

NCBC Youth Group  
February 16, 2020

PRIDE AND HUMILITY  
MARK 9:30-41

**Introduction**

With the cross less than a year away, Jesus shifts His focus away from public ministry to private ministry<sup>1</sup> with His disciples. In over two years of His public ministry, He taught crowds and performed many miracles before them. Instead of believing Him as the Christ the Son of the living God, the crowds largely remained in unbelief. Some even rejected Him.

Though Jesus performed many miracles and had compassion on the crowd, His primary goal was not to entertain or to be a social worker. He was not here to usher in the ultimate socialist welfare state. He demonstrated power and teaching that only God could do, but most of the people failed to acknowledge Him as God (Mark 8:28).

As Jesus prepares to depart and moves closer to the cross, He spent time teaching His disciples privately. They will need to learn crucial lessons. Last week, we studied Mark 9:14-29, where the disciples learned a lesson on faith. In that passage, Jesus came down the mountain, where He transfigured before Peter, James, and John. The remaining nine disciples who did not accompany Him tried to cast out a demon but failed.

Our text begins in verse 30, where we see Jesus and His disciples traveling from the place where the demon was cast out. They traveled through Galilee (9:30) to get to Capernaum (9:33). Along the way, the disciples argued with one another about who was the greatest. Once they reached Capernaum, Jesus taught them a lesson on humility.

**Concealed Truth**

Jesus begins the private instruction by teaching them once again that He will be delivered<sup>2</sup> into the hands of men, He will be killed, and He will rise three days later (9:31). Remember that they didn't quite understand that when He taught them before (8:31-33; 9:1-13). In their minds, the Messiah—the Savior—would establish an earthly kingdom and overthrow Roman rule. They never thought the Messiah would die at the hands of the men He came to save.

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<sup>1</sup> "He did not want anyone to know about it" (Mark 9:30)

<sup>2</sup> Judas would deliver Him to the Jewish ruling body, and they would deliver Him to Pilate. But, behind the people is God. Acts 2:23, "This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."

Nevertheless, that is the reality, and without it, there is no gospel. So, Jesus once again foretells His death and resurrection, and once again, verse 32 says the disciples “did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.” Matthew 17:23 adds that they were deeply grieved. Their sorrow is understandable. They had spent over two years with Jesus, they acknowledged Him as the Messiah and the Son of the living God, and now He is going to die. They couldn’t process the death of Messiah.

Look back at verse 31: Jesus told them that “He will rise three days later.” It seems like they didn’t understand His resurrection. Why is that? They witnessed Him raising the dead, so they knew about resurrection. Perhaps in their minds, they knew Jesus could raise the dead, but they wondered who would raise Jesus if He’s dead. Whatever the reason, they didn’t understand it, they were deeply grieved, and they were afraid to ask Him.

They were afraid to ask because they didn’t want to know more. This information about His death was devastating enough, they didn’t need more. Luke 9:45, however, gives us some very interesting insight into this. Luke 9:45 states, “It was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it.” Jesus concealed the truth from them—He hid it from them.<sup>3</sup> This is an act of mercy. If they knew the full details, they would be crushed. But this concealment is not permanent. They will one day look back and understand how all this fits together in the plan of redemption.

### **Who is the Greatest**

The journey must have taken some time because they were also arguing<sup>4</sup> about who was the greatest. Of course, Jesus knew what they were thinking (Luke 9:47), so He asked them in verse 33, “What were you discussing on the way?” They didn’t answer Him, probably due to embarrassment.

What a stark contrast we have here. Jesus just talked about the ultimate act of humiliation—His death—and they were consumed with self-exaltation. Jesus foretold His death, they were grieved, and all they could think of was themselves. Listen, culture tells us that we need more self-esteem or we need to work on our self-confidence. I don’t buy that at all. People are woefully self-consumed. All this talk of needing more self-esteem just fuels our pride.

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<sup>3</sup> We have the sovereignty of God playing out here again. God concealed the truth from them in an act of mercy, and they didn’t ask for more information. On the human level, it looks like they were the ones refusing to ask, but behind the curtain, it was God who mercifully concealed information from them, giving them only what they could handle.

<sup>4</sup> Mark uses the word “discussed” in verse 34, but Luke uses the word “argument” in Luke 9:46.

Now, humility is crucial in the Christian life for many reasons. First is that pride destroys any kind of unity that exists among believers. These were grown men arguing about who was the greatest. If you were to talk to people, even though they think they are the best or greatest, very few people would actually say that out loud. And we certainly don't have a lot of respect for people who always brag about themselves.

