

Mark 9:30-37. Jesus' leadership model

1. Jesus and his disciples have just arrived at Capernaum on their return from the neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi (8:27) and Mt Hermon, having passed through (northern) Galilee (9:30).

Vv. 30-31. Jesus wants to be alone with his disciples. He is continuing to teach them that (he) the Son of Man has to suffer and die and rise again

V. 32. His disciples clearly have difficulty understanding this teaching. Even his reassurance that he would rise again fails to change their entrenched views about the Messiah. The Messiah was to rule over his people with power and authority and save them from their oppressors.

2. The first disciples had an embarrassing past which they ensured was recorded in the Gospels. Here they fail to understand Jesus when he is trying to teach them and they do not trust him enough to admit their ignorance and ask for help. Yet these same disciples ensured that this event was recorded in the Gospels.

3. But there is more embarrassment for the disciples, they are caught out by Jesus arguing about who is the greatest among them!

Vv. 33-34. Jesus discerns what they are arguing about and addresses this in his following teaching.

Vv. 36-37. Mark underlines the importance of Jesus' teaching by saying that Jesus 'sat down...called the twelve and said'. There is no record of the response of the twelve but we can surmise that Jesus' teaching about leadership – his style- would have shocked them. This radical alternative model of leadership is still as shocking today as when Jesus first announced it. Putting oneself last, and being the servant of others is the way to true greatness. The example that Jesus sets, being willing to suffer and die (in obedience to his heavenly Father), is to be followed by his disciples (8:31-38; Mt.20:26-28).

V. 36. Jesus knew that in the Graeco- Roman world children were seen as having low status. Jesus makes his point by a dramatic act of showing acceptance and love toward a child, through a warm public embrace. To welcome a little child is to show allegiance to Jesus – to truly be his disciple. His disciples, like their master, are to practice humble servant leadership.

V. 37. Jesus goes on to make another bold and dramatic claim: to welcome him, by following his example of humble servant leadership, is to welcome the 'One who sent' him. As the divine Son of Man, Jesus enables those who welcome and follow him to be in fellowship with God.

Reflection/Response. How does our attitude toward children reflect our allegiance to Jesus? How do we encourage Christians to be ambitious to become humble servant leaders!?