

# MARK

## Chapter 9

**And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”**

**9:1** Only Judas failed to witness the resurrection. (TLSB)

*I tell you the truth.* See note on 3:28. (CSB)

*not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.* Though Jesus could mean the transfiguration as a fulfillment of this promise (vv 2–13), this ultimately points to His death and resurrection as the beginning of the Kingdom in power. (TLSB)

**8:31–9:1** Jesus warns that He has come to suffer, die, and rise and that everyone who follows Him must carry the cross. Temptation to avoid the anguish of the cross is great. A safe life tempts us to deny Christ and His cross. Yet, Jesus suffered for our salvation and promised to overcome Satan and all our foes. Jesus is the only one sufficient to exchange His life for ours. • Lord, thank You for accepting the disgrace and pain of the cross. Strengthen us to follow You from Your cross to Your glory. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Transfiguration*

**2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” 8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. 9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. 11 And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” 12 And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”**

**9:2-9** It may actually be that what precedes the account of the transfiguration is the greatest key to understanding the event. The word from the cloud proclaimed, “Listen to him.” As we read Mark’s Gospel, what is recounted before the transfiguration is the complete failure of the disciples, Peter serving as their representative, to understand what it means that Jesus is the Christ. After Peter’s confession, Jesus begins to tell them what will happen to him because he is the Christ, namely, that he “must suffer many things and be rejected . . . be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mk 8:31). Therefore, it is the theology of the cross, not a theology of glory, that

provides the interpretational key to the transfiguration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

The last Sunday after Epiphany is always devoted to the Transfiguration of Jesus. All three Synoptics recorded it. It is very important for several reasons: (Buls)

- a. The Transfiguration is important just before Ash Wednesday because of what is recorded in Mark 8:27-38. There He asked the disciples: "Who do people say that the Son of man is?" (Matthew 16:13). Peter responded: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Matthew 16:16). But when Jesus (Mark 8:31) then foretold that the Son of man would suffer, die, and rise again, Peter objected and Jesus criticized him severely. Then Jesus spoke of the lot of the Christian, especially about not being ashamed of the Son of man, the suffering and dying Son of man. Jesus was preparing His disciples for His suffering and death.
- b. The Transfiguration is important also because of what Jesus says in Mark 9:1. Some would live to see the Kingdom of God coming in power. Bengel, Fahling and Franzmann were of the opinion that this included the Transfiguration, the first step in seeing the Kingdom of God coming in power. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: Both events, Peter's confession and the transfiguration of Christ are closely related because the miraculous occurrence on the mountain was proof that Christ was truly the Son of the Living God. There is also confirmed, through the transfiguration, Jesus' announcement of His coming suffering and death, and of His return to glory. (Buls)

**9:2** *After six days* – (Mark also says “six days”(Mk 9:2), counting just the days between Peter’s confession and the transfiguration, whereas Luke, counting all the days involved, says, “About eight days” (Lk 9:28) (CSB)

"After six days" since the incident recorded at 8:27-9:1. Note the article with each of the four names. All four are uses of the anaphoric, in each case "the well-known." (Buls)

“after six days.” That is, six days after Peter’s confession and subsequent confusion. This not only provides a chronological mark, but also provides a narrative link between the confession/denial of Peter and the transfiguration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

“After six days.” Mark, like the other Synoptic Gospels, sets the transfiguration in the context of Christ’s Passion prediction (cf. Mk 8:31–9:1; Mt 16:21–28; Lk 9:22–27). It happens a week after Jesus begins to teach about his suffering, death, and resurrection; rebukes Peter; calls his followers to deny themselves and take up their cross; and promises that some of those with him will see the kingdom of God before death. Mark also records Jesus’ warning: “Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (8:38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

*Peter, James and John.* these three disciples had an especially close relationship to Jesus. (CSB)

“Peter and James and John” uniquely witness Christ’s ministry. Mark notes that these three also saw the raising of Jairus’s daughter (5:37–42), received instruction about the signs of the end (with Andrew) (13:3–37), and were to stay and watch with Jesus as he prayed in Gethsemane (14:33). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

*a high mountain* – (Although Mount Tabor is the traditional site of the Mount of Transfiguration, its distance from Caesarea Philippi (the vicinity of the last scene), its height (about 1,800 feet) and its occupation by a fortress make it unlikely. Mount Hermon fits the context much better by being both closer and higher (over 9,000 feet). (CSB)

“A high mountain.” Variant traditions differ on locating the transfiguration on Mount Tabor or on Mount Hermon. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

"Mountain," perhaps one of the high mountains between Hermon and Tabor. These are mentioned in antithesis to the people, 8:34, and in antithesis to the nine remaining disciples. These three were Jesus' special witnesses also at Mark 5:37 and Matthew 26:37. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Jesus took them with him so that after the great event of Easter they might bear witness of what they had seen. (Buls)

