

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Sermon title: Be At Peace – Part 1, Mark 9:33-41

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SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:33-41³³ *They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?”*³⁴ *But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

³⁵ *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”*

³⁶ *He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them,*³⁷ *“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.”*

³⁸ *“Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”*

³⁹ *“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me,*⁴⁰ *for whoever is not against us is for us.*⁴¹ *Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.*

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever had to break up an argument? Or, perhaps even a physical fight? If you had a family and raised kids, I guarantee you did. Occasionally, Susan and I had to stop an argument among the kids. Of course, it was never anyone’s fault because the kids blamed each other. What about in the household of faith—the Church? Surely Christians would never get caught up in disagreements or arguments? Well, we know better than that, don’t we? I heard of a church where they ran the pastor off because he didn’t go to the post office often enough! Or, what about the church that splits because one group doesn’t like the new praise and worship music? Or, the family who refuses to attend the only church in town because the pastor’s wife teaches a class of women and men? Or, the group that splinters off because they don’t like the preacher using the NIV instead of the King James Version of the Bible?

Even Jesus had his challenges with his own group. Mark 9:33-50 is a section of scripture found between Jesus' second and third prediction of his death. These verses deal with how his disciples are to live after he is gone. We are going to take verses 33-41 today, and then 42-50 next week, but the overall theme of this passage is found in verse 50: *Be at peace with one other.*

I have four points to my message today, centering around the topic, "Who is the greatest?"

1. Be the servant of all.
2. Jesus gave an illustration about children.
3. John references those unlike us.
4. Are we truly servants?

Jesus and his disciples had returned to Capernaum, a fishing village on the Sea of Galilee, which was Jesus' home base. Evidently, the disciples had been arguing amongst themselves as they journeyed along. Jesus wanted to know what they had been discussing, but they were apparently embarrassed to tell him. They knew better.

Jesus had been teaching them about the Kingdom of God, and they were expecting they would have a high position in that kingdom, based on their devotion and service to him now. And, actually that was correct.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 19:28 Jesus says: *"Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"*.

EXPLANATION: But, they wanted to know who would have the highest place? Whose throne would be the best? Who would have the honor of sitting next to Jesus? Who would be the farthest away?

In verse 35, Jesus sits down ... because sitting was the posture of teachers in that day ... and began to teach them. He had something very important he wanted to share with them about the true path to greatness, which is very different path from what the world thinks.

First, BE THE SERVANT OF ALL.

Jesus repeated this teaching at different times in his ministry:

- Matthew 23:11 – ¹¹*The greatest among you will be your servant.*
- Mark 10:43-44 – ⁴³*Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,* ⁴⁴*and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.*
- Luke 22:26 – ²⁶*...Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.*

God's economy seems backwards in the world—give and you'll receive; pray for your enemies; turn the other cheek; give a blessing instead of an insult. So, to get ahead:

In the World

Put yourself forward.

Claw your way to the top.

Push others down.

Be self-focused.

In the Kingdom

Put yourself last.

Lower yourself.

Pull others up.

Be others-focused.

Being great in the world's eyes means being served by others, but in the kingdom, it means serving others. God will raise up those who are to be honored.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was an associate pastor, I attended a church banquet once which had a head table for the staff. I was never comfortable with this special recognition. When I came here, one of the first things I did was remove the 24/7 pastor's parking sign. If I ever come by here at 3 AM, I am quite certain I won't have trouble finding a parking place. Susan and I really appreciate your kindness to

us. We really appreciate the place of honor you make for us, but we don't consider ourselves any better than anyone else. You'll not see Susan or me on any billboards around Nashville.

Second, JESUS GAVE US AN ILLUSTRATION ABOUT CHILDREN.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:36-37 ³⁶*He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them,* ³⁷ *“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.”*

EXPLANATION: Children were not held in the same high regard in Biblical times as they are today. They were often seen more as slaves until they grew up. They had no power or social status. They were not put on a pedestal. They were on the bottom—lowly and last. This thought really carried over until child labor laws spread around the developed world. Just a thought, but we may have gone too far the other way. Children are many times allowed to interrupt adult conversations, rule the household, and so on...

Jesus embraced the child—a simple act of love, attention, and affection. Jesus was saying by example **greatness comes from accepting the lowest social status in order to serve others**, and in this case, a child. You lower yourself below someone so you can love and minister to their needs. Instead of requiring the “lowly ones” to focus on you and lift you up, you should focus on them and lift them up by serving them.

APPLICATION: I'm thinking of those forgotten ones in nursing homes, the homeless, the addicts.

Are we willing to “get dirty” in order to serve the lowly?

If we see a lowly person, our first thought might be, “I won't shake hands or have any contact...”

The deeper truth here is, however, when we serve the down-and-out, people who can't help us out in return, we are serving Jesus.

Third, JOHN REFERENCED THOSE UNLIKE US.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:38-41 ³⁸ “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” ³⁹ “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

EXPLANATION: We could spend much time here, but the bottom line is: We may have major differences with another person, another denomination, another persuasion, but if they are preaching Jesus and lifting him up, they are our brothers and sisters.

- This does not mean aligning with false gods and saying their god is the same as ours—Allah and Jehovah God are *not* the same god.
- There are not *many* ways to Jehovah God—Jesus is the *only* way.
- People may have different opinions on the second coming, or church government, or methods of baptism, and I could go on with a long list.

But, if a person loves Jesus and is following him and giving a cup of cold water in his name, chill out and extend love and acceptance!

Fourth, ARE WE TRULY SERVANTS?

How about in the household of faith—this household of faith, Tusculum Hills Baptist Church? Do we participate in subtle ways of seeking to put ourselves above others?

ILLUSTRATION: Chuck Swindoll gives a simple but piercing example of how he realized he was trying to put himself forward. He and his son were enjoying a father/son retreat. The afternoon’s activity was to be canoeing, and they were to meet the other father/son teams at the dock to get their canoes. As they approached the dock, Chuck spotted what he surmised to be the best canoe in the line-up, and he began inching his son along the line of participants to be first in line to get a

particular canoe. The Holy Spirit blew the whistle on him. *The first shall be last.* He sheepishly stepped back and allowed another team to have the best canoe.

APPLICATION: What about church members who want a certain role and manipulate, pressure, and politic for it? What about when a visitor comes to one of our services and sits in someone's regular pew?

The last shall be first.

CONCLUSION: Let's examine our motives in light of being a servant. The older I get, the more I realize how selfish I am. I want things organized, in order, comfortable, and clean. I want things the way I want them. Being a servant gets messy, and I don't like messes. It interrupts my schedule and inconveniences me.

I have to re-examine myself regularly regarding my motives. Am I taking up the cross and denying myself for the advancement of the kingdom? Do I put myself last in my family and consider it an honor to serve them?

Jesus' words: *The greatest among you will be your servant.*

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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