

Mark 9:38—41
October 14, 2018

Embroided in the throes of World War II, the famed author George Orwell wrote an essay against pacifism. The British author of such famous books as *1984* and *Animal Farm* said—speaking of citizens against the war,

"If you hamper the war effort of one side you automatically help that of the other. Nor is there any real way of remaining outside such a war as the present one. In practice, 'he that is not with me is against me'. The idea that you can somehow remain aloof from and superior to the struggle, while living on food which British sailors have to risk their lives to bring you, is... (an) illusion..."

'He that is not with me is against me.' According to Orwell in WWII.

What Orwell said about the war humanity repeats ad nauseum—He that is not with me is against me. That idea is baked into our mindsets. For some, 'He that is not with me is against me' so often repeated, so pervasive that it has hardened into undeniable truth.

We hear the same sentiment everywhere—

'He that is not with me is against me.'

We heard in the halls of high schools.

'He that is not with me is against me.'

We hear around the Thanksgiving table.

'He that is not with me is against me.'

We hear it in the political rhetoric.

'He that is not with me is against me.'

We hear it at work meetings.

'He that is not with me is against me.'

We hear it from our friends.

'He that is not with me is against me.'

We can even hear that in the church.

But from Jesus, today, we hear the opposite. Today we are going to overhear Jesus say, "The one who is not against is for us."

The universal human temptation to draw a circle and say—"this is us" and another and say—"that is them," in the church. Is not just wrong but it is contrary to what it means to follow Jesus.

It is easy to define 'us' by those who—

Think like we do.

Have the same preferences we do.

Like us.

Never disagree with us.

Do things the same way as we do.

“He that is not with me is against me.” Can even be heard in the church. Coming out of our mouths.

But today—Jesus says, “No!” Us starts with me not you. Any who are with me are with us.

Because we can suspicious of others, following Jesus means any who are with Jesus are with us.

In Jesus, there is no ‘us’ and ‘them.’

“John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” [39] But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. [40] For the one who is not against us is for us. [41] For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.” Mark 9:38–41

PRAY

The book of the Mark is an invitation. An invitation to walk with Jesus. Those who already know him, get to know him better. Those who don’t know him can find out why he is worth getting to know at all.

We are getting to know Jesus and his stupid disciples.

When last we were with Mark, we overheard an argument amongst the disciples about who was the MVP of the 12 disciples. That conversation is on the heels of all of them failing to help an ailing, desperate father with a troubled boy. Not only did they fail to

help—they made everything worse. So it only makes sense to argue about who was the greatest.

Jesus takes a child and says, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” And further when you serve the least (invisible, overlooked, vulnerable) you are serving me.

In other words, the greatest in the kingdom of God are servants that often appear the least in the kingdom of man.

The disciples of Jesus can be dense and John shows us by the story he tells Jesus. Keep in mind, Jesus has just finished saying—the greatest are the servants. When you serve the least you are serving me.

1. A Story—Mark 9:38

John shows that he doesn't understand a lick of what Jesus is talking about. John essentially says, speaking of serving you. I've got a story for you. I'm telling you this story because I know when you hear it you will be proud of me—

Verse 38,

“John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.”

Do you see the reason that John tried to stop the man from casting out a demon in the name of Jesus? Do you see the reason he gave?

Why?

“...because he was not following us.”

John who would go on to write fully 20% of the New Testament later, shows here that he doesn't really understand what Jesus is about.

Do you see the issue?

John doesn't say—because he wasn't follow you. He says, “he was not following us.”

John is troubled because some other guy is trying to help people in the name of Jesus. This is ironic, did Jesus deputize John and ask him to make sure no one used the Lord's name inappropriately?

No.

John shows us his hand when he said, ‘he was not following us.’

That man was not a part of the group. He was not one of us. John was exhibiting a party spirit. An ‘us vs them’ mentality.

Us. There is the word that exposes what is wrong with John's thinking. He doesn't say—he was not following you—but he was not following us.’ John has an ‘us vs. them’ mentality. He is thinking—how dare you cast a demon out of someone in the name of Jesus—I am one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. You can't do that.

Never mind the fact that the disciples are not exactly world-beaters when it comes to casting demons out and this man seems to be pretty good—never mind that—but do you see how foolish his perspective is?

Imagine the conversation from the perspective of a bystander.

Somehow it becomes clear that a man is being harassed by a demon. And another man comes up and begins to attempt to cast the demon out.

