

ONE WHO CAUSES OTHERS TO SIN

Mark 9:30-50

Key Verse: 9:50

"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

Last time we studied about Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain into his original image as God. He shone with dazzling white and he looked holy. He came to talk with suffering servants, Shepherd Moses and Elijah. It is good for us to have Jesus' original image as God in our hearts. Otherwise, we are occupied with many kinds of evil images in our souls and we are not happy. Jesus went up on the mountain and transfigured to show his original image to his disciples so that they could understand the meaning of his death on the cross and his glorious [resurrection](#) on the third day. In today's passage Jesus talks about his death and resurrection briefly to his disciples. Next, he mainly talks about Christian influence. When we empty our hearts and listen to the word of God, may God richly bless us; may the word of God be planted and sprout and grow like an oak tree so that we may be great men of influence like Father Abraham.

I. The Son of Man (30-32)

Jesus and his disciples left that place and passed through Galilee. Obviously, Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem for the last time to become the Lamb of God to shed his blood on the cross. Jesus' footsteps were heavy and his apprehension about the cross made him brace himself. Still, Jesus had one clear mission. It was to plant the meaning of his death and resurrection in the hearts of his disciples. Look at verses 30-31a. "They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples." In the past, our Lord [Jesus Christ](#) wanted to teach his disciples. But when he saw the flock of God's sheep crowding around him, his heart went out to preach the [kingdom of God](#) and to take care of their sick bodies. This time, however, Jesus was very solemn and he left the crowd of people far behind. He was passing through Galilee and next he wanted to arrive in Capernaum. It is very obvious that he was going to Jerusalem for the last time to become the Lamb of God to shed his blood on the cross. We repeat "the Lamb of God to shed his blood on the cross." But even if we repeat 100 times, "the Lamb of God to shed his blood on the cross," we are all the more overwhelmed by his grace. Our Lord Jesus Christ's crucifixion on the cross imputes life to us. If Jesus was not crucified, the gospel message has no power. But Jesus was crucified on the cross to blot out our transgressions and iniquities. It has great power, and whenever we think about the Lamb of God shedding blood on the cross we shed many tears endlessly.

Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that his disciples still did not grasp the meaning of his death and resurrection in their hearts. They were full of worldly ideas. To Jesus, it was a very sorrowful event that his disciples didn't understand the main point of his teaching: He would die for the sin of the world and rise again from the dead and ascend into heaven and he would be our Christ, Lord of lords and King of kings. Jesus taught

his disciples about his death and resurrection repeatedly. Mark 8:31 says, "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again." When Jesus said this, Peter was upset. He took Jesus aside and rebuked him not to do that. This time Jesus told them again about his death and resurrection very plainly (31b). But they did not understand what he meant. They wanted to know what he meant, but they were afraid to ask him about it. Even to hear the words "death on the cross," made their bodies shake and they were too afraid to ask Jesus about his death and resurrection. We are the same. We want to share many happy stories, drinking many bottles of coke. We want to talk about baseball games with excitement. But if we hear that one of our friends was killed in a car accident we immediately feel gloomy. Sometimes we associate our death with his tragic death. When we hear that one of our close friends died of cancer, we feel gloomy until we are deeply depressed. When Jacqueline Kennedy died of cancer we felt very sorry that the mother of our nation had passed away. She once had a blinking and shining beauty to the eyes of President Kennedy. Likewise, the disciples wanted to live in this world forever. They didn't want to die. They thought they were too young to die. So they were unhappy whenever Jesus talked about the core of the gospel, his death on the cross and glorious resurrection.

Jesus also did not want to die in his prime. But in order to fulfill God's plan of world salvation, he had to lay in a manger in a stable of an animal. When he began his earthly messianic ministry, he was despised and rejected by men. He became a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering (Isa 53:3). He suffered so much for God's sheep that he became familiar with sufferings. There are many students who are not familiar with their homework. But Jesus was familiar with sufferings and he was a man of sorrows because there were so many sorrowful sheep of God's flock under the power of sin. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities. He was wounded so that we might be healed (Isa 53:4-5). This was the Lord's plan for his one and only Son to carry the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. As a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors (Isa 53). This is the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross as the Lamb of God. His resurrection defeated the power of sin and death with God's love and shone his love to the world and gave men peace on the earth. Through his resurrection, Jesus opened the way for us to go back to his kingdom by his grace.

