



‘Now!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #36

‘Sin, Salt, and Stumbling!’

Mark 9:42-50

Wednesday, January 29th, 2024

This Past Sunday in NOW Sermon Series:

- This Past Sunday we were able to look at mark 9:38-41 with a sermon entitled *‘The Kingdom is Bigger than You!’*. I asked the question: *How does Jesus show His disciples in this text that the Gospel is broader than just ‘them’?*
 - **Truth #1: *The Gospel is not Exclusive. (v. 38)***
 - **Truth #2: *The Gospel takes Everyone. (v. 39-40)***
 - **Truth #3: *The Gospel is to be an Encouragement. (v. 41)***
- Based on this past Sunday’s Sermon, has the Lord continued to show you that His Kingdom is much

bigger than us as a person, our SS class, or even our Church?

‘Sin, Salt, and Stumbling!’

Mark 9:42-50

Sermon in a Sentence:

In light of the previous text, Jesus talks about the important marks of Discipleship in the life of a believer by looking at Causing Others to Sin, Cutting Sin out, and the Cleanliness of your own life.

Intro:

- As you can tell by now, I decided to change the title of tonight’s sermon from you see on the marquee outside, and on your preaching plan, to ‘Sin, Salt, and Stumbling!’
 - What we find in tonight’s scripture text through these verses (Mark 9:42-50), connect with where we left off Sunday in Mark 9:41, but are also grouped into what I see is 3 units categorized by keywords.
- **V. 42: *SIN***
- **V. 43-48: *SALT***
- **V. 49-50: *FIRE***
 - While it may seem that these verses are out of place or that they don’t make sense together, I think in this passage we see that our sin or lacking of saltiness can cause stumbling in the lives of other believers.

- ***In our text tonight, I feel that you can see:***

- The cost and seriousness of Discipleship (we have to cut sin out of our lives).
- The phrases and keywords are grouped together in a way under the theme of: ***severity of sin.***
- Several of these saying that we found here our found in different contexts, but are repeated by Jesus. (A good teacher will repeat the same things, over and over).
 - These same phrases are found in Matthew 5:13, 29-30, Matthew 18:8-9. Luke 14:34-35.

- ***In the context of tonight's passage, Jesus has the strongest possible view of judgement and hell. Tonight it serves in our passage as a warning and motivation to live for Jesus and take our discipleship seriously.***

- ***Tonight we also see that if God has allowed many of us to live for Him, grow in Him, and mature in our spiritual walk for many years, we must not allow others to stumble.***

- May we not forget that when much is given, much is required. Little eyes are always watching.
- That's just it, in Jesus' statements here in Mark 9:42-50, our discipleship journey matters in our own walk, but also affects others...

****Read Mark 9:42-50****

Question to Ask:

How does the mention of sin, salt, and suffering in this text by Jesus show us how we should be growing in our personal journey of discipleship?

Truth #1: *Causing Others to Sin. (v. 42)*

- 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,[a] it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.'
 - When we have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of our lives we have the high calling and responsibility to live like Jesus.
 - ***Which is why every Christian must be careful in doing or in engaging in things that can easily cause others to fall into sin.***
 - Verse 42 greatly hinges on the previous section and brings an end to the themes found in verses 35-41, and then serves as an introduction to the verses that follow tonight.
 - The phrase 'little ones' is a representation of the 'child' in verses 36-37.
 - Though not a literal child (but it could be), it is referencing a follower of Christ who is perhaps new to the faith, immature, or weak.
 - ***Jesus is very clear here that these are the ones that we are not to cause to stumble and fall.***

- In verse 41, Jesus taught we should do good, give a cup of cold water to these ‘children’ in the faith.
 - Verse 42 is the opposite. While we can do so much good to non-believers, we can also do so much harm.
- *Some scholars believe that Jesus is still speaking to John, and that the issue at hand is pride.*
 - Either way, I think the Lord is clear that if we do not handle our sin, we will be a stumbling block to others.
 - **God will hold those who have caused others to stumble accountable.**
- ***Word Study***
 - The word ‘sin’ there in verse 42 (ESV), comes from the greek verb **Skandalizo** (σκανδαλίζω) which occurs 29 times in NT and literally means to cause to stumble, cause to sin, and to offend.
 - *In this context the word is referring to those who destroy the faith of a fellow believer or cause that believer to fall away from God.*
 - This is why we must be oh so careful with our words and our actions... The Christian life is not a game, so we must stop playing it as if it is.