You probably think something like, “I’m glad there is someone who can help this poor man.”

And then a group of other guys march in and say, “Hey—don’t help this man in the name of Jesus—you don’t even understand what it means to follow Jesus—how dare you use his name like that.”

How is helping a tortured man in the name of Jesus bad? It isn’t. It can’t be. That is the crux of the correction that Jesus brings to them.

2. A Correction—Mark 9:39—40

Vs. 39,

[39] But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.

That is much more gracious and kind than I would have been. I would have said something like—Are you medically unable to listen or are you just stupid?

And then Jesus says something that is counterintuitive.

[40] For the one who is not against us is for us.

Jesus takes the he that is not with me is against me stance and turns it upside down. In Christ, in the local church there is to be no us vs. them.

Us is everyone not against us—even if they are not with us.

Anyone doing good in the name of Jesus is not a threat. Just because we don't know what they are about or even what they are doing—even though they are doing things differently than we would—

The one who is not against us is for us.

In Jesus, there is no 'us' and 'them.'

Every Christian is a part of something much bigger than ourselves.

While it was true that this man John tried to stop didn't know Jesus as well as John did, it is true that Jesus did not commission this man to cast out demons, it was probably also true that this man was immature in many ways.

But Jesus says, NO matter!

In Jesus, there is no 'us' and 'them.'

The kingdom of God has many servants the world over—many doing name in the work of Christ. Many people doing things differently than we would but working hard in the name of Christ.

In Jesus, there is no 'us' and 'them.'

There are Christians and churches that do things differently than we do and believe differently than we do on secondary or debatable matters. When we have Christ we have common cause.

In Jesus, there is no 'us' and 'them.'

Christians can focus so much on our differences—

- Mode of Baptism
- Sabbath differences
- End Times Debates
- The Lord's Supper
- The Regulative Principle
- Music Style
- High church/Low church

We have no right to look at brothers and sisters in Christ with a suspicious eye.

In Jesus, there is no 'us' and 'them.'

The kingdom of God is more than your experiences of it. Jesus is telling them, I'm doing more in my kingdom with more people than you know. It is not about who you think is 'us.' Any who are with me are one of us.

Do you see what John is doing here?

John thinks 'us' has to include him. Jesus says—no. Us starts with me. Us starts with Jesus. Anyone is an us if they are with Christ.

What is a danger as you interact with other Christians is deadly if we bring that same party spirit to our church. We have to be so careful!

In Jesus, there is no 'us' and 'them.'

- No—Our ministry vs. theirs
- No—My friends vs. theirs
- No—my small group vs. theirs

A story

A correction

And now

3. A Reorientation—Mark 9:41

You might call this a kingdom reorientation. Jesus says, not only

[40] For the one who is not against us is for us.

But also,

[41] For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

Do you see the connection?

John was thinking that the real and only true followers of Jesus were with him and further they were doing things he knew about.

In other words, not only In Jesus, there is no 'us' and 'them.' But also In Jesus there is no such thing unimportant gospel work.

Jesus is saying—John you don't understand either WHO makes up my kingdom and WHAT my people do. Not only is the work of God done by more people than you know BUT ALSO in more ways than you know.

In fact, there are things believers do in my name that if you were to see, you would not notice. I do. And I will reward them some day.

Do you see what this means?

The things that the Lord notices and rewards are not always the same things we notice. You don't have to be able to command the attention of large crowds to matter. You don't have to be able to pray to raise the dead to matter. You don't have to be able to have the wisdom of Solomon to matter.

You just have to do what the Lord has put before you.

And maybe no one notices what you have done what you are doing but Jesus sees.

Jesus is saying, John you think greatness is done by great and important men and that is what I will notice and applaud.

False.

I see even the ones who give a cold cup of water.

None of us are going to be famous doing great and noteworthy deeds for the kingdom of God. None of us are going to have books written about us recalling our exploits or celebrating our victories. None of us are going to have legends arise around the report of our gospel work.

But that doesn't mean our work is unimportant.

And maybe no one notices what you have done what you are doing but Jesus sees.

When you serve someone else because you want to please Jesus—heaven sees and applauds. Though something as small as a cool drink of water is forgotten and easily overlooked—Jesus takes note.

You don't have to do great things to be noticed by God—just the things God has called you to do.

Do not fall into the trap of thinking that the most significant ministry in the church is done by people like me. And what you have to do doesn't matter.
NO!

Not true.

