

Worldly Competition

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[0 : 00] Shall we pray? Oh Lord, how we need you this morning.! So that our souls might be washed and enriched.

So that we might receive from you. Lord, we ask in the name of Jesus that you would do what only you can do. Cause your word, oh Lord, to find fertile hearts this morning.

Cause us, oh Lord, to be transformed by your word in ways like only you can do.

So Father, we pray this morning that you would use my lips to speak to your people. And Lord, that you would anoint the heirs of all those who will hear this message.

Not only today, but in the days, months, and years to come. In Jesus' name, and all God's people say, Amen.

[1 : 36] Please turn in your Bible to Mark chapter 9. Mark chapter 9.

And we're going to read verses 38 through 41. Mark chapter 9, verses 38 through 41.

John said to him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name.

And we tried to stop him. Because he was not following us. Verse 39. But Jesus said, Do not stop him.

For no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us.

[2 : 47] For truly, I say to you, Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

You will recall that we are in a year-long series in the book of Mark. And last week, our brother Tim walked us through Mark chapter 9, verses 33 through 37, where we encountered the disciples arguing about who is the greatest among them.

Who is the greatest among them? You'll recall that Jesus sat the disciples down and explained to them that if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.

Indeed, in verse 37 of Mark chapter 9, Jesus makes the point to his disciples that service to children in his name is receiving him and his father.

Today we come to verses 38 through 41, where John, perhaps prompted by Jesus' statement about doing something in his name, made the observation that he and other disciples saw someone casting demons out in Jesus' name.

[4 : 44] John said, because this person was not following them, they tried to stop him. And Jesus told John that they should not stop the man and he gave, Jesus gave the reasons why.

this section of Mark uncovers a very vexing human condition, a desire to compete, a desire to compare oneself against others, and an inclination to think that not only is one always right, everyone who is not a part of one's group is almost always wrong.

We have indeed a clannish approach to life. You're not a part of my church, you gotta be wrong, something is wrong with you.

You're not a part of my group, something is wrong with you. Because we gotta say, mate, we understand this thing perfectly, and you don't.

Jesus addresses this human condition by telling us how we are to approach service, and by extension, how we should evaluate service of others.

[6 : 22] Allow me to make just two more introductory points before going into the heart of our message. You will recall that we've stated time and time again that the book of Mark is written primarily to non-Jews.

people who may have not seen Jesus or heard him directly, they would have been particularly encouraged by these words in Mark.

In a moment, you will see that Jesus dismantled the walls of exclusivity and set out criteria for servanthood that anyone, anywhere could follow.

Not just Jews, but Gentiles and anyone from anywhere could follow those criteria carefully laid out by Jesus.

My final introductory point is that while this account begins with someone casting out a demon, which suggests that this individual perhaps had a leadership role somewhere, you know, that's just the suggestion that maybe this person, given that he was casting out a demon, perhaps he occupied some leadership position and some might think that this passage, therefore, relates only to leaders.

[8 : 16] Not so. This relates to all of us. with that backdrop, let's dig in to these words in Mark chapter 9 verses 38 through 41.

We're going to examine these words. We're going to consider these words under two headings. Under two headings. The first is worldly competition displayed.

worldly competition displayed. And then secondly, worldly competition debout. Worldly competition debout.

If I were to give you, if I were to ask you to give to me the key elements of worldly competition, and I know that many of you here are in business, and if you're not a business owner yourself, you work for someone who is.

So if I were to ask you to tell me what are the elements of worldly competition, I believe you would say such things as ultimately there are winners and there are losers.

[9 : 43] Perhaps you might say every man for himself. self. Or maybe you would say self promotion is important. Perhaps you might say brands and trademarks must be developed and protected at all cost to assure distinctiveness, to ensure uniqueness.

Maybe you would say there are few limits or constraints. whatever it takes. You do it to get by, to get on top. Perhaps others might say, for you to get up, someone must come down buddy. It's as simple as that. Dog eat dog world. Worldly competition is about self. Listen to what John says in verse 38 of Mark chapter 9.

John said to Jesus, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to stop him because why?

He was not following us. John said, we tried to stop him. I want you for a moment to consider the innocency with which John said those words.

[11 : 17] John was being innocent and transparent to Jesus. He felt that there was nothing wrong with what he was saying. No doubt he thought he was bringing Jesus news.

