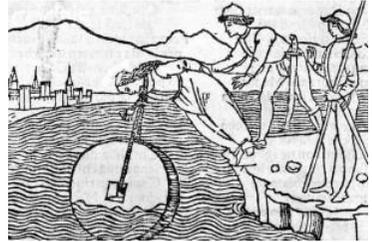


What does Jesus teach about discipleship by the using these graphic images?

Why is cutting off or a hand or a foot or plucking out an eye not radical enough a way to deal with sin?



NB *Gehenna* (translated “hell”) derives from the valley of Ben Hinnom outside Jerusalem, where idolaters had once offered child sacrifices. It was later used as a garbage dump, and the burning waste became a vivid image for the place of final punishment. ARNOLD

(d). Verse 49. is somewhat of a mixed metaphor, but fire has been used as an image in vv.42-48. Taking a cue from there, what do you think it means to be “salted with fire”?

(e). If salt is connected with fire as an image of judgement, what do you think having salt in yourself might mean?

How would that contribute to peace?

NB In the OT the Temple sacrifices had to be accompanied by salt (Lev. 2:13; Ezek. 43:24; cf. Ex. 30:35). The salt-sacrifice metaphor is appropriate to a situation of suffering and trial in which the principle of sacrifice cultivated with respect to the individual members of the body is now severely tested. The disciples must be seasoned with salt, like the sacrifice. This will take place through fiery trials (cf. 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12), through which God will purge away everything contrary to his will.

Understood in this way, Jesus’ word is a challenging pronouncement on suffering which shed light on the experience of the Church in Nero’s Rome. Its preservation in “the teaching manual” of a community facing persecution is fully intelligible. Wm LANE.

NB **Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other (9:50).**

These sayings are parallel. Having salt “among yourselves” means to share salt or eat together which is to be done in a spirit of peace.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

SESSION 11: CHAPTER 9: 14-50 "BEING A DISCIPLE"



Read Mark 9: 14-29

1. (a). Jesus descends the mountain and returns to his other disciples only to find them in hot debate with the teachers of the law over their failure to exorcise a young boy robbed of speech (vv.14-18).

Why do you think this major incident follows the Transfiguration?

Why do you suppose Jesus appears so harsh in v19?



(b). How is the father's request in v.22 similar to and yet different from the leper's request in 1:40?

(c). What are the key elements in the conversation between Jesus and the father?

(d). What was the reason for the disciples' failure?
Could they have done any better?
What might we learn from their example ?

(e) How do the words in v.24 echo your own feelings at times?
What might you learn from this passage to help you get through the difficult times?

NB

In the ancient world, magicians sought to hit the right combination to invoke the power to achieve the desired goals. They weaved esoteric spells using special words, performed unusual actions, and utilized special instruments. Success was all a matter of technique that would force the power to do the bidding of the sorcerer. The disciples' question about what they did wrong verges on this attitude. ARNOLD

The disciples have turned a corner in their pilgrimage; now it's getting harder. People today often suppose that the early years of a person's Christian pilgrimage are the difficult ones, and that as you go on in the Christian life it gets more straightforward. The opposite is frequently the case. Precisely when you learn to walk beside Jesus, you are given harder tasks, which will demand more courage, more spiritual energy. Did we suppose following Jesus was like a summer holiday?

The incident seems to have made Jesus, too, reflect on just how bad things now are. His response to the problem (echoing 8:12) is to comment sorrowfully on 'this faithless generation', and to wonder aloud how much longer he will be with them.

Something in the father's statement of the problem, in the crowd's prurient but faithless interest, and in the disciples' inability to deal with it all, says to him that whatever is going on it isn't faith. That sad reflection confirms him in his belief, announced already at Caesarea Philippi, that he must now himself go the way of sorrow, the way of the cross, the path of his redeeming vocation. N T WRIGHT

Read Mark 9: 30-32

2. (a). Why was Jesus "avoiding publicity" in this section of his ministry?
- (b). What details in the account of the boy's healing parallel those in Jesus' prediction of his coming suffering and victory ?
- (c). Why were the disciples afraid to ask Jesus what he was talking about?



Why don't the disciples want to understand the plain meaning of what Jesus is telling them?

Read Mark 9: 33 - 37.

- 3.(a). What is Jesus trying to get across to the disciples in this section?



- (b). Thinking back through all the Gospel of Mark up to this point, how have we seen this principle of the "first and last" in action?
- (c). Why is a child so appropriate an illustration for Jesus' point?
- (d). What do you think Jesus means by "receive" in v. 37?
- (e). Is it a natural desire to want to be "first"?

How should we deal with it?

NB To squelch the disciples' hankering for worldly greatness, Jesus uses a child as an illustration of kingdom greatness. No romanticized notion of children existed in the first century. Children had no power, status, or rights. They were not considered full persons and were regarded as somewhat akin to property. They were dependent, vulnerable, unlearned, and entirely subject to the authority of the father. The rabbis classified children with the deaf, the dumb, the weak-minded, and slaves. Nowhere else in this period do we find children appealed to as examples to be imitated. To become as a child basically means to recognize one's insignificance. What evokes repentance is the realization that one is as small and slight as a child before God.

ARNOLD

Read Mark 9: 38 - 41.

- 4.(a). What do you think motivated John's remarks in v.38?
- (b). What points do you see Jesus making in his reply to John?
- (c). How do you understand v.40? Can that be literally true?
- (d). What individuals or groups are we tempted "to silence" because they are not one of us?
Does this mean we shouldn't oppose anyone or does Jesus give limits?
- (e). What attitudes and actions does this passage suggest should govern our relationships with rival individuals or groups who act in Jesus' name?
- (f). Can you detect echoes on the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt 25) here in this section?
Is Jesus suggesting that what we do will influence what we say and believe?

Read Mark 9: 42 - 50.

- 5.(a). What further rebuke does Jesus give to John here?
- (b). How are Jesus' attitudes about greatness and personal worth radically different from the attitudes we often adopt in society?
- (c). Christian history has known some individuals to take Jesus' words in vv43-47 literally. But that is surely not what He meant as self-mutilation was prohibited in Judaism.