

***Recap of 10/15/23 message by Pastor Chris (Mark 9:38-50):***

- The question of why the disciples stopped the unnamed exorcist is important to understanding Jesus' instruction in this passage. John tells us the reason they tried to stop him was because he "was not following us." It was a matter of exclusivism, a sectarian attitude that revealed the pride in their hearts. This is a continuation of their revealed sin of pride in their arguing over who would be greater. This is the reason Jesus instructs them not to stop him. It is not a prescriptive instruction to allow all teachers and apparent miracle workers to continue as long as they are using the magic word "Jesus" in their work. On the contrary, Jesus Himself calls out hypocrisy of wrongful teachers (Matthew 23). The apostles continue this stance against false teaching. The issue the disciples have with the unnamed exorcist is not one of theological dissent, false teaching, nor charlatan acts used for self-gain. Their issue was simply that he wasn't part of their club, and it was a matter of the disciples' sin in their hearts.
- Jesus moves then into hyperbolic imagery to make the point that sin is quite serious. One's sin is not only harmful to themselves, but also to the people around them, possibly causing others to stumble. It must be dealt with and cut out by every believer. Jesus' point is clear - There is no negotiation with sin, it's amputation. Jesus is not advocating for self-mutilation, rather it's a picture for the seriousness of sin and how it must be dealt with. It must be cut away from the believer's life. While we all struggle with different sin, this principle is the same. The sin of the disciples in that moment was one of pride leading to division among themselves and the body of Christ. This is why after Jesus instructs them about cutting sin out, He teaches about salt and living in peace with one another.
- Having salt in ourselves is having a gospel perspective of ourselves and God which leads to peace with one another. When we have a wrong view of ourselves, we tend to think either lowly or highly of ourselves. A low view is seen as low self-esteem or an inferiority complex leading to a focus on self and self needs. This leads toward jealousy and need for approval. On the other hand, a high view is seen as an exalted self-esteem or a superiority complex which also leads to a focus on self and self needs. This often leads to contempt for others and a self-sufficiency that scripture teaches against. Both of these wrongful views leave one consumed with self and unable to minister effectively to others. The right view or gospel view of self is seen in the phrase, "God has made me what I am!" It is a recognition that you are a sinner that has been saved by grace. This leads to a focus not on self-image, but on the image of Christ being formed in you. This moves you toward true humility, the freedom to focus entirely on others and their needs. The freedom to minister effectively and be at peace with one another.