- ***Illustration: *Little Ones Sinking at the faith of an older believer***
 - George Fox was a young Quaker preacher who lived in England and was born in 1624 and died in 1691.
 - He wrote of a story where one day he was seeking God in his personal time with Him and felt led to go and ask advice from a Pastor of a well established church in the area.
 - **George went to the home of the older, well established minister and began advising him.**
 - The conversation took place outside, and George Fox accidentally stepped back and stepped on a flower in the garden while speaking with this older minister.
 - *Once George fell on the flower, this man went into a rage.*
 - **George Fox then decided he would not find personal or ministerial help from this person, so he went elsewhere.**
- Many of us have been turned off by an unforgiving person, dishonest business practices, crude language, sarcasm, gossip, and many things.
 - The Sin in our lives, lack of saltiness, can cause others to stumble.
- Theologian Kent Hughes said **‘Someone is watching you, and if you disappoint him or her, that person will stumble. And the great personal tragedy is, it may**

someone you love deeply— a child, a grandchild, a boyfriend, a teacher, a student.’

- If there is something in our lives tonight that could even slightly potentially cause someone else to sin, it’s not worth continuing to do it.
 - If you are a Christian, your life should not cause others to stumble, at the same time, if you are a leader in Christ Kingdom (ex: leading in the Church), you must set a great example.
- Let me give some modern day applications of things we can do that could cause a younger believer to stumble.
 - ***Posting vulgar things on social media repeatedly.***
 - ***Speaking curse words in our regular conversation, repeatedly.***
 - ***Having a glass of wine in public, that could send the wrong message to a younger believer who may struggle with alcoholism.***
 - ***Holding a Bible in our hand acting as if we are ‘teaching’ but in reality just spewing our own opinions.***
 - ***Say we are going to show up, be there, and not stay true to our word.***
- ***And so many countless others.***
 - We must be careful, lest we cause someone to stumble...

Truth #2: ***Cutting Sin Out. (v. 43-48)***

- One of the hardest things to do in life is to get rid of things that we love.
 - Whether that’s dieting and exercising to get rid of unneeded weight, or going through your closet to get rid of clothes you don’t wear anymore. It’s not easy.
- ***Jesus began this passage in verse 42 with not causing the ‘little ones’ to sin, and now in verses 43-48, Jesus gives the ‘how to’.***
 - Trust me, we aren’t going to like it...
 - ***Cut it out. Yep. Cut it out.***
- Now, when you read these verses, don’t go crazy and jump off the deep end.
 - ***We must understand that Jesus is using hyperbole (an intentional overstatement), to the severity and seriousness of sin.***
 - It also gives us a front row seat to how God views our sin.
 - We know that Jesus is using hyperbole here because Deuteronomy 14:1, Deuteronomy 23:1, 1st Kings 18:28, and Zechariah 13:6 all forbid bodily mutilation.
 - ***Jesus is not asking for physical mutilation, but spiritual mortification.***
 - Now, notice if you have the ESV Bible, that verses 44 and 46 are not in your Bibles.
 - ***Here’s why:***

- Some of the original greek manuscripts add verses 44 and 46 (some do not), but the ones that do add 44 and 46 repeat verbatim verse 48. Which is why if you have a KJV, the phrase ‘the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched’ is found 3 times.
 - *So, what we find here in these verses are 3 powerful hyperboles for how God views sin...*
 - **Hyperbole #1. (v. 43)**
 - ‘And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell,[b] to the unquenchable fire.’
 - Jesus gives us the first hyperbole with the hands.
 - *Which represents something that we do.*
 - If there is a continuous/habitual action in your life that is causing you to sin, that Jesus makes it clear we must get it out.
 - *With the use of hyperbole in reference to the hand, it’s showing the actions we DO that cause us to sin, we must cut them out.*
 - **Hyperbole #2. (v. 45)**
 - ‘And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell.’
 - The feet, that Jesus mentions here in the second hyperbole, are places where we go, that cause us to sin.
 - *If we are all honest, there are places that our feet can take us that can cause us to be more susceptible to sin than other places.*
 - Whether that’s a certain location that tempts us to sin, or people that will be in that location that tempt us to sin.
 - *What Jesus is saying and trying to get across in all of these hyperboles is that the Kingdom of God is more important than chasing what we want to do, where we want to go, and thirdly, want we want to see...*
 - **Hyperbole #3. (v. 47)**
 - ‘And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,’
 - Here Jesus shows us that we must be careful of what we see, that can cause us to sin.

