Lev. 2:13): “You are to season each of your grain offerings with salt; you must not omit from your grain offering the salt of the covenant with your God. You are to present salt with each of your offerings.”

Personal Reflection

1. Am I living in a way that encourages others toward Christ? Are there any attitudes, habits, or words in my life that might inadvertently lead others into sin?

2. What “hands, feet, or eyes” (things I hold, places I go, or things I look at) might I need to surrender or completely change to pursue true personal holiness?

3. Which area of my life am I still holding back from Christ instead of offering it as an unconditional sacrifice to Him?

4. Do I follow Christ mainly because of fear of judgment or because of a sincere desire to please Him and reflect His glory?

5. In my relationships with others, am I bringing “salt” that seasons and strengthens faith, or do I bring conflict, negativity, or compromise that disrupts peace?

So, why did Jesus mention this? He emphasizes the need for unconditional sacrifice. It reinforces what He has already commanded in (Mark 8:34): “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Following Jesus requires us to sacrifice everything for His greater glory... unconditionally. As Paul states in (Rom. 12:1): “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.” Isn't this our ultimate goal?

V. 50

Finally, what motivates us to love others intentionally, pursue personal holiness passionately, and live a life of unconditional sacrifice? After reading (vs. 43-48), you might think that our motivation is to escape eternal judgment in Hell. However, escaping hell or being motivated by it can never compare to the motivation of pleasing Christ! How do we please Christ? Paul writes, “you have received instruction from us on how you should live and please God—as you are doing—do this even more . . . For this is God’s will, your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:1-3).

This is what Jesus refers to in (v. 50). Jesus explains that salt is only valuable if it is pure, unmixed, and uncorrupted. We are to have pure devotion to Christ. We should have undiluted love for others. We are to pursue untainted holiness. Then Jesus goes even further and says, “Have salt among yourselves.” In other words, live in a way that positively influences others with your actions. Let your salt be contagious. If we are truly salt of the earth and salt for each other, then we can “be at peace with one another” (v. 50). This is our motivation: to be salt, to serve the kingdom of God, to live a life that reflects the goodness and glory of Christ.

Commentaries Used:

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