Jesus, there's somebody out there casting out demons in your name and he's not even following us. Perhaps he thought that this would elicit an angry response from Jesus.

John's attitude points to some startling things about human nature that we will share in a moment and that you and I would do well to resist.

John, we see in these words that it was not just John. John was not speaking merely about his observation or what he tried to do.

John said we saw many it was not just him but at least one of the disciples and perhaps all of them. He said we saw someone and no one, none of the other disciples objected to what John said.

[12 : 39] Notice that John Mark certainly did not recall or did not record this man's name. And we've got a quote here from John.

John says teacher we saw someone someone didn't call the man's name didn't perhaps he didn't find out the man's name.

Maybe it was not important to him. Gives you a sense of John's thinking at the time. Jesus teacher we saw someone anyone we saw this man his name was not important.

And then John said that we tried to stop him we tried to stop him because he wasn't following us.

Not because he wasn't following Jesus but because he was not following us is what John said.

We tried to stop him. This man was unknown to the establishment. He was not a part of this crowd.

[13 : 54] John thought that he and the disciples had an exclusive right to Jesus. perhaps the reason they tried to stop him because simply he was not part of the group.

He was not a card carrying member of the group. Maybe John was concerned about the brand. He was concerned about the Jesus brand.

What was John and the other disciples thinking? perhaps they were thinking that they were the ones being trained to take over.

And here was someone performing their gig. It was a personal and selfish mindset. No one else has seen Jesus like we have, perhaps he thought.

no one else understands him like we do. No one else is entitled to this trademark unless we transfer it ourselves.

[15 : 09] Notice for a moment that the disciples based on John's words, they didn't try to stop this man because of his doctrine.

You see, what they did was they condemned his ministry, but not because of his doctrine. You notice that? John didn't say, you know, listen, he was teaching foolishness and so we sought to stop him.

They condemned his ministry, not because of his character, but because he wasn't following them. There is no evidence that they sought to engage this man.

You know, they didn't pull him aside and ask him questions about, you know, why are you doing this? Who are you? They just tried to stop him in the very act.

And apparently they were unsuccessful in doing so. No engagement. Just stop what you're doing because you don't follow us.

[16 : 30] Not because your doctrine is wrong, not because you've got a history of bad behavior, but simply because you are not a part of this exclusive tribe.

You don't go to my church, so you must be wrong. You're not a part of my group, so you must be wrong. You don't attend prayer meeting with me, so you surely can't have it all together.

You got to stop. They were more concerned about the exorcism being done in Jesus' name than they were about the fact that people were being helped and cured.

God can you imagine that? Here it is, this man casting out demons in Jesus' name, helping people, helping people who've been afflicted and John and the disciples were more concerned about stopping this man because he wasn't following them than they were about the results that these people were enjoying.

How do we get to that point? How do we get to the point where we are willing to condemn someone who is doing good in Jesus' name simply because they're not part of the group?

[18 : 09] How do we get there? that's where John was. He was willing to condemn this man to stop him in the very act.

In the very act. Now remember a few verses earlier we saw that the disciples themselves could not cast out demons.

the disciples failed to acknowledge that this man he knew something about Jesus.

He knew something about Jesus. He was casting out demons after all in his name. But John felt that only they were empowered.

They were uniquely and solely empowered to do this work. But what does this tell us about John's and our psychology?

[19 : 14] It tells me at least that we have a tendency to believe that we are always right. We tend to believe that we have it made and everybody else either they are fully wrong or they're more wrong than we are.

But we're always right. You see we can live in a bubble and believe that everything outside is wrong.

It's easy to get caught up in a bubble. Easy. You know let me say this most politicians live in bubbles and most preachers most people who go to church live in bubbles as well.

But these disciples they had zeal with no compassion whatsoever. Willing to see people remain possessed with demons simply because this man was not following them.

Jesus listened to John and he debunked or he exposed the falseness of the notion of worldly competition.

[20 : 44] Jesus having listened to John and having realized that John was being competitive that John was comparing himself with this man Jesus said I'm going to give you reasons why this is all wrong John why your approach is all wrong.

Reason number one Jesus helps John to see don't compete because the gospel is about him.

