

32. Jesus Taught About the Importance of Humility

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that we are not to try and cast out demons in our own strength. Instead, we are to pray that Christ will defeat the power of Satan in the life of an individual that is demon possessed. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus taught the disciples about the importance of humility.

Jesus left the area around Caesarea Philippi, where the large group of people met Him when He came down from the mountain. Mark 9:30-32 says, “Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *it*. For He taught His disciples and said to them, ‘The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.’ But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.” Here, we see that Jesus traveled to a different area of Galilee. It was only a few months until Jesus would be crucified, and He had many things to teach the disciples before He returned to heaven after the resurrection. That was His main work from this time until His crucifixion. We see, in John 17:4, that He had completed that work before He was crucified. In that verse, Jesus prayed to the Father the night before His crucifixion and said, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” That night, the disciples did not understand, but Jesus knew that He had prepared them for the time He would return to heaven, send the Holy Spirit, and begin the church.

The key message of the apostles after the resurrection was the death and resurrection of Jesus. As a result, Jesus taught them many times before His death about His coming death and resurrection, even though He knew they did not understand. The plan of Jesus was to open the understanding of the disciples after the resurrection. Luke 24:45-48 says, “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.’” This is a reminder of the fact that, as we teach the Word of God, the Lord gives spiritual understanding to those with prepared hearts.

We see that Jesus explained three things to His disciples as He taught them. First, Jesus said He would be betrayed into the hands of men. The disciples never realized until it happened that the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, was among them as Jesus was teaching them. Second, Jesus taught the disciples that He would be killed by those men. The disciples were looking for Jesus to restore the kingdom to Israel, and so, even though they heard Jesus say He would be killed, they did not understand. Third, Jesus taught the disciples that He would rise on the third day. Since they did not expect His death, the disciples could not understand what Jesus meant by the fact He would rise the third day. The disciples could not understand, because they were expecting something very different from what actually happened.

We see that the disciples did not understand, but we also see that they were afraid to ask Jesus what He meant. People have many questions they need to have answered in order to gain a full understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus. They will not find the Biblical answers to

their questions unless someone encourages them to ask their questions and then takes the time to help them become familiar with the Scriptures that will answer those questions. That is why every person needs someone like Priscilla and Aquila to help them understand. Acts 18:26 says, “So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” This couple took the time to answer the questions of Apollos and helped him understand the Scripture, so he could explain the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus and show that Jesus is the Christ.

We see the results of the ministry of Aquila and Priscilla in the following verses. Acts 18:27-28 says, “And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.”

Jesus taught the disciples as they traveled toward Capernaum. However, they also talked among themselves at times as they walked along the road. Mark 9:33-35 says, “Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, ‘What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?’ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the* greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’” Jesus waited until they were inside the house in Capernaum before He asked them about their discussion.

Once they were in the house, Jesus asked, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” Here, the word translated “disputed” means *to reason together or to resolve in one’s mind*. Mark 8:16-17 uses this word twice when those verses say, “And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘*It is* because we have no bread.’ But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, ‘Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?’” We see that none of the disciples wanted to answer the question of Jesus, so they all kept silent.

Then, we see the reason why they did not want to answer the question that Jesus asked. The disciples had been discussing among themselves which of them would be the greatest. They were all ashamed to tell Jesus what they had been discussing. As a result, Jesus sat down and called the disciples to gather around Him. Then, Jesus said, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” The word translated “desires” means *to will, to desire or to wish*. The disciples had each been saying they wished or desired to be the first or most important in rank or influence. This is an attitude of pride rather than of an attitude of humility. Jesus explained the results of pride.

The word that is translated “last” means *to be last in time, place or rank*. The word translated “servant” is the word that is translated “minister”, “servant”, or “deacon”. In Matthew 20:26, Jesus said, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.” Jesus said that we will be great by becoming the last in rank or place. Paul wrote, in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the

new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” Paul wrote that God has made each of us sufficient so that we can be last in rank or place. When we have that attitude of humility, the Lord will work through our lives to give life to others.

This helps us to understand why none of the twelve wanted to tell Jesus what they were talking about along the road. In fact, they were probably embarrassed and filled with shame. Mark 9:36-37 tells us what Jesus did next, “Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.’” Jesus then took a little child to illustrate exactly what He meant. We see that Jesus took this infant or young child and held the child in His arms. Jesus said that those who receive one of these little ones in His name were actually receiving Him.

We see that the disciples heard but did not learn what Jesus meant. Mark 10:13-15 says, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’” Here, we see the disciples tried to tell the parents to leave and not bother Jesus. The disciples thought Jesus was too busy talking to the adults to be bothered by little children. Instead, Jesus rebuked the disciples and told them to let the little children come to Him. He told them not to forbid them. In these verses, Jesus said that anyone, of any age, must receive the kingdom of God as a little child, or they will not enter into that kingdom. A young child has faith and believes his parents, even in times when the child is in a fearful situation.

Jesus explained that whoever receives one of these little children in His name receives Him. The word translated “receive” means *to take with the hand, to pick up or to develop a friendship with a person*. We are to humble ourselves, reach out to Christ, and receive Him by faith just like a little child. Then, we are to reach out to children, as well as adults, in the name of Jesus to tell them about His love. Jesus said that all those who receive Him also receive the Father. It was the Father who sent Him to this earth to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus took our sins and paid the penalty for them on the cross. He experienced separation from the Father to make forgiveness possible. Then, at the moment of salvation, Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of our salvation, so we receive the entire Trinity. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others what it means to come to Jesus for salvation with the faith of a little child. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to present that message to others.