

“Like a Little Child”  
Mark 9:33-37  
(Preached at Trinity, September 12, 2012)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. It is amazing that after all that had transpired in the previous passage, we would find a selfish concern over who would be greatest in heaven. They had seen the glorious transfiguration of Christ and witnessed the infinite power of Christ over the demons. In the face of this the disciples were given over to the desire for prideful exaltation. The Luke account describes it as an argument - διαλογισμός  
**Luke 9:46 NAU** - "An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest."
  2. Jesus answered by using a child for an example. It is interesting how often we find the presence of children around Jesus. Undoubtedly they felt attracted to Jesus and Jesus was kind to receive them. In this case Jesus called one of the children and held the child in His arms.  
**Mark 9:36 NAU** - "Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,"
  3. Jesus would use this occasion to teach them the nature of humility and servanthood.
- I. This is not a minor issue. Jesus states that it is at the heart of a relationship with Him  
**Mark 9:37 NAU** - "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."
- A. Jesus states that receiving Him demands that one die to self
    1. What Jesus seems to be saying is to welcome a little child, one who is insignificant, one who is incapable of adding to your prestige is at the heart of the humility that should characterize those who receive Him
    2. The parallel passage in Matthew is much more revealing  
**Matthew 18:1-4 NAU** - "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" <sup>2</sup> And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, <sup>3</sup> and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
    3. In essence Jesus is saying, "The essence of following me is to humble yourself as this little child." To receive Christ demands a change of heart whereby we see others as greater than ourselves. It demands a change of heart – a conversion.
  - B. Pride has been the greatest curse of men from the beginning
    1. It was the root cause of the fall of Adam
    2. It was the root cause of the first murder

3. It can be found at the tower of Babel  
See **Gen. 11:1-9** - "Let us make us a name"
- C. Pride characterizes the lost man  
**2 Timothy 3:1-4 NAU** - "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,"  
**Psalm 10:4 NAU** - "The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*. All his thoughts are, "There is no God."  
**Mark 7:21-22 NAU** - "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, <sup>22</sup> deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness."
- D. God is in great opposition to the prideful
- 1 God hates pride  
**Proverbs 8:13 NAU** - "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate."  
**Proverbs 6:16-17 NAU** - "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: <sup>17</sup> Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,"
  - 2 God resists the proud  
**1 Peter 5:5-6 NAS** - "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,"
    - a. The proud man is trying to be successful in his occupation  
God is opposing him
    - b. The proud man is trying to be successful in his home life  
God is opposing him
    - c. The proud man is trying to be financially successful  
God is opposing him
    - d. The proud man is trying to be religious  
God is opposing him.
- E. Jesus says that the only solution for pride is Christian conversion
1. It changes us from prideful and self-serving to meek and humble
  2. It changes our pride but does not annihilate it.  
This will take much work and discipline on our part. The greatest thing that conversion does is awaken us to the existence of pride and puts us in a war with it.
  3. Do you recognize your pride? Is your life an exercise in self-promotion?  
How much time to you spend telling others about yourself, your life, your accomplishments, your goals, your desires.  
How often do you use personal pronouns I, me, my, mine

4. Here's an exercise for you that will serve as a test of your pride. See if you can go a month without talking about yourself one time.

## II. Jesus teaches on the importance of humility and servanthood

### A. He uses the example of a child.

1. On one hand this may seem strange. Children are among the most prideful. To them, their own world is the most important.
2. Yet they are weak and helpless – limited in strength and knowledge. They are trusting, simplistic, unpretentious.
3. It is important that we see the focus. The true focus is upon the disciples. The true focus is the contrast between the disciple and the child.
  - a. The child had no accomplishments on which to brag, no power, no prestige, no authority. We must be willing to receive the least in society and be their servant if we are to receive Christ.
  - b. Jesus is telling His disciples that to receive Him demands receiving the child in His name. In other words, being willing to see the least important as being greatest.  
**Mark 9:35 NAU** - "He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."
  - c. Paul taught this in Philippians 2  
**Philippians 2:3-4 NAS** - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; <sup>4</sup> do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

### B. The perfect picture of humility and servanthood – The Lord Jesus Christ

1. The King of Kings came to earth as a servant
  - a. See the "Lord's Supper" and the dispute among the disciples  
**Luke 22:24-27 NAU** - "And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest. <sup>25</sup> And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors. But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. <sup>27</sup> "For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves."
  - b. Jesus answered their dispute in John 13  
**John 13:3-5 NAU** - "*Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, <sup>4</sup> got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. <sup>5</sup> Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

2. We must be willing to be servants to all  
**Mark 9:35 NAU** - "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."
  - a. This is for ALL of us. Even if you are in a place of authority you must see yourself as a servant. You can lead one having authority and at the same time have a servant's heart
  - b. Servanthood is at the heart of discipleship

### III. What can we do?

- A. Pray that you might become more like Christ  
**Philippians 2:5 NAU** - "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,"
- B. Pray that God would fill you with His Spirit  
 The Spirit filled life demands submission – to God, to one another  
**Ephesians 5:18-21 NAU** - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; <sup>21</sup> and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
- C. Pray that God will give you a servant's heart  
**Mark 9:35 NAU** - "Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."
  1. The natural man desires only that which is good for himself
  2. The good servant labors for his master
- D. Pray that God might increase your love for the brethren  
**1 Corinthians 13:4 NAU** - "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant,"
  1. Only a true love for God and for others will bring us to deny ourselves
  2. Instead of focusing upon yourself try directing your attention upon the lives of others
- E. Pray that you might see yourself as you truly are
  1. A lump of clay in the Potter's hand
  2. A sinner who set out to dethrone God – treason!
  3. A robber of God's glory