Don't compete because the gospel John is not about you it's about me it's about Jesus look at what Jesus says in verse 39 Jesus said do not stop him for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me so Jesus helps!

to see that we ought not compete because the gospel is about him it's not about us the criterion of faithful ministry that Jesus gives is that ministry is being done in his name that's it is he who is to be glorified not the minister not the preacher not the one who's being helped it is he who is being is to be glorified apparently this man was not seeking to make a name for himself he was after all promoting Jesus he was casting out the demon in Jesus name he was invoking the power and the authority of Jesus and the disciples knew it and we can assume that the people being delivered that they also knew it the observers they knew it

Jesus was being glorified worldly competition among believers just makes absolutely no sense because believers should be bringing glory to Jesus and not to them themselves it's not about them it's not about you and me it's about Jesus it's about his name it's about his glory ministry should be viewed through God's enabling prism one through the precious blood of Jesus ministry is like a check with the signature of Jesus drawing from his account it's an appropriation of Jesus inheritance!

[23 : 54] This man this man did not cast out the demon in any other name but the name of Jesus it is his name that ministry is done you see you and I when we minister we minister in Jesus name and for his glory when we think of it this way it becomes clear that competition is foolish you and I we minister in the name of Jesus and not for our glory but for his it's clear that competition makes no sense the question we should ask is this is Jesus being glorified that's the only question there is that's the only question there is not whether somebody is following me or following someone else or am I better or if I'm getting a bigger crowd no the question is is Jesus

Christ being glorified our job is to see ourselves as servants all promoting Jesus the Christ and Jesus further makes the point he says one who does a mighty work in his name cannot shortly after speak evil of him can't do a mighty work mighty act in Jesus name on the one hand and immediately after speak negatively about him he!

he! Jesus helps the disciples and by extension us to see that there is a second reason why worldly! competition is wrong! Jesus helps us to see in verse 40 that we should not compete because if someone is not against us he is for us he is for us look at what verse 40 says let's read verse 40 together it says for the one who is not against us is for us let me say that in bohemian vernacular look he ain't doing you nothing I believe Jesus would have said it that way he ain't doing you nothing he ain't bothering!

you and if he! against you! if he ain't point for a moment these disciples who were with Jesus who heard him directly who witnessed his miracles who were commissioned directly by Jesus Jesus did not permit them to put down this man!

[27 : 28] how much how much less do you think he permit us to put down others he didn't let them do it you think he's gonna let us he's gonna be pleased if you and I were to do it Jesus says if he's not putting me down but instead promoting me that's fine let's celebrate that Jesus is standard for tolerating someone who does not belong to the tribe if you will so much lower than our own we set our own standards they must be part of our denomination they must be part of our clique they must wear their clothes a certain way same kind of way that we do that's the way many of us think but

I want to tell you something the apostle Paul in Philippians talked a little bit about this kind of attitude apostle Paul helps us to see that really ultimately it's only about bringing glory to God the apostle Paul when he wrote the book of Philippians he was imprisoned and in Philippians chapter one Paul talks about the fact that there were some who preached let's turn to it and see it very clearly in verse 15 of Philippians chapter one Paul says that some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry but others from good will the latter do it out of love knowing that

I am put here for the defense of the gospel the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment then he asked what then what then only that in every way whether in pretense or in truth Christ is proclaimed and in that I rejoice Paul makes the point that some people were preaching Christ out of love while others were doing it out of envy and rivalry and using the occasion of his imprisonment basically to say all kinds of things no doubt about him but Paul said you know as long as they're preaching Christ I rejoice as long as they are preaching

Christ I rejoice now you see it could very well be that John and the disciples were jealous jealous of this man they were jealous of this man but Jesus tells them you know listen you need not be jealous you need not be concerned because if he is not against us he is for us and Moses actually confronted a situation like this as well in Numbers chapter 11 Moses having led the Israelites out of

Egypt Moses went to the Lord and Moses said to the Lord Moses says listen I've got 600,000 people who we have led out of Egypt and these people they are completing bitterly he said they want to eat meat and they were completing bitterly they were saying when we were in Egypt we used to have meat and we used to have fish and we used to have fine vegetables imagine that enslaved nonetheless and Moses went to the Lord and Moses says listen I didn't give birth to these 600,000 people he says I can't take this he said Lord I can't take this why did you put me in this situation church says it's too much for me to bear and then the Lord said to Moses the Lord said to him I want you to appoint 70 elders and I will cause my spirit to be poured out on these men and they are to prophesy outside the tent and now we pick up in verse 26 of

