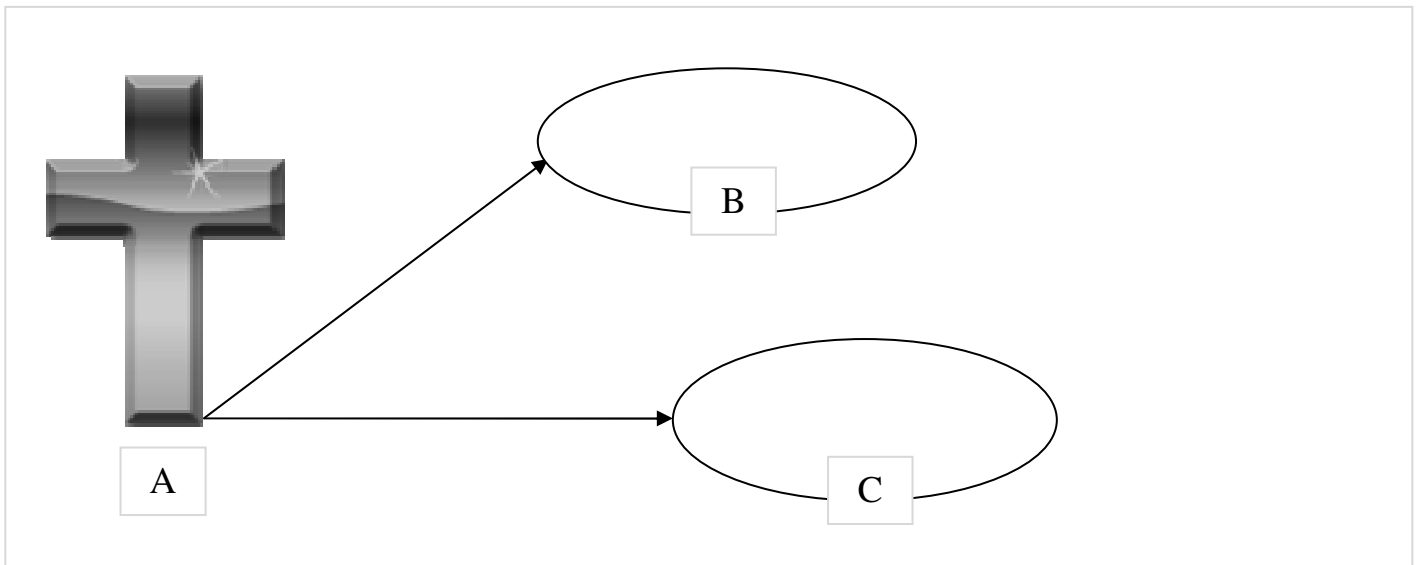


THE LIFE OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPELS
Class #238 – Sunday AM1 May 18, 2008

It is important to ensure fellowship with God before the study of the Word.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (**1 John 1:9**).

Isaiah 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.



Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”



- Peter, James, John, and the Lord have just come down off Mt. Hermon where these three disciples had beheld the eternal glory of the Son of God that the Father had revealed.

- Moses and Elijah were present, encouraging the Lord regarding His death which would occur not too far off in the future.
- In arriving back at Caesarea-Philippi, they rejoined the nine disciples who had gotten embroiled in a theological debate.
- Those same nine disciples had failed to exercise faith in the Lord to cast out a demon, an act they had been given authority to do.
- The disciples were arguing among themselves on the way back to Capernaum as to which one of them was the greatest in the Kingdom.

Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house [*Peter's home – where Christ stayed when He was in Capernaum*], He *began* to question them, “**What were you discussing on the way?**” ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them was the greatest*.

Luke 9:46 An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest.

- The disciples had become **arrogant** – full of pride and jealousy.
- The Lord knew exactly what they were arguing about.
- It was probably Peter, James, and John - who had witnessed the transfiguration - against the nine who failed to cast out the demon and became embroiled in a theological debate with the scribes.

Mark 9:38 John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.”

- They are full of envy.

The disciples have an attitude problem - -

- They argued with each other over who would be the greatest in the kingdom.
- They were a stumbling block to a fellow believer.

*That is the context which drives the Lord's teaching in **Matt 18:1ff**.*

Matthew 18:1-11 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said,

- He asked them, “**What were you discussing on the way?**”
- They kept silent, because they were arguing who would be the greatest in the kingdom.
- Even though He has repeatedly told them it is the Father's will for Him to - -
 - ✓ Go to Jerusalem.
 - ✓ Be delivered into the hands of the religious leaders.
 - ✓ Suffer death.

- ✓ Be resurrected on the third day.

They think He's going to establish the Messianic kingdom!

