

Mark 9:30-37

As long as Christians are on this side of heaven they have to battle their sinful nature. Even though they have been forgiven and are children of God, they still have this sinful nature that clings to them. This old man or old Adam, as he has been called, wants to sin and argues with the will of God. For instance it says, "If you are saved by faith in Jesus, without works, then you can be lazy and neglect serving God and your neighbor. Our sinful nature imagines that we can be do-nothing Christians. But the Bible says that God created us in Christ to do good works. Our Small Catechism reminds us that Christ redeemed us that we should be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

The Word of God that we are looking at today reminds us that *We are Saved to Serve*. First we see how Jesus served to save us and then that He saved us that we might serve.

The Lord's ministry was drawing to a close. He was on His way to Jerusalem for the last time so that He might complete His work. On His way He passed through the region of Galilee but He did not pause to speak to the crowds or do works of healing. Instead, St. Mark tells us, Jesus didn't want people to know where He and His disciples were because He was teaching them. This was their seminary time. After His ascension His believers would be called to carry the Good News of the Kingdom out into the world. The message they were to proclaim was not their own. It was to be God's announcement to people. So it was that they had to sit and learn from Jesus. It is still necessary for us to sit and learn from Jesus.

What Jesus had to tell His disciples stunned them. He said that He, the Son of Man was going up to be betrayed into the hands of men. The expression, "the Son of Man" is first found in the Book of Daniel. It emphasizes that Jesus, the Son of God, became man. He took to himself a human nature that He might save mankind. In his letter to the Philippians St. Paul states that Christ Jesus took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

Jesus said He would be betrayed. To be betrayed is to be handed over to one's enemies. A friend of Jesus would give Him to His enemies to be killed. Now we know who that traitor was. It was Judas who helped the leaders of the Jews to arrest The Lord. These leaders then handed Jesus over to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate to be crucified.

Brutal, spiteful, evil men would take Him, yet Jesus permitted this to happen because of His great love for sinners. They would kill Him. Can you imagine how impossible that sounded to the disciples? They had high hopes for Jesus. They imagined He would establish an earthly kingdom. They saw His glory. They saw His miracles. No, this couldn't be.

The Lord added that after dying, after His work was completed, He would rise again.

St. Mark says, "They did not understand what He meant and were afraid to ask Him about it. We can understand how they were shocked by this revelation. They were afraid to ask any questions.

Consider what the Lord had told the disciples. He was sacrificing Himself. In another place He said that He had not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many. He laid aside all glory to become a servant. Yes, a servant of

everybody. He became the most humble of servants for He permitted Himself to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, to be spit on, beaten, mocked and ridiculed and finally to be shamefully killed on a shameful cross. to help undeserving sinners.

Why did He do this? He did it that He might save us sinners. We have lived lives of shameful disobedience to God. Our rebellion against our kind and loving God earned his anger and punishment. We are the ones who deserved the shame and we are the ones who should have suffered and died but Jesus became a man. He took our place in the court of God's justice and He served and sacrificed Himself in our place. Because of His service in our behalf God has pardoned us and promised that whoever believes on Jesus as his Savior will have everlasting life. God sealed this truth for us by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus served to save us. Now we are free from guilt and free from death and hell. Through the work of Christ, God has made us heirs of heaven. How could we ever thank Him?

As they were passing through Galilee, Jesus and His followers came to Capernaum His home. He went into the house where He was staying and questioned His disciples. "What were you arguing about on the road?". The Lord knew they were having an animated discussion and He also knew what the arguing was about. He needed to correct them so He kept after them to tell Him what was on their mind. They were ashamed to answer because they had argued who among them was the greatest.

They should have been ashamed of themselves because they had surrendered to sinful pride and selfish ambition. One said, "I am the best disciple Jesus has. Another said, "No, I'm the greatest." Still another said, "I should be the boss."

We read, "Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be last and the servant of all." In our world people want to brag, "I'm the greatest ". They want to give the orders and not take them. In the Lord's kingdom that is turned up side down. Jesus showed the way. He became the servant of all people so that He might save them. As He said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many." Among His followers true greatness is shown not by being served but by serving.

There was an incident on the evening before Jesus' crucifixion when He put a towel around his waist, poured water into a basin and washed His disciples' feet. It was an act usually done by the lowliest servant. He said to His followers, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." He told them, "Love one another as I have loved you." While they remained on earth they were to love and serve one another.

In our text Jesus taught this lesson in this way. He took a little child and had him stand among them. Then taking the little one in His arms He said, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name welcomes Me." Little children are dear to Jesus. He gently takes them up in His arms and blesses them.

However, often among sinful men, children are despised.. Among the old Romans if a father didn't like the way a baby looked he could take it out and let it die of exposure. The pagan Apaches, if twins were born would cause one of them to die. In our enlightened country thousands of babies are killed each year by means of abortion. No a child doesn't mean much. What honor is there in changing a diaper or wiping a runny nose, tying a shoe or putting on a coat? Yet, Jesus says whoever serves a little child in His name serves Him and whoever serves Him serves the One Who sent Him.

Oh, there are people who build hospitals for children out of a natural instinct of mercy. Some do deeds of charity to earn glory for themselves or to earn God's favor. Though we appreciate these works, the Lord does not acknowledge such deeds. The works that please Him are those done in Jesus' name. That means deeds done in grateful response to Jesus great work of saving sinners.

Our purpose on earth is not to be served but to serve. We are to use our abilities, our talents, our station in life, and our possessions in humble service of others. We are to be of service not to only to people who can pay us back or to people we like but to the little children, the weak and the lowly. As Jesus served us so He is pleased when you and I become little Christs in the world washing the feet of others. No act of mercy and kindness is beneath us. True greatness in Christ's eyes- that which pleases Him is a life filled with good deeds borne of faith in Him. Amen.