Leaders must be careful and not fall into the trap of thinking that they are doing the most important work. NO, they may be doing the most visible work, but not the most important.

You might feel that the most important person in the church is me—I don't. I think the most important people are ones that no one notices and those who serve in ways that others don't want to—

- Clean-up
- CM
- Special needs service

What about you?

Do you see how even things that no one else notices matter greatly in the kingdom of God? Do you see it? When you live to please Jesus and act accordingly God notices.

Single moms

You do the job of two serving your kids. As you change diapers, wipe noses, clean up because you love Jesus and your kids—heaven applauds.

Special needs caregivers

You who share the love of Jesus silently and consistently by how daily choosing to lay your life down.

Seasoned Saints

You who pray in secret make more of a difference than those who serve in more public ways. Please keep praying.

You don't have to be an important person to make a difference—you don't have to be a great person to make an impact—just do what God has called you to do.

Think of all the opportunity to please Jesus—things no one else notices but make a difference. Things like:

- A smile and warm welcome
- Prayer in secret
- Bringing a meal to someone
- Giving someone a ride to the hospital
- Watching children
- A timely word to build up
- A thoughtful encouragement

Those things are things we can all do—and Jesus says I see. I will reward.

There are more kingdom workers and kingdom work than we know. His people are everywhere and opportunities to please him is everywhere.

You cannot, you must not measure the activity of God by your experiences alone. Jesus is always doing more than you can see with people you don't know. Do not trust what you can see or perceive to measure what he is doing.

His ways are not our ways.

It makes sense, doesn't it?

Later in this book we will see Jesus die. His death was the means of victory over the forces of evil. He won by appearing to lose. He was defeated and appeared to lose it all.

But the Lord was working in a way that no one understood or expected.

His death was followed by his resurrection and became the very means of his victory.

If you expect to understand how the Lord works you will miss much that he is doing. The Lord is working through you in ways that you won't understand and ways that you don't expect.

His ways are not our ways.

More than that did you notice he watches us in order to reward us? And not punish us?

He sees all we do and Jesus wants us to understand the small, tiny gospel works is what he notices about us. NOT OUR many sins.

That is a man worth following.

What can we take away from our encounter with Jesus this morning?

At least 3 things—

There is no 'us vs. them' just him.

We are united together not merely because we live in the same area but primarily because we are in Christ. We are united by Jesus not:

- Preferences
- Politics
- Education
- Money

Or all the things that the outside world rallies around.

Disagreement need not lead to division

If you expect that you will agree with everyone in the church all time—don't. Be honest but disagreement need not lead to division.

What matters is not so much what your preferences are but how you hold your preferences.

There is no such things as unimportant gospel work

What you do for Jesus may not get applause, or recognition with men and women. But Jesus sees and knows.

What you are doing for Jesus matters—even if no one seems to notice. He does. He is watching his people to reward them. Not to punish them.

Don Carson movingly wrote about his father in his book “Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor.” His father was like all of us—normal. Not flashy just faithful.

He concludes the book by saying,

“Tom Carson never rose very far in denominational structures, but hundreds of people ... testify how much he loved them. He never wrote a book, but he loved the Book. He was never wealthy or powerful, but he kept growing as a Christian: yesterday’s grace was never enough. He was not a far-sighted visionary, but he looked forward to eternity. He was not a gifted administrator, but there is no text that says “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you are good administrators.” His journals have many, many entries bathed in tears of contrition, but his children and grandchildren remember his laughter. Only rarely did he break through his pattern of reserve and speak deeply and intimately with his children, but he modeled Christian virtues to them. He much preferred to avoid controversy than to stir things up, but his own commitments to historic confessionalism were unyielding, and in ethics he was a man of principle. His own ecclesiastical circles were rather small and narrow, but his reading was

correspondingly large and expansive. He was not very good at putting people down, except on his prayer lists.

When he died, there were no crowds outside the hospital, no editorial comments in the papers, no announcements on the television, no mention in Parliament, no attention paid by the nation. In his hospital room there was no one by his bedside. There was only the quiet hiss of oxygen, vainly venting because he had stopped breathing and would never need it again.

But on the other side, all the trumpets sounded. Dad won entrance to the only throne-room that matters, not because he was a good man or a great man—he was, after all, a most ordinary pastor—but because he was a forgiven man. And he heard the voice of him whom he longed to hear saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord.” Don Carson

PRAY

[28] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
(ESV) 1 Thessalonians 5:28