Arrogance blinds the believer to seeing or knowing the will of God.

- That's why they were arguing about which one of them would be the greatest in the kingdom.

Here's the scene in Peter's home -

1. Lord asks, "What were you discussing on the way?" (Mark 9:33)
2. They kept silent (didn't answer - Mark 9:34).
3. Luke 9:47 states that Jesus knew what they were thinking in their heart.
4. They finally come to Him and say "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Look what He does . . .

² And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,

- This child is most likely Peter's son.
- This is His slide on the overhead projector for them – a child!

³ and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- **Converted** – στρέφω – **STREPHO** – *To be turned around*
- Remember the Lord is privately teaching the disciples who are full of pride, jealousy, ambition, & envy.
- This is a very strong reproof from the Lord.

Unless you twelve turn around here and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

With the little boy standing beside Him, they are looking at a depiction of a father and son.

- A child is totally dependent upon his father.

The child has no concept of rank or who is greatest!

The child never asserts himself above his father.

- A child's will is in submission to His father's will.

So the twelve disciples need to be turned around from their arrogant thinking. . .

They must become dependent upon Christ.

They must submit to His will just as a child must submit to his father's will.

That is the epitome of humility.

[Phil 2:5-9]

⁴ “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

- Rank, authority, and responsibility in the kingdom are based upon childlike dependence and submission to the Father’s will.
- Humbling oneself as a child means trusting and submitting, listening and obeying.
 - Trust is born from humility.
 - The humble believer is the one who is trusting in the Lord.
 - The arrogant believer may have trusted in the Lord at salvation but he sees no need to keep on trusting.

It is the one who is trusting in Him for whom “all things are possible.”

- The one who is trusting in the Lord’s service is not motivated by personal ambition or because he desires to be honored or recognized.
- The one who is trusting in the Lord is not seeking promotion; he does not argue who is going to be the greatest.

POD: Capacity for blessing or promotion is contingent upon humility.

The humble believer has his eyes fixed on the Lord.

POD: The humble believer is the one who submits to Christ’s plan for his life.

It’s submission to Christ and His plan for one’s life that results in authority and honor in the kingdom.

⁵ “And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;

Mark 9:38 “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.”

⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me [*a fellow believer*] to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- Here was a man who was doing what the disciples had failed to do and they are jealous.

We have observed from **Matt 17:20** the faith that is required.

POD: Living faith [*mustard seed of quality faith*] results in accomplishing what God has prepared beforehand for you to walk in (Eph. 2:10; Matt 17:19-20; Heb. 11**).**

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Living faith results in works.

- Here's this man whose faith was in the person of Christ and what he was doing was a result of that faith.
- The disciples were jealous. They were envious of this man so they tried to prevent him from casting out demons because the man was not following their little group.

POD: Every believer is acceptable to God in Christ whether they attend your church or not.

- This man walked with childlike faith in Christ.
- His living faith in Christ resulted in works.
- All things were possible for him because of the mustard seed of quality faith he had in the Lord.
- The disciples served as a stumbling block by trying to prevent him from fulfilling the will of Christ.

“Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him”

Definition “Stumbling block” - a hindrance to fulfilling the will of God for one's life

⁷ “Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!

- A stumbling block is something we never want to be!
We never want to be a hindrance to someone fulfilling God's will for their life.
- Instead of being a stumbling block we should be **facilitators**.

We must be mindful of how we might facilitate the functioning of someone's spiritual gift.

Pray for them!

Do whatever might facilitate their gift to function!

Now He tells the disciples they need to seriously deal with their wrong motivation.

⁸ “If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. ⁹ If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

He is not speaking literally here.

Cutting off your body parts does not rid your soul of jealousy or envy!

“Look boys, you need to drop this crappy attitude of yours and get with the program” - was what the Lord was communicating.

¹⁰ “See that you do not despise one of these little ones [a believer who has childlike faith in Me], for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

- The concept of a guardian angel provided for each believer is being introduced here.

- In the angelic realm, angels have rank and only the highest ranked angels have the privilege and honor of seeing the face of God the Father.
- So what He is teaching here is that the disciples should never be aloof or pompous toward a fellow believer.

¹¹ [“For the Son of Man has come . . .

- He came by taking on the form of a bond servant, being made in the likeness of men.
- There is our Savior’s great humility.
- He submitted the independent use of His divine attributes to that of the Father’s.
- Although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God, but emptied Himself.
- **Phil 2:5** commands us, as believers, to have this same attitude ourselves!

¹¹ [“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

- He did that by humbling Himself.

He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Phil 2:8

All Scriptures quoted are from New American Standard unless otherwise noted.