



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 22, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

18th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Numbers 12:1-15](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 151

Second Lesson: [James 3:13-18](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Mark 9:30-37](#)

The Need for Followership **Followers of Christ Are Humble Servants** **TRUE HUMBLE SERVICE**

- 1. See the perfect _____: He _____ all**
- 2. Seek true _____: _____ all**

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

You may have been a part of a situation like this. You may have been on either side of it, but you can picture it in a school hallway when there are a few kids talking and laughing and giggling, and then another student walks up. As that other student walks up, everyone else stops talking. They look around and there is silence. Or maybe you've seen this in the work breakroom where there are a few people sitting there, talking and chatting and they may be getting louder. Then another co-worker opens the door and they see that co-worker and they go quiet, silent. Maybe even in the barn, in the workshop on the farm, a similar thing happens. People are talking and another worker comes in and there is silence. What has happened? These people have been caught. They were talking about something, maybe that person specifically, and they knew they weren't supposed to be doing that and they become silent.

In our Scripture lesson for today, we are going to see a similar picture where the disciples are in a way caught. They become silent when Jesus asks them a question because they know they aren't supposed to be talking about what they are talking about. It becomes especially important because of what Jesus had been talking about previously. We are going to see how Jesus then teaches them to understand what the problem is with what they were talking about.

Today Jesus is going to teach the disciples and us about **true humble service**. It's something that we know we all can struggle with in different ways, no matter what age we are.

For the disciples, Jesus was teaching them. The way that it describes here, it says he was teaching his disciples and telling them. This is after they had made their way through Galilee and he didn't want anyone to know it. The way the translation goes is that he has told them and he is telling them again. He is starting to do it, and it's not just once. How do we know that this is true of what he is going to say is in just a few chapters, we are going to hear that earlier Jesus had told them pretty much the same thing. So he takes them aside and he is teaching them something very important. What was the very important thing? He says, ***"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after he is killed, he will rise three days later."*** ***But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask him.*** ^(CSB) Jesus is beginning to teach them the whole point of why he came.

The disciples recently had confessed that he was the Messiah, the one promised, but what does this mean? Jesus tells them what that means is that he is going to be betrayed, handed over and killed. The translation we have in the service folder just says that he is going to be killed and then will rise three days later. The original is more like what I read to you, in the older translation, where it says ***"They will kill him, and after he is killed, he will rise three days later."*** In case they didn't understand it, he expresses it twice. The new translation kind of gets rid of it because it is a little redundant, but the whole point is that he is going to die. He is really going to die! An old professor of mine described this as "They would kill him to death," just in case they didn't get it.

But the whole point of sharing this is to share why he came—to be the perfect Servant, to give all. He is telling his disciples, you, and me to *see the perfect Servant*—that Jesus is the one. *He gave all* for us and submitted himself to death on a cross for you and for me. What is interesting is that the disciples don't seem to understand. That's what Mark tells us. And they were afraid to ask him.

Why do you think they were afraid? Why do you think they struggled to understand? I think one of the points of understanding why they didn't understand is they thought he was the Messiah. In that picture, they didn't really yet understand what that meant, but for them it was going to be this leader that was going to help them kick out the Romans. Not only that, he is this promised leader, so how could he die if he is going to do all these things? And, they had seen him do miracles. Earlier in this chapter, Peter, James and John had just seen the transfiguration. They had seen him transfigured into glory, so if he is this glorious leader and he does miracles, how is someone going to take him into captivity? How is he going to be betrayed into someone's hands and then killed? It just didn't make sense. And, just previously, Jesus had said these same words

and they were struggling to believe it. It's similar to when you've heard difficult news about a loved one—maybe there is a cancer or someone you know passed away or something devastating happened and it's just so hard to believe. You don't want to believe it. Maybe this is what the disciples are struggling with. They just don't want to believe.

But then it even says that they were afraid to ask. Why were they afraid to ask? In those chapters previously when Jesus had said this, this was right after Peter made that great confession, but then when Jesus said that he was going to be killed and then said that anyone who wants to follow him must take up their cross and follow him, how does Peter respond? "No, never, Lord! This can't happen to you! This can't happen to you and we don't want that to happen to us!" How does Jesus respond to Peter? In one of the words that we would never want to hear, he says **"Get behind me, Satan!** You don't have the things of God in mind but the things of man." [\(Matthew 16:13-23\)](#) So if the disciples are remembering this, they are saying "Well, Peter questioned him about this and he was called 'Satan.' I don't think it's good for us to question what he is saying." It was just a struggle. Even though he's not speaking in parables, he's not saying that he is going to be in the earth like Jonah for three days or that the temple was going to be destroyed and he would build it again in three days. He is speaking so clearly but they still struggled.

