

**Valley Bible Church**  
**Sermon Notes for June 18, 2017**

**The Great Servant**  
**Mark 9:30-37**

I. The prediction of service (9:30-32)

A. The return (9:30)

*They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know,*

- Jesus and the disciples left Caesarea Philippi area in the north of Israel
- They were now back passing through Galilee
- Jesus did not desire for anyone to know He was there
  - Jesus was not back in Galilee to continue public ministry
  - Jesus had essentially concluded His public ministry in Mark 8:11-13
  - The Pharisees in Galilee still wanted a sign from Jesus
  - Instead, Jesus ceased His public ministry in Galilee
- Jesus desired to spend more time teaching His disciples (v. 31)
  - “for he was teaching his disciples” (v. 31)
- Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem in order to go to the cross

B. The reminder (9:31)

*31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.”*

- Along the way, Jesus was using the private time with His disciples to teach them
- He spoke to them again concerning His mission
- Again, He describes Himself as the “Son of Man” drawing on the Messianic title from Daniel 7
- He spoke of His work in three stages:
  - He is going to be delivered into the hands of men
  - They will kill Him
  - After three days, He will rise
- The previous prediction (Mark 8:31-32) took place in Caesarea Philippi
  - Emphasis on God’s plan (“it is necessary”)
- Second prediction (Mark 9:30-32) took place in Galilee

- Emphasis on the present passive
- The Son of Man is being delivered into the hands of men
- Jesus was stating to the disciples that it is happening now
- The cross would be Jesus' ultimate act of service among the many acts He did

C. The reluctance (9:32)

*32 But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.*

- The disciples still did not understand the saying even though it was Jesus' second time stating it to the disciples
- The disciples did not understand and thus were afraid to ask Jesus
  - Perhaps this is particularly true in light of the last instance where Peter rebuked Jesus and was rebuked by Jesus in turn

II. The principle of service (9:33-35)

A. Discussing the greatest (9:33-34)

*33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.*

- Their travels through Galilee eventually brought them to Capernaum
- This was a familiar location but they were still trying to remain unnoticed
  - They were in a house at this moment
  - Maybe this was Peter's house?
- Jesus asked a question to which He already knew the answer
  - He asked them what they were discussing on the way
- The disciples were silenced by this question
- They had been discussing/arguing with one another about who was the greatest
- How could the disciples be doing such a thing?
  - Especially after Jesus predicted His suffering a second time?
- First, remember that the text says they weren't understanding Jesus' words
- This is what piles on the irony in this situation
  - Jesus was talking about His death
  - The disciples were talking about who among them is the best
- Obviously, they felt guilt and remorse for such a conversation
  - No one even tried to explain themselves to Jesus

B. Defining the greatest (9:35)

35 *And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."*

- Jesus sat down and called the twelve
  - Sitting down could mean that Jesus was beginning to teach them
- Jesus' words immediately identify His supernatural knowledge of their conversation
  - He did not take time to explain that He knew what they were talking about
  - Instead, He simply began to teach on a subject that happened to be relevant to their exact conversation
- Jesus states a countercultural principle for the disciples
- "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all"
  - How did these words hit the disciples?
    - Jesus knew exactly what they were talking about
    - This was a shameful moment for the disciples
  - Jesus proceeds to flip the paradigm of true greatness
    - He makes their entire discussion not only shameful but also void
    - "Greatness" cannot be measured in the typical fashion of the world
      - Money/wealth, success/accomplishments, fame/popularity do not define true greatness
- "If anyone would be first"
  - If anyone desires to be most prominent
  - If anyone desires true greatness
- "he must be last of all"
  - He must be the least of everyone
  - True greatness comes to the opposite of the expected
- This is another paradox much like His first call to discipleship
  - In order to save one's life, one must lose it
  - The greatest/most prominent is the last or least of everyone
- It's interesting that He adds "and servant of all" to "he must be last of all"
  - It appears that Jesus helped His disciples to understand what He was in fact saying
  - Jesus used the practice of servanthood to further explain what it means to be "last of all"

-On the other hand, Jesus gives the definition for true greatness  
-**Philippians 2:3-8** “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

-Next, Jesus addresses how far one must go in their service of others

### III. The practice of service (9:36-37)

*36 And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”*

-Jesus then moved to an object lesson with children

-Jesus set a child in their midst

-Jesus then embraced the child

-Why would Jesus use the example of a child?

-Children were insignificant in their culture

-Children, generally speaking, were not as pampered and spoiled

-If one was trying to advance in society, children would not be your main focus

-Jesus shows just how far the service of others must go

-The disciples must be willing to even be the servant of insignificant children

-He proceeded to state a principle

-Receiving child in the name of Jesus means receiving Jesus

-Receiving Jesus means receiving God the Father who sent Jesus

-Another paradox is being stated

-Receive the least significant (children) and you will be received by the Most significant One (God)