

Title: MISCELLANEOUS ATTITUDES, MARK 9:38-50
(Chatham, NJ; 9/30/12, AM) [D – Exegesis]

Theme: Jesus expresses numerous teachings on a number of attitudes that the disciple must adopt and live by.

Purpose: To examine what attitudes are appropriate for the disciple and to encourage us to adopt them.

Introduction:

1. There are a number of things here that reveal important attitudes for the disciple.
2. They may not seem related except that they are specific to being a follower of Christ.
3. We must pay careful attention to them.

I. Not Being One of Us, 38-40 ((How do we relate to those who believe differently?))

- Christianity is exclusive on the one hand and inclusive on the other: everyone must believe that Jesus is the Christ, but that includes all races, each gender, and all nations of people
- There are of necessity requirements to be included
- Jesus, however, interjects some leniency into the thought of the early disciples
- Remember that this would have been read by the early church.
- He comes up with “For the one who is not against us is for us.” (40)
- Moses’ own struggle to have allies may provide some insight, Numbers 11:24-29 (Explain the story)
- Today we can use all the allies we can get; we may have theological differences, but we certainly need friends in our fight against a prevailing unrighteous culture.
- Those who aren’t against us are for us.

II. Practice Hospitality, 41

- “Whoever gives you a cup of coldwater...”
- Related to the previous discussion: their hospitality toward those who represent Christ suggests they are with us more than their differences may at first indicate
- Admittedly we have to uncover exactly what those differences are: some are more divisive than others. (Episcopal bishop stated that you don’t need Christ for salvation: this is offensive, divisive, and heretical. It is enough to sever fellowship.)
- Yet a man I know recently gave me a small donation to me on behalf of the church.
- I hope that I understand verse 40 correctly that he will “...not lose his reward.”
- Even small demonstrations of kindness and hospitality are important for disciples, not just to receive but to give; Hebrews 13:2 & 16

III. “Little ones” afforded special care

- Little ones are new converts, children, or the innocent and vulnerable
- Certainly ones “who believe in me”
- To seduce them is one of the worst offenses
- The Millstone and the Sea (42) – perhaps if God gets his hands on this person the punishment will be worse
- We need to recover a sense of being repulsed by sin and by those who attack the vulnerable and innocent (sexual abuse would have to be one of those things)
- As much as we want to be a forgiving people, we also have to be concerned with justice for and protection of the innocent

IV. Believe that Sin Is Serious: cut off offending members (43-48)

- These statements are hyperbole, a figure of speech (intentional exaggeration) never meant to be literal
- Origen, an early-church theologian, took literally the idea that people “made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven,” Mt. 19:12
- In the 90s (?) a non-Christian cult (killed themselves to meet up with the Hale-Bop comet) believed that there should be no distinctions between male and female and some of the men took this literally as well
- There has never been, nor should there be, a widely-accepted practice among Christians to take literally the ideas of cutting off any part of our bodies because they sin
- Here is the point: sin is very serious (wrath of God is coming, Eph. 5:6)
- “Living in sin” is no grounds for joking, smirking, or mockery

V. Salted with Fire, 49-50

- A metaphor of judgment, separation of the righteous and wicked, John speaks of Jesus baptizing with fire
- Salt is a symbol of cleansing (it is good just as the cutting off offending parts are good or “better” in some translations)
- Having salt in yourselves is a reference to the covenant (Lev. 2:13) that included the purifying effects of the holiness of God (in bread salt moderates the growth of yeast)
- We are called to be filled with the purifying effects of God’s holiness and grace

Conclusion:

1. Be at peace with one another, 50.
2. Incorporates reflection on all the previous issues: those who aren’t one of us, hospitality, the little ones, seriousness of sin, and salted with fire.
3. These are attitudes that facilitate peace among us.
4. Let’s adopt these in order that peace might reign in our hearts and in our fellowship.
5. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the foundation of all of this; the grace of God and forgiveness for sin sustains and purifies us from unrighteousness.
6. Believe in the grace of God, obey the Gospel, accept forgiveness and redemption; peace will enter and rule your heart.