Only humble people can love and serve one another. Listen to 1 Corinthians 13, “[4] Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, [5] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked ... [7] bears all things ... endures all things.” Only the humble can truly love. Prideful people care only about themselves. We must be humble to remain unified to be effective ministers and witnesses for Christ. Philippians 1:27 says we are to stand “firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Let me ask you, who is the greatest? Of course, it's Jesus. Look at verse 35. Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Jesus was the greatest, yet He was last and the servant of all. Mark 10:45 tells us, “Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. This was an example of humility. We love and serve one another, and to do that, we need to be humble. Christ was the greatest, and He was the last of all and servant of all.

In verse 36, Jesus uses a child as an analogy of the Christian life. In Jesus' time, children were often ignored by Rabbis, but they weren't despised by Jesus. Instead, Jesus used children as an illustration of humility. Children are weak, dependent, needy, they have no accomplishments, no achievements, and no power. Matthew 18:4 says, “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

If Christians are analogous to children, then how we treat each other matters. Verse 37, “Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.”<sup>5</sup> How we treat other Christians is how we treat Christ. And, in order to love and serve each other, we must first be humble.

So, pride creates disunity, and believers are called to be humble. Verse 38 gives us an example of the disunity pride creates: “John said to Him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone

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<sup>5</sup> Of course, there is also a general principle of how we treat children, not in the same manner as the Rabbis who treated them with disdain.

casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.” The disciples were jealous of the success of others, and they wanted exclusivity. I think the timing of this is kind of interesting. In the previous passage, the disciples failed to cast out a demon, and here is a man who was not one of the 12 but was casting out demons in Jesus’ name. Pride is jealous of the success of others. Remember 1 Corinthians 13:4? Love is not jealous.

Jesus responds to them in verse 39-40, “Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. [40] For he who is not against us is for us.” There are many people out there who are false disciples and false apostles. They claim to do things in Jesus’ name (cf. Matthew 7:21-23). This person was a genuine follower of Jesus, just not one of the twelve.<sup>6</sup> Disunity and exclusivity are some of the damaging effects of pride in the Christian fellowship. We serve the same Lord, and we share the same gospel. We should be characterized by humility and love.

Now, if you look around you and survey leaders of this country, business executives, leading scholars, prominent politicians, etc., what you will find is that some of these are the most prideful people. They may appear to be somewhat humble, but you can usually see their pride by what they say and how they act. You may wonder, if I am humble and end up at the bottom, will I lose my reward? And the answer to that is certainly not. Verse 41, “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.”

### **Conclusion**

Pride is something we battle our entire lives. John MacArthur said, “As soon as you feel humble, guess what? You’re proud. And as soon as you feel proud, you have hope for humility.”<sup>7</sup> This is a lesson that the disciples had to continue learning. They continued arguing about who was the greatest up to the Last Supper (Luke 22:45).

Today, we studied Jesus’ teaching on humility. Let us take heed of that teaching. Let us also look to Christ as the example of humility. He humbled Himself by being obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). We not only receive the teaching and the example of humility, but God will also use pain and trials in our lives to teach us humility.

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<sup>6</sup> This was not a Simon Magus (Acts 8:4-24) or the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:11-16).

<sup>7</sup> John MacArthur, *The Virtue of Being Last*, Sermon delivered on October 31, 2010. GTY # 41-46.

As humans, humility doesn't come naturally or easily. Our culture tells us to have more self-esteem or self-confidence. We need more "me" time. We live in a very self-consumed society. We need to have a positive self-image. We have everything we need inside of us. Just set your heart and minds to it and believe in it. You can achieve it. Of course, these are all lies.

The Bible tells us that the true human condition is totally opposite what the culture feeds us. We have no good in ourselves. The Psalmist says in Psalm 16:2, "I have no good besides You." Second Peter 1:3 says, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." God is our source of power and good.

So, I suppose it makes it even harder to be humble when we live in a world where we are constantly told that we are good people, we are powerful people, we can accomplish anything we want. What's worse is that some pastors are motivational speakers who quote the Bible. They dispense the same kind of lies the culture tells us. That's why we must read our Bibles and depend on God in prayer. We need to discern what is from God and what is from the world.

Let me close by reading you Philippians 2:1-9. There is the teaching of humility, and there is also the example of humility in Christ.