

Sunday, October 15, 2023 | Everyday Disciple

Week 25 | Luke 9:46-50 | "Pride & Prejudice"

Last week, we unpacked one of the six hindrances to discipleship: *faithlessness*. And we saw an example of the fallout of faithlessness in how the disciples failed to rescue a boy from demonic possession. Thankfully, Jesus picked up the ball after the apostles dropped it, but there was a sobering lesson to learn from that whole experience: Faithlessness not only impedes our ability to help others, but it also impairs our ability to grasp God's word. Salvation does not make us into superheroes. Faithlessness can cripple even the best Christian. And, sadly, when believers falter, the fallout is disastrous.

Today, we'll explore the next *two* hindrances to discipleship: pride and prejudice. Just as faithlessness keeps us from helping those in need (cf. Lu. 9:40), selfishness and tribalism keep us from accomplishing great things for God. When we think only about our greatness and/or the superiority of "our camp," we weigh ourselves down, needlessly making an already difficult task even harder.

Comparison is not only the thief of joy; it also feeds a spirit of elitism, leading to gatekeeping. The Lord would not have his followers garner rivalries; he would have them join hands with *anyone* who uses truth to fight the dark. After all, there is no such thing as favoritism in Christ's community; even one as lowly as a child is great in God's kingdom. Thus, Christianity is best served when Christians do not compete with one another but work together for the glory of Christ alone.

Jesus teaches the disciples two things:

- i. **Pride keeps them from seeing who is great in God's kingdom (vs. 37-40).**

READ: Luke 9:46-48 (ESV)

⁴⁶ An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷ But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side ⁴⁸ and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

DEFINE PRIDE: “A high, esp. an excessively high, opinion of one's own worth or importance which gives rise to a feeling or attitude of superiority over others; inordinate self-esteem.”¹

Treating a child with dignity might be expected today, but it would've been considered foolish in the first century. Society had a pecking order, and children lived on the lowest rug. In fact, Jewish rabbis thought it was a waste of time to converse with a child under the age of 12 since they could not read the Scriptures. Or, as Edwards explains,

“We are mistaken if we imagine that Greek and Jewish societies extolled the virtues of childhood.... Societies with a high infant mortality rates and high demand for human labor are not sentimental about infants and youth. Until children could contribute to the labor force, they simply had “not arrived.” They were, quite literally, “the least among you.”²

Thus, seeing Jesus place a child directly among his disciples and put him by his side is pretty jarring. The Lord *elevated* those who would've been *dismissed*. In fact, it is interesting to note how often God used children to do great work: Samuel, David, Joash, Josiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, etc. Thus, this passage is not really about how *to be* great in God's kingdom but about what is *already great*. Jesus was not telling the disciples to serve children to be MVP in God's eyes. The Lord told them who was already MVP: the lowly, least, and lowborn.

And, to be clear, he was not necessarily saying they ought to serve children, though that would be a very good way to apply this passage. "There is no point in being at Jesus' side unless one is humble enough to be at a child's side."³ Instead, Jesus' point is that we should not view anyone as more important than anyone else. Or, as Morris says, "this child stands for the helpless and the unimportant."⁴ We ought to give the same value and dignity to least important people as we do to the most important people. “If greatness is found in the least, greatness is found in all.”⁵

Pride keeps us from seeing who is great in God's kingdom. Interestingly, this would not be the last time they argued about who would be the greatest. Even during the Last Supper, they fought about this (cf. Lu. 22:21-24). If we constantly compare ourselves to each other and debate who is the best, we miss those God considers great.

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "pride, n.¹, sense I.1.a", September 2023.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7326909000>

² Edwards, p. 290.

³ Garland, p. 404.

⁴ Morris, p. 194.

⁵ Bock, p. 896.

Furthermore, when we think only of our perceived greatness, we miss an opportunity to love Jesus and thereby skip a chance to love God.

READ: Matthew 25:31-46 (ESV)

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

How do you avoid the end of the goats? Act in a way that ignores status. But, make no mistake, "the simplest act of kindness begins a chain reaction that reaches heaven itself, for whatever is done to the little and least is done to Jesus, and whatever is done to Jesus is done to God."⁶

ii. Prejudice keeps them from doing what is great in God's kingdom (vs. 49-50).