- One person said *'Very little, if any, sin comes out of your heart that didn't first enter through your eyes.'*
 - As previously mentioned, Jesus is not advocating for you to gouge your eye out tonight.
- But, be aware of yourself. What causes you to sin, what causes you to struggle, and what causes you to be tempted to sin the most.
 - ***When you know that something you watch or look at causes you to sin and you still continually do it, your heart is rejoicing more in sin, rather than in Christ Himself.***
- It's also important to note the three different times in these three hyperboles that Jesus says the word hell.
 - According to Dr. Daniel Aiken *'Jesus says more about hell than anyone else in the Bible.'*
- Hell is the Greek word that is used to describe eschatological punishment that is apart from the presence of God.
- ****Word Study****
 - The greek word for hell is **Geenna** (γέεννα) which comes from the Hebrew word 'Ge-hinnom' which means Valley of Hinnom.

- *The Valley of Hinnom was a valley south of Jerusalem and is where King Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:3) and Manasseh (2nd Chronicles 33:6) offered up child sacrifices to the pagan god Molech.*
 - King Josiah declared the place unclean and it became the place where dead corpses were disposed of.
 - Because of this it became a symbol of final judgement.
 - It is a word for the real place, hell.

Truth #3: *Cleanliness of Your Life. (v. 49-50)*

- We've all heard the phrase, 'cleanliness is next to godliness'.
 - ***Now, where exactly that phrase originated I am not sure, but here in verses 49-50, Jesus is clear that the cleanliness of our lives matters greatly to God.***
- When it comes to these verses, there are so many different interpretations that are given by different scholars and theologians.
 - ***I personally feel that the appearance of the word 'fire' in verse 48, triggers Mark to include the saying of 'for everyone will be salted with fire.'***
 - It's important to note that the enigmatic saying of Jesus as recorded by Mark in verse 49, is only found in Mark's Gospel.

- ‘Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.’
- There’s a well known outdoor fishing company that makes apparel and fishing gear called ‘salt life’.
 - *How many of us are actually living ‘salty living’ as Jesus describes it here?*
- *Salt was imperative in the ancient world because it preserved food from rotting (remember, they did not have refrigerators).*
 - Jesus uses salt here in verse 50 as a challenge for His disciples to be a *preserving influence in a world that was (and is) decaying quickly.*
 - *Is the Saltiness of your salvation preserving Christian influence and living in the world? Or, have you lost your saltiness?*
 - Our world has certainly rotted and decayed in many ways. We blame many factors for this. But we’d all be better off if we looked at our own personal inventory of salt, or lack thereof.
- *When Jesus says that ‘salt is good’, it is a necessity for life and a preservative in life.*

- When Jesus asks the question ‘but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again?’
- *True/pure salt cannot lose it’s saltiness. The same way that a true/genuine follower of Christ cannot lose his/her salvation.*
 - In the ancient world, a lot of the salt that was gathered at the dead sea contained many impurities.
 - Once the true/pure salt was removed, and just the impurities remained, it would still look like salt.
 - *But it could not perform the preserving nature of salt that saved lives.*
- So, Jesus is making it clear that a person may have the external appearance of a disciple, but not the internal properties.
 - Which is why Jesus said ‘have salt in yourselves’. Don’t be a pretender.
- *The cleanliness of our life as a Christian, being the salt of the earth, can go a long way.*
 - **Illustration**
 - William Wilberforce was an English member of parliament (their form of congress), and was born in 1759.
 - He accepted Christ in 1784. He had considered becoming a minister, but

stayed in politics, and oh the influence his salt had.

- *William Wilberforce is not as known as it might perhaps should be, but he almost single handed brought about the slavery emancipation in England, with slavery ending in 1800.*

- One of his colleagues in parliament said 'I saw a shrimp become a whale'.

- Based on William Wilberforce's personal convictions and beliefs on the Bible, he was able to outlaw slavery in Britain.

- *In his era, he was salt to decaying society.*

- Are you?

Conclusion:

- Tonight we've looked at Sin, Stumbling and Salt.
 - *Several important applications we've cleaned tonight...*
 - **Truth #1: *Causing Others to Sin.* (v. 42)**
 - **Truth #2: *Cutting Sin Out.* (v. 43-48)**
 - **Truth #3: *Cleanliness of Your Life.* (v. 49-50)**