Can we be that way sometimes? Do we hear God's Word and it's clear to us, but maybe we struggle with that clear Word of God because it's something Law, something we don't want to believe and understand? Or maybe it's something that just goes against our human logic and we just say "No way!" So yes, there are times when the Bible isn't exactly clear on everything, but there are other times when it's very clear and we just say "Nope! Don't want to believe it."

So instead of asking questions as they continue on the way, we see the disciples kind of shift the conversation. How do we know this? As they arrived in Capernaum, Jesus asked them a question. **"What were you arguing about on the road?"** But they were silent because on the way they had been arguing with one another about who was the greatest. We don't have the exact idea of when these two took place, if it was right after a very similar time (Mark is grouping it together), but he is saying that these things are related. Jesus had just told them these things sometime during that day/the previous day, and here they are, on the way, now arguing about who is greatest. So Jesus, the one who gives all, is working with these disciples who want to argue about who is the best.

We know that this is nothing new. They argued about this at other times, even that last week of his life. Or James and John, whose mother came to Jesus and said, "Can my kids sit on your left and your right?" [\(Matthew 20:21\)](#) They were always focused on being the best, being the greatest. We could say "How foolish," but then we understand that we

struggle with the same thing. We always want to be first, or we want to be right. We want to be greater than others or put down people that are different than us or that we disagree with and that we know we are right and they are wrong. Our simple hearts are filled with pride. So the disciples are silent when Jesus talks to them because they know they were caught. They knew that what they were talking about was wrong.

So how does Jesus teach them? It says in Verse 35: ***Sitting down, he called the Twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be last and servant of all." He took a child, had him stand among them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one little child such as this in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but him who sent me."*** The disciples are focused on being greatest and what does Jesus say? "If you want to be great, if you want to be first, become the servant of all." True greatness and true humility comes from serving; serving all and putting yourself last. I find it interesting though, he doesn't say "Don't try to be first." He says "If anyone WANTS to be first." He's not saying it's a bad thing to be first or great, but the way to do that is through humility of serving; to *see true humility: serve all.*

The world that we live in is not that way. It's all about boasting. It's all about greatness. And people love the luxury of this world and having other people serve them. We see it all over the media and news and politics that it's all about what is greatest and best, and it's all about boasting. There is so much pride and there is a struggle to find that true humility and serving others, putting others first.

So Jesus teaches with this great picture as he took this child in his arms. What a beautiful picture—Jesus holding a child and saying "If you really want to serve, serve by welcoming a little child. Serve the littlest ones." Why do you think serving a child is a great example of humility? If you're a parent or grandparent out there, raising kids, does it take some humility and service in that? Do you have to give up a few things to raise your kids, maybe some time, some money, some of your goals, some of your preferences, lots of energy, and service to something for a long time that really can't do much to help itself and there is no promise of a return in there? But it's done out of love and service. Is anyone really praising you for changing diapers or the sleepless nights? Do you get applause and people saying how great that is? It often goes unnoticed. Remember that, kids, how much it takes to raise you; and that love. So that picture of a child is used to say "This is what it means to serve."

But then to think, yes, as a parent it is easy to show that love and care for a child that you love, but there is more. I'm asked to be a servant of all, to serve those I don't like that much, to serve those I don't agree with, those that I'm enemies to, to be humble, to let other people get their way and for me to not always try to be right. It's hard! That goes against our hearts and our natural ways. When we seek to be humble, we want to not make it all about ourselves and not make it that no one is thinking about me and

get depressed on why no one is thanking me and giving me gratitude. I always like to think about how an author talked about if you see a prideful person, you notice them. You see them in the room. But do you notice a person who is humble? Not really. They are just there to serve and to make it about other people.

We know that this is hard for us, so we seek guidance. We seek the Lord as our model. But more than the Lord as our model who gave everything, we know that he is the one who forgives us. He is perfect in our place—the perfect Servant who gave all so that when we have struggled to give a little but, to give up a little bit of our way or our desires, we know that we are forgiven. When we struggle even serving those closest to us, the people that we like, let alone the people that are different than us, that we don't like, we know God has forgiven us through the perfect life and death and resurrection of our Savior. That's the motivation. That's the hope and peace that you have; that you truly are loved and forgiven; that Jesus, who was perfect, who had everything, was the King of kings and could have had everyone serve him, but he came to serve all; to love you; to forgive you; and to give you all that you need.

So with all of that, with that love and mercy, knowing that you are everything you need to be because God loves you. You are forgiven. You are a redeemed child of God and you don't need recognition or anything other than that love from Christ. And with that humility, you can go and serve and love others.

The hope is that as you serve others with this joy and peace, where he says to welcome others in his name, you don't serve so that others recognize you but you serve so that other people can see Jesus; to see the one who loves you and that they can get to know their Savior, the true and humble Servant who loved and forgave you and the whole world. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.