

## Mark 9:38-50. 'True' disciples of Jesus

**Introduction.** This passage has three sections which are linked by the general theme of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

**1. (36-41) Who is on Jesus' side?** Who should use Jesus' name to exorcise demons or perform a miracle?

- i. Once again the original 12 disciples misunderstand Jesus and his mission. Jesus tells them not to forbid people using his name to perform miracles. These people are showing, by using his name, that they are in some way committed to Jesus (39).
- ii. The 12 disciples are once again seeking a special privileged position in their friendship with Jesus.
- iii. The sub-text in this passage is that it is only in Jesus' name, that people are able to heal. This is not a magical use of Jesus' name but an invoking of Jesus' authority to heal – he chooses to heal through them (Acts 4:10-12)

**Reflection/Response.** How do people misuse Jesus' name? How do disciples act in Jesus' name?

**2. (42-48) What stops people being under God's rule (entering the Kingdom of God) ?**

- i. The offence of causing 'little ones who believe in Jesus to sin' (42) probably initially refers back to the one 'driving out demons in your name' but then Jesus widens his teaching. He challenges his disciples about their responsibility to lead and teach by example and the serious consequences of causing others to sin.
- ii. Jesus uses very dramatic language to illustrate the need to focus on the only goal worth aiming for, 'entering the Kingdom of God' = new life - eternal life (43) with God.
- iii. The subtext in this passage is that real, full life can be experienced in part now but its fullness awaits the future.

**Reflection/Response.** How do disciples of Jesus experience new life with God now? How do disciples of Jesus keep their focus on life beyond this life, eternal life with God?

**3. (49-50) Saltiness and discipleship.** (see 1 Cor. 3:13; Mal 3:2)

- i. Fire can be used to purify, which links with salt used to combat decay. This may echo Lev. 2:13 in which salt is added to a sacrifice. This would then link the self sacrifice of 42-48 leading to holiness (readiness) to the sacrifice of the Son of Man (Mk. 9:32) – like Master, like disciples. Contaminating salt destroys its effectiveness as salt.
- ii. The impossibility of re-salting salt is a warning against giving up being a disciple of Jesus.

**Reflection/Response.** How do disciples of Jesus act as salt to the wider community? Why is it imperative for Jesus' disciples to be at peace with each other?