This James was not the author of the Epistle of James. We have no extant writings from the Apostle James. But Peter and John speak about this occasion in their writings: 2 Peter 1:16-18 and John 1:14. They were witnesses not only in their time but also in their recorded writings. (Buls)

Fahling: They were to witness the Lord's greatest glory on earth as well as His deepest degradation in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: Both required the fuller faith. (Buls)

*transfigured*.† His appearance changed. The three disciples saw Jesus in his glorified state (see Jn 17:5; 2Pe 1:17. (CSB)

Jesus shone with the glory of His divine nature, which otherwise had been veiled (cf Php 2:7–8). (TLSB)

“He was transfigured.” Note the passive voice. It is the work of the Father that discloses the identity of Jesus and points forward to the glory that would be his after the death and resurrection he had predicted was accomplished. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

*metemorphōthē*. Besides the parallel in Matthew (17:2), this verb is used in the Epistle (2 Cor 3:18) and as an imperative in Rom 12:2. It seems wise to use two different English words to distinguish between Jesus’ transfiguration and the transformation of Christians. His transfiguration reveals his divine nature; ours, the new life of Christ at work in us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**9:3** *intensely white* – Matthew and Luke speak of Jesus' face and garments, whereas Mark speaks only of Jesus' garments. By the way, good commentators point out that the many details in the account of the Transfiguration indicate that all three Synoptics wrote quite independently of each other. That is the best and soundest view. (Buls)

Neither Matthew nor Luke was an actual witness. Mark gives us the testimony of Peter. "And His clothing became glistening, exceedingly white, such as no launderer on earth is able to whiten them to such a degree." The translations are interesting. By the way, KJV and NKJV add a variant reading which is not even listed in the Nestle Greek text. NKJV reads: "His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them." With or without the variant, the point is: What happened was supernatural. (Buls)

We are being told that the human nature of Christ and even His clothing was completely suffused with the brilliance of the divine nature. These could have been the very clothes which were taken from Him on Calvary. Here so brilliant, there so cheap! Here His person so brilliantly transfigured, there so cursed and helpless! What a contrast! (Buls)

Jesus' divinity shone with brilliance (cf Ex 34:29; Rv 1:16). (TLSB)

*bleach* – Paste made from clean clay (fuller's earth) in which white cloth was soaked and then stretched out to dry in the sun. Once dry, the clay paste washed away. (TLSB)

**9:4** *Elijah and Moses*. See notes on Mt 17:3; Lk 9:30 – († Moses is the representative of the old covenant and the promise of salvation, which was soon to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus. Elijah is the appointed restorer of all things (Mal 4:5–6; Mk 9:11–13). The disciples here witness the confirmation of Jesus' claim (5:17) that he fulfills the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Lk 9:31 says that they talked about Christ's death.) – († Moses, the great OT deliverer and lawgiver, and Elijah, the representative of the prophets. Moses' work had been finished by Joshua, Elijah's by Elisha (another form of the name Joshua). They now spoke with Jesus (whose Hebrew name was Joshua) about the "exodus" he was about to accomplish, by which he would deliver his people from the bondage of sin and bring to fulfillment the work of both Moses and Elijah.) (CSB)

Literally "and there was seen by them." The word "appeared" is used of the appearance of angels (Luke 1:11), of God (Acts 7:2) and of Jesus (Acts 9:17). Elijah and Moses truly appeared. (Buls)

Fahling: Both of these erstwhile prophets and now residents of heaven, whom they probably recognized by the nature of their conversation, stood before them with glorified (Jude 9; Deuteronomy 34:6; 2 Kings 2:11) bodies and were heard talking with Jesus. As their bodies had been preserved from decay, so the body of Jesus should not see corruption (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27ff). They had been zealous for the Lord and His Law, one as the lawgiver, the other as a fiery reformer; but neither of them had been able to stop the transgression. Now they were talking to Jesus of His decease at Jerusalem and the redemption which He was to accomplish. (Buls)

With their physical eyes the three disciples and Jesus saw these visitors from heaven. At this point Hendriksen makes a curious remark:

We receive the distinct impression that for Elijah and Moses this speaking with an exalted being like Jesus Christ was not something unusual. (Buls)

They were not frightened as were the disciples. They were very much at ease, at ease with the Father in heaven, at ease with the glorified Jesus on the mountain. (Buls)

*talking* – The last part of verse 4 means: "And they were conversing (speaking informally) with Jesus." Why would saints from heaven speak with the glorified Jesus about His coming

suffering, death and resurrection? Like Jesus, both of them had suffered much for the Lord's sake. Obviously, they were strengthening Jesus, somewhat like the angel in the Garden of Gethsemane, in view of His coming ordeal. Did the disciples hear what Moses and Elijah said? Did they hear the conversation among the three? The text says nothing about this but if they were witnesses to what they saw, why not witnesses of what they heard? Jesus in His essential glory, Moses and Elijah in God-given glory, all three speaking victoriously about what was soon to happen. (Buls)

“Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.” Only Luke records what they were talking about, namely, Jesus’ “departure [Gk: *tēn exodon*], which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lk 9:31). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

It was appropriate that Jesus, whose work was inaugurated in the wilderness at his baptism and whose way through the desert was directed by the Spirit, should be accompanied in this moment of high revelation by the eminent prophets of the wilderness who stand by his side to testify to his character and mission. Jesus is the one in whom the promise of the second exodus becomes a reality. Moses appears as the representative of the old covenant and the promise, now shortly to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus, and Elijah as the appointed restorer of all things. The stress on Elijah’s presence at the transfiguration indicates that the fulfillment of “all things” has arrived. (Lane)

**9:5-6** “Let us make three tents.” It appears Peter wants to remain on the mount. Though we’re not told much, Mark gives the most insight into Peter’s suggestion. Luke tells us that Peter said this “not knowing what he said” (Lk 9:33). Mark adds that this was because of fear. Later, Peter would find comfort in what he saw and heard, but mainly in what he heard (2 Pet 1:17–19). Peter took away from this event that the Word of God is a light shining in the darkness for us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**9:5** *Rabbi*. Hebrew word for “(my) teacher.” (CSB)

Hebrew rabban, “chief” or “great one.” (TLSB)

"Said" means response to the situation. No one had said anything to Peter. Matthew, Mark, Luke have "Teacher, Lord, Master." A plain indication that the Evangelists did not copy from each other, In each instance, high respect. Hendriksen and Lenski explain the differences by saying that each Evangelist translated the original Aramaic with a different, but synonymous, noun. (Buls)

*three tents*. Peter may have desired to erect new tents of meeting where God could again communicate with his people (see Ex 29:42). Or he may have been thinking of the booths used at the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:42). In any case, he seemed eager to find fulfillment of the promised glory then, prior to the sufferings that Jesus had announced as necessary. (CSB)

Peter hoped to prolong their stay by providing shelter or places of worship. (TLSB)

This Gospel and the glory that day on the Mount stirred Peter to capture the excitement, to enshrine and preserve that celestial conversation and the glory of the moment. Skaps-napse – a *tent* or cloth hut (literally or figuratively):—habitation, tabernacle. (QV)

God communicates to us through his word and we need to take that message to people who need it on the plain. – LSB hymn 414 verse 5 “Tis good, Lord, to be here! Yet we may not remain; But since you bidst us leave the mount, Come with us to the plain.”

**9:6** *did not know what to say* – Peter did not rightly understand what he was witnessing. Moses and Elijah were preparing Jesus for going to His death (Lk 9:30-31). (TLSB)

for" in each clause. Likely the first is explanatory and the second causal: "You see, he did not know what to say in response (to the situation), because they were so frightened." (Buls)

At this point Luke reads: "He did not know what he was saying." LB gives an interpretational translation: "He said this just to be talking, for he didn't know what else to say and they were all terribly frightened." In this life Christians are often a strange mixture of joy and fear or pleasure and fright. Cf. Luke 2:9 and Matthew 28:8. Moses and Elijah were not afraid. They were in the state of glory. But even believers, who are still sinners, fear in the presence of the supernatural because they are sinners. (Buls)

Jesus was not frightened at Luke 22:43 when an angel appeared to Him. The next verse, 44, tells us that He was in great agony, not because of His own person, but because of our sins. (Buls)

Jesus did not answer Peter. He disregarded what Peter said. (Buls)

The effect of this singular experience was such as to put the disciples into a state of ecstasy; they were almost intoxicated with the glory of the singular appearance. They were incidentally in a condition of half-sleep, overcome by the brightness of their transfigured Master. (Kretzmann)

**9:7** *a voice came from the cloud*. The cloud is frequently a symbol of God's presence to protect and guide (e.g., Ex 16:10; 19:9; 24:15–18; 33:9–10). (CSB)

The presence of divine glory was associated with clouds in the wilderness, overshadowing mountains, the tabernacle, and the temple (cf Ex. 13:21; 19:9; 33:9; 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10-11). (TLSB)

Bengel: The divine majesty is frequently conspicuous in clouds. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: As the God of Israel at the time of the old covenant dwelt in a cloud and assured His people of His gracious presence, so also was the brightness of the cloud a shadow, a carrier of the divine grace and glory. (Buls)

Commentators disagree among themselves as to the antecedent of "them." Was it the disciples or does it refer to all of them? We leave it unanswered. In any case the cloud silently said to the disciples: "The experience is over." (Buls)

“A cloud overshadowed them.” The cloud of God's glory showed his presence with Israel. It was particularly associated with Mount Sinai (see Ex 24:15–16: “the cloud covered it six days”); the tabernacle and temple, where the Lord met his people to have mercy on them (Ex 40:34; 1 Ki 8:10–