Let's see the response of his disciples concerning his crucifixion and the glorious resurrection. Verse 32 says, "But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it." Their response was, "Well, I don't understand. I mean it." The matter of understanding is a matter of heart. If you don't want to understand, you cannot understand. In Chinese letters, misunderstanding is "O hae," which means five misunderstandings. "Ee hae" means two understandings. So Confucius said we can understand if we subtract three misunderstandings from the five; we can come to understand. Not only can we understand others, we also become saintly persons. The disciples did not understand because they decided not to understand. If we are going to understand, there is nothing that we cannot understand. We can understand even

the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. The same was true with his twelve disciples. But they decided not to understand, so they did not understand Jesus' crucifixion and the glorious resurrection. St. Paul, who knew Jesus' death on the cross and glorious resurrection said to the Ephesian coworkers in Ephesians 1:18, "I pray also that 'the eyes of your heart' may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...." He also prayed in Ephesians 3:16, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being...." May God open the eyes of our hearts. May the Holy Spirit make our inner beings firm in the faith of our Lord's death on the cross and resurrection. We must pray that our faith in his death and resurrection will be rooted and established in God's hope.

Jesus was very sorry that his disciples did not understand his death on the cross and glorious resurrection, even when he was bracing himself before his upcoming crucifixion.

II. "I am the greatest" (33-35)

Look at verses 33-34. "They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest." When we read about the disciples, they were indeed no more than mundane men. But we respect them. Even in the former Soviet Union many parents named their children after the eleven disciples or other great men in the Bible. Stalin's name was "Josef Stalin." "Mikhail" Gorbachev was named after the archangel of God. His parents hoped that he would be God's great angel Mikhail. Last month, our quartet team leader, honorable Chris Kelly, had a son. He named him Matthew in the hope that his son will be like Matthew who wrote "The Sermon on the Mount" after his transformation. All parents want their children to be number one in their class. Last week one of our women missionaries rebuked her first son from 11:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m. because his report card was not upgraded. This mother felt more painful than her son to rebuke him for so many hours. But her hope is that her son will be number one in his class. Not only mothers, everyone has a great desire to be number one. There was a grade school boy who lived under his stepmother and had no time to do homework. So he did not catch up in school studies and was 71st out of 72. But he was very happy that there was one boy who was inferior to him. However, he learned how to strike with a bicycle chain, and he became "king of the alley" among the students in his school. He was very proud of himself that he was the "king of the alley," including the sixth graders, when he was in the fourth grade. There are many terrible events in newspaper articles. Some people want to be very popular even if notorious articles are published about them. So they commit unforgivable acts of misconduct. People are frightened at the news. But the one whose misconduct is publicized is very happy that he became very popular in the community, because his story was published in the newspaper. He thinks he is somebody.

There are many children who want to be loved by their mothers. But the mothers become wayward and divorce their husbands and abandon their children. Soon they bring new men one by one to live with their children. Then the children who want to receive the most love from their mothers despair. They gradually become crooked and see everything in a crooked

way. One lady who lives in Florida wanted to be Miss America someday. But she was abused by her stepfather. Her desire to be the greatest faded away and hatred grew and grew. She lost her beauty and her desire to be number one. Finally she began to live at random. The Jewish people were originally chosen people. But now they have been mostly secularized. Still, they want to be number one among humankind. So they keep growing moustaches and beards and wear dark clothes which look like funeral clothes and also wear dark hats. They want to be number one by growing moustaches and beards and wearing dark clothes and hats. We deeply understand their national pride and peculiarity in this modern time. But they think they are the greatest people among all people. There was a heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield. He was not born to be a boxer, but through his self-control he became the heavyweight champion several times. He even made Mike Tyson helpless. Mike Tyson could not hit him even one time. He bragged about himself, "I am the greatest and Muhammed Ali is the second greatest in the boxing world." But one day the English boxer Lennox Lewis challenged him. When the fight began, Lewis made his face like a rib steak through his left jab. Then he knocked Evander Holyfield out in the last round. Evander Holyfield, who thought he was number one, could not hit him even once. So he disappeared from the boxing world.

These days, those who want to be the greatest are dwindling. Muhammed Ali, with his big mouth, shouted, "I am the greatest." As a result, he became the greatest champion in the 20th century even though there were much better boxers. But these days, people don't want to be the greatest or greater. They just want to live quietly and easily. This is the reason why Harvard University could not maintain the number one ranking among universities in the United States of America. Harvard University became number two next to Princeton University. It seems to be a small matter. But it is the sign that young people's vision or ambition is dwindling. It is not necessarily bad that one wants to be the greatest. In fact, it is necessary. Matthew 11:12 explains this theory. It says, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it." We must know that the truly greatest man is a man of God. Therefore, we Christians should not be ambitious and crush our children to make them become the greatest in the world. We must pray for them to be the greatest in the sight of God.