[33 : 05] Numbers chapter 11 the Bible tells us that now two men remained in the camp one name Eldad and the other named Medad and the spirit rested on them they were among those registered but they had not gone out to the tent and so they prophesied in the camp and a young man ran and told Moses Eldad this is what the young man said the young man said Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp see he's not a part of the 70 and Joshua the son of Nun the assistant of Moses from his youth said my lord Moses stop them stop them from prophesying but listen to what Moses said in response Moses said to Joshua are you jealous for my sake are you jealous for my sake truly would that all the lord's people were prophets that the lord would put his spirit on them and Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp it's the lord's work and the lord chooses whomever he wills there's no need for competition there is no need for us to be jealous of how the lord uses any of his servants they are his servants after all but there's a third and final reason Jesus gives for why worldly competition is wrong don't compete

Jesus says because he rewards everyone who does anything in his name don't compete because he is the rewarder and he rewards everyone listen to what Jesus says in verse 41 of Mark chapter 9 for truly I say to you whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward Jesus said there's no need to compete because he rewards everyone who does anything in his name in this last verse Jesus plainly states that he is the rewarder of those who serve him not the disciples or anyone else for that matter but before

Jesus this Jesus lays out a few things that I wish us to see at this point notice that Jesus makes clear that the reward is open to everyone Jesus says for truly I say to you whoever whoever of course we are speaking here of any believer then he says whoever gives you a cup of water now there isn't a single person in here who's incapable of giving someone a cup of water and so Jesus makes the point by drawing on this illustration that it does not matter you can do the smallest thing it doesn't matter it doesn't matter what you do

I mean this ought to be an encouragement to someone it doesn't matter what you do as long as you do it as long as you give it in the name of the Lord Jesus says that he is mindful of it that he sees it that he rewards it so what are you doing what are you doing perhaps you have looked at your work and you thought I wonder if the Lord sees this because no one else does I don't get up here and preach so I wonder if the Lord sees it wonder if the Lord sees it well Jesus helps you with this point here he said it doesn't matter what you do even if it's a glass of water which everyone can do even if it's a word of encouragement even if it's opening the door for someone even if it's shaking someone's hand by way of encouragement so that they know that they're not excluded but a part of the body of the

[38 : 34] Lord part of the group Jesus says it does not matter reward is given for an act done in the name of the Lord how many of you realize today that this gotta be true that either Jesus is going to reward everyone who gives a cup of water to drink because it belongs to Christ or none of it is true and I believe that this is true and every bit of it is true that Jesus will reward those who do anything in his name ultimately you and

I serve Jesus when we serve others when you and I serve others we serve Jesus Jesus was saying that we ought to do we ought to give things in his name and the blessings will come from him so competing makes no sense!

you see in worldly competition there's a limited number of customers and only those who attract a certain number will be rewarded if you will with the continuation of their business you see in the world that's the way it is if you only got a thousand customers and there are ten businesses and each one needs 300 to get by everybody isn't going to!

make it everybody is not going to be rewarded with business continuity that's not a problem in the kingdom of God everybody is going to be rewarded because Jesus sees and he knows what we do

he is the one who rewards everyone for everything and in this kingdom you don't rise by pulling people down by seeking to stop them when they are doing work in the name of the Lord this is not the world system but you got to go out there and compete for every dollar and perhaps do things that are going to hurt the competition Jesus said not so there is enough be there is more than enough for everyone and so as we conclude this morning the message is simple let's not compete let's not compete let's do our deeds in the name of the Lord in the name of the Lord whatever you do let's do it in the name of the Lord let's live our lives in the name of the Lord we used to say that often growing up we used to hear our parents say that everything in the name of the Lord I do this in the name of the Lord let's give in the name of the Lord whatever you do whether it's serving at the door whether it's giving someone a drink nor that the Lord sees and will reward you and pray pray and ask the Lord to give your heart to break through the walls of exclusivity Lord let me be open to others let me be open to others let me not be judgmental but let me be open to others to unbelievers to unbelievers we believe that our efforts here on earth will be rewarded in the age to come not because of what we have done but because of what

[43 : 04] Jesus did 2000 years ago in a way you can call it cheating you can call it cheating if you want you see because not only do we get to live here but we get to live forever with the one in whose name we do things truth is at one point we were just like you we were without hope but Jesus God's son having borne the penalty of our sin he rescued us and now we are in right standing with Christ and our prayer my prayer the prayers of saints gathered is that the Lord's grace will similarly be yours God