

## THIS WEEK’S MESSAGE

AUGUST 23RD–24TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

### THE GREAT DISTRACTOR (MARK 9:30–37) CONTINUING ON

After delivering a demonically possessed boy, Jesus and the 12 travel through Galilee. On the way, He reminds them again of His mission to be betrayed, killed, and rise from the grave after three days.

- In Chapter 8, Jesus told the disciples virtually the exact same thing.

### STILL NOT GETTING IT

Jesus had also spoken of His mission in Chapter 8. These two accounts were a clear call for the disciples to pay attention, but they still “did not understand.”

- **Ignorance does not offend Jesus. He loves to enlighten. It is why we lack understanding that can frustrate God.**

### “WHAT WERE YOU ARGUING ABOUT...?”

I believe Jesus always knew the answers to His own questions, but in order to teach His followers, He asks.

- Apparently, the 12 still thought Jesus was going to evolve into a military leader who would conquer Rome because they argued over who would be next to Him in authority.

### THE GREAT DISTRACTOR FROM THE THINGS OF GOD

The disciples **could not comprehend the simple truths of Jesus’ mission because their minds were preoccupied with their selfish ambitions.**

- Their silence at Jesus’ question might have been some shame and recognition of their immaturity and selfishness.

### NOT WITH ANGER BUT WITH TRUTH

Jesus did not lose His cool, demean, or spew anger. He addressed the problem of self-centeredness with truth. In His Kingdom, **if one wants to be first, they must willingly be last.**

- This is the great contrast of man’s kingdoms and the Kingdom of God. **True greatness is through humility and servanthood.**

### TO ILLUSTRATE THE PRINCIPLE

Children were not viewed favorably in ancient Israel. It would have been shocking for Christ to have a kid sit on His lap as an example of who we are to humble ourselves to and serve.

- The message is to **love and serve those who are weak, in need, and even seen as unimportant in the world.**

### LEARNING TO VALUE OTHERS

James 2 tells us not to show favoritism and to love others like we love ourselves. Jesus establishes the principle in Mark that His brother elaborated on later.

- **The point is that we are to be humble, gracious, gentle, benevolent, truthful, and genuinely concerned for others.**

### MAKING A CONSCIOUS EFFORT

**“Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.”** – C.S. Lewis

- As Christians, **we are to make a conscious effort to make it more about Jesus and others than ourselves.** This requires much prayer and taking practical steps to be more selfless.

### THE NAME (MARK 9:38–41)

#### JOHN STILL WANTED TO DRAW SOME LINES

John speaks up about someone who was not one of the 12 who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. This seems to be John wanting to distinguish the 12 as better than those outside their circle.

- This is a subtle reminder about just how hard it is to “kill” the flesh.

### CASTING OUT DEMONS

In ancient times, when someone tried to perform an exorcism, they would use the name of a stronger force than the demon.

- Jesus encourages John to give this man **the benefit of the doubt** because he was using the only name capable of casting out demons.

### SO, THIS MEANS THIS GUY WAS OK?

We must use Scripture to answer questions in Scripture. In Matthew 7:22 Jesus says that many will say they cast out demons in His name, but they never had a relationship with Him.

- **Scripture helps us make sound judgments, but God ultimately decides who is righteous because He sees the heart.**

### “FOR WHOEVER IS NOT AGAINST US...”

If we can agree on the majors of the faith, **all Christians should be able to work together to achieve the Great Commission to make disciples, baptize, and teach** (Matthew 28:19).

- Jesus also promises that even the smallest act of kindness, like getting someone a cup of water, will be rewarded by Him.

### WARNINGS (MARK 9:42–50)

#### “BUT WHOEVER CAUSES ONE...TO FALL AWAY”

This section continues the teaching of the previous section, but in the negative.

- When we do things to demonstrate Jesus or draw people closer to Him, it is rewarded, but when we cause people to stumble in their pursuit of God and truth, there is judgment.

### AN EXAGGERATION?

The reference to tying a millstone around our neck and drowning is graphic and extreme.

- Jesus is not encouraging suicide over causing others to stumble. He is making a point that **sin and deception are dangerous, and all steps must be taken to remove them from our lives!**

### TO WHAT DEGREE?

Again, Jesus uses hyperbole to prove a point. If our **hand (what we do)**, **foot (where we go)**, or **eye (what we see)** causes us to sin, we must remove it in order to avoid damnation.

- **Only the cross can remove sin, but we have the responsibility to take steps to avoid and repent of sin.**

### A LITERAL HELL

It is hard for one to believe in the teachings of Jesus and not an eternal destination apart from God—a literal Hell. Hell is an uncomfortable but biblical topic.

- Jesus doesn’t delight in people going to Hell (2 Peter 3:9). **Our eternity is a result of what we seek in this life (Jesus or no Jesus).**

### WHAT DOES SALT HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

Jesus uses a metaphor of being “salted with fire,” meaning there will be trials and tests in this life that will refine and make us stronger.

- The questions are if we will **depend on Him and His teachings during trials, and if we will be humble, be grateful, learn, and grow in our purification process.**

### SALT CAN SYMBOLIZE SEVERAL THINGS

Salt was used to **purify, preserve,** and flavor foods. It was also used in **peace covenants** to represent **loyalty, friendship,** and the **presence of God** in relationships.

- This is why Jesus commands His disciples to **“Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”**

### ONLY THROUGH JESUS

- **Jesus is the only power in the universe that can protect from, deliver from, and forgive us for sin and evil.** This does not mean we abuse His name but that we live in relationship with Him and in His power.

- We must also learn to partner with other Christians if we agree on essential doctrines.

### THE GREAT DISTRACTOR

- The greatest distraction from living in Christ and understanding His ways is **ourselves.** Throughout the Bible, we are urged to **humble ourselves to Him and to live as servants to those around us.**
- **Self/individualism is the god of the western world, and we must war against it.**

### OUR HANDS, FEET, AND EYES

- If we are to avoid sin, we must be **careful about what we do, where we go,** and **what we see.** Even when things are permissible, they may not be beneficial (1 Corinthians 10:23).
- This means we must **proactively remove stumbling blocks in our lives and help others with things that may tempt them.**

### THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SELFISHNESS

- Though uncomfortable, Hell is a literal place. **If we pursue self over Jesus, we will end up in a place where He is absent.**
- Jesus does not want us to be in Hell—this is why He died on the cross—but **what we choose to pursue in this life will be given to us in totality in the next one.**