III. Jesus' definition of being the greatest (36-37)

Look at verses 36-37. "He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'" Jesus' definition of who is the greatest has two points. First, we must be like little children. Usually children trust and obey their parents. They love their parents so much. They call their mommy more than 20 times each day. I heard that a decent boy who is in the first year of junior high school always hung around his mom and drew his mom's attention every day for at least two or three hours on the pretext of his homework. When we look at little children, they look like angels. Here Jesus is saying that the disciples should have complete trust and obedience to his words. Without complete trust and obedience we cannot come to know our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the word "trust" has an absolute influence to the word "obedience." When

we trust, we can obey. During the Revolutionary War between the English army and American residents for independence, the English soldiers were like salary men. The American residents were like peasant farmers who wanted to have their own farms. Americans' complete trust in their leader during the war was remarkable. Even though they were not trained, and arms supplies were very limited, they fought with great courage. On the other hand, the English soldiers fought with well-disciplined military skill and their abundant weapons. Soon the English soldiers lost their morale. They began to disobey their officers and commanders. In this way, they lost the war to the American residents. The American residents' trust in their leader was remarkable. In this way, America defeated English soldiers.

A child was in Jesus' arms. This child trusted and obeyed his parents. Likewise, when we trust and obey the word of Jesus we come to know Jesus that he is the Son of God and he is the Lamb of God who died for our transgressions and iniquities. Mundane people struggle hard and obtain the president's position in many companies for the time being and then retire and go to a nursing home. The presidential campaign shows us that to become the greatest by becoming the president of the United States of America, they work hard. But after four years, their terms are over and they must go back to civilian life. There are many great people in the world. But there are no greatest people in the world. According to Jesus, the greatest people are those who trust and obey Jesus' words. They come to know that Jesus is the Son of God who carried out God's mission by shedding much blood on the cross and rising again in glory. The greatest person is the one who knows Jesus is the Son of God. The greatest person is the one who knows the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross and his glorious resurrection. The greatest person is a child of God.

In this verse we learn another mystery. Let's read verse 37. "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." One who knows the Son of God through complete trust and obedience can know who God is. One who accepts Jesus' words, like a little child who trusts and obeys his parents, can come to know Jesus is the Son of God through the gospel accounts. Through Jesus he comes to know who God is. One who knows God knows the spiritual world. He also knows the kingdom of God. We can know God through Jesus. We can know God and his kingdom when we trust and obey our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. One who causes others to sin (38-50)

After Jesus taught them who is the greatest, they were again walking on the way to Jerusalem. Abruptly John said to Jesus, "We saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." John was in the midst of a hegemony struggle with Peter. In short, he was offensive in character. He saw a bunch of people who were driving out demons in the name of Jesus. So he said to Jesus, "We saw a man driving out demons in your name. And we told him to stop." Jesus answered in verses 39-40, "Do not stop him. No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us." Here Jesus teaches John that he should be generous and embrace those who work in the name of Jesus Christ as his fellow coworkers. A bigoted person can never be a great servant of God. Instead, one whose heart is as wide as the summer sea can be a disciple

of Jesus. We must recognize those who work in the name of Jesus as our fellow coworkers. The disciples of Jesus are not basically bigoted; they are universal in the truth of God.

Look at verse 42. "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck." This verse tells us the seriousness of causing others to sin. It also sounds terrifying. Causing others to sin is the most serious sin in the sight of God. It brings them to hell where the fire never ends. Sometimes we make others stumble in faith by joking. Once a young girl said to her roommate who was a sincere Christian, "Hey, you look like a fanatic. Why do you go to your church every Sunday afternoon? Why do you do Daily Bread every morning? You have no boyfriend, right?" Doubt crept into the Christian girl's mind. Then she stopped coming to worship service and wanted to be accepted by her peers. She drank a lot and did everything others did. She contracted the HIV virus and died. Her death is the responsibility of the girl who planted doubt in her heart.

Since classroom prayer was stopped by an insane woman through the Supreme Court, in many high schools, gun shootings have occurred throughout the country. Since classroom prayer was forbidden, school teachers planted doubt about God in the hearts of students. For example, at Northwestern University one professor said, "I would not break anybody's faith." But in the course of teaching Genesis she saw the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from a sexual point of view. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is to teach spiritual order between God, man and nature. Without spiritual order in God's love, the world would be chaotic. How dare she interpret the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from a sexual point of view. That's a terrible method of planting doubt in the hearts of young souls. This is causing others to sin. We must think that causing others to sin is very serious. Look at verses 43-49. "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' Everyone will be salted with fire." In verse 49, "salted with fire" means pure Christian influence.

As a conclusion, Jesus tells the children of God that we have to be salty children of God (50). We should maintain saltiness and we must be at peace with each other as salty Christians. We are not at peace without Christian saltiness. Peace without Christian saltiness leads to utter corruption. Salt prevents corruption and immorality. We are children of God. We must have a Christian influence. If we Christians do not have Christian influence, we are totally useless. Therefore, we must be salty Christians. We must be men and women of Christian influence. We must lead others to our Lord Jesus Christ through one-to-one Bible study and salty influence.