READ: Luke 9:49-50 (ESV)

⁶ Edwards, p. 291.

⁴⁹ John answered, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.” ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, “Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.”

DEFINE PREJUDICE: “An *irrational* attitude of hostility directed against an individual or a group.”

Ironically, this person was successful in an area where the disciples weren't: *exorcism* (cf. Lu. 9:40). Also, he was excising demons in the name of Jesus. What cause would the disciples have to stop him? John said it was because this person did not “follow with *us*.” Should we not have expected him to say, “he did not follow *you*”? John and the others were conflating their reputation with Jesus' status. They felt this exorcist encroached on *their* territory, not God's. Apparently, for John, being Jesus' so-called "inner circle" cultivated elitist tendencies in John's heart.

When we operate with the assumption that we hold a place of honor more significant than those around us, we inevitably become prejudiced. Tribalism seeps in, and we start to think that *our* “camp” is better than *their* “camp.” Rather than seeing others as potential allies, we view them as competitors. But there is no such thing as “our turf;” there is only God's turf (cf. Josh. 5:13-15).

To be clear, there are times when we should resist those contrary to the gospel (cf. Ac. 19:13-17; 1 Jn. 4:2). Jesus' message was never *unqualified* coexistence or inclusion. After all, is he not “the [only] way, the [only] truth, and the [only] life?” In fact, later in Luke, Jesus will say almost the exact opposite of what he says here in Luke 9.

READ: Luke 11:23 (ESV)

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Sadly, we live in an age where not every so-called “church” is Christ-honoring. For instance, there are religious systems that are broken because they're based on works—i.e., Catholicism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. And sadly, there are also so-called “evangelical churches” that compromise on key doctrinal issues—i.e., sexuality identity, marriage, scriptural infallibility, objective truth, .etc. All these belief systems should be opposed, for they twist the good news. Though, to be sure, we ought to combat ideas, not people (cf. Eph. 6:12).

BOOK RECOMMENDATION: *Find The Right Hills To Die On* by Gavin Ortlund

But back to Jesus' point in our passage: *don't make enemies out of potential friends*. Anyone who successfully opposes the forces of darkness is no enemy. Divisions and disunity are

unavoidable outside the church but **avoidable** inside the church. In a world that is becoming more and more hostile to Christ, we need all the allies we can get. We have enough enemies already without us going out of our way to make more. When we meet someone doing a great work for God and in Christ's name, we ought to, at least, encourage them or, at best, join them even though they may not be a part of our particular camp.

READ: 1 Corinthians 3:1-7 (ESV)

¹ But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³ for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? ⁴ For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

We do what Jesus would have us do when we divide over **biblical principles**. But when we divide over **personal preferences**, we do what **Satan** would have us do. We must have "exactness in the church's Christology and broadness in its ecclesiology."⁷ So long as Jesus' name is glorified, it matters not who is used. Rivalries hinder the work of God.

Coincidentally, the apostles had better get used to Jesus using others as he will shortly commission another 70 disciples (cf. Lu. 10:4). God's plan does not begin, end, or depend on us. Should we enter the Lord's service, we will be nothing more and nothing less than a link in a long chain of faithful servants.

So, what's the takeaway?

Consideration for others and collaboration with others are the hallmarks of great disciples.

READ: Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV)

³ Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁷ Edwards, p. 292; Bock, p. 892, "Ecclesiastical snobbery is a vice to Jesus."

'Teamwork makes the dream work' might be an overused cliché, but it still holds true. We can do more together than we can on our own. But if we only prefer our own company, we will needlessly exclude those with value. "All people count, while comparison counts for nothing."⁸

The greats see the innate value in everyone, in every so-called "worthless" person, and in anyone who names the name of Christ, though they may be from another tradition or denomination. If God is no respecter of persons (cf. Rom. 2:11), then neither should his followers be.

⁸ Bock, p. 897.

Video Description

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SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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