

**LENT 2021 - Who Do You Say That I Am?
"A Different Kind of Realm"**

March 7, 2021

Overarching theme: John 20:21, Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' In 2021, as DISCIPLES, we are SENT with the peace of Christ to share with others!

Instructions: When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Passage: **Mark 9:36-50 NRSV** ³⁶ *Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them,* ³⁷ *"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."*

³⁸ *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."* ³⁹ *But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me."* ⁴⁰ *Whoever is not against us is for us.* ⁴¹ *For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.*

⁴² *"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea."* ⁴³ *If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.* ⁴⁵ *And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell.* ⁴⁷ *And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell,* ⁴⁸ *where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.*

⁴⁹ *"For everyone will be salted with fire."* ⁵⁰ *Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."*

Commentary:

This collection of sayings is very difficult for Christians to hear. The amputation metaphors, with their references to the fires of hell, can be perceived in legalistic terms as words of damnation, not grace. Yet we should be able to recognize the metaphoric use of language in these sayings, which were part of familiar proverbs in Jesus' day. His audience would have had no difficulty recognizing the fact that Jesus was speaking metaphorically and was not literally suggesting that we remove an offending body part.

These sayings challenge us to examine the quality of our discipleship. By the grace of God, are we open to welcoming others as beloved children of God, or do we allow social status or tribal affiliations to get in the way? Employing radical hyperbole to get his disciple's attention, Jesus calls them (and us) to be decisive with whatever gets in the way with being at peace with one another. After all, we are called to be 'the salt of the earth' (Matt 5:13a). Just as the Father sent him, Jesus is sending us to make a difference for his purposes of peace in this world.

– adapted from the New Interpreter's Bible, Vol VIII p. 641

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

1. Read Mark 9:33-34. Why do you think the disciples argued about who was the greatest disciple?
2. In the 1st century, children had no legal rights or inherit status in the Roman world. How does this understanding inform Jesus' words "*whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*" Who might be a 21st Century equivalent to "one such child" that Jesus would call us to welcome?
3. Why do you think John told the rival exorcist to stop (v. 38)? How does Jesus' response inform how we might be called to relate to people of different groups in our world today?
4. Why do you think Jesus is so extreme in his warnings about those who would cause one of these '*little ones who believe in me*' to stumble? Understanding the nature of hyperbole, is there anything that you need to let go of in order to be "*at peace*" (v. 50) with others?

Activity for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional and spend time pondering and meditating on the challenge.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Mark 9:50
⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."
3. Brainstorm ways that you can live into the "cup of water" metaphor (v. 41) this week. Make it your aim to help someone 'hydrate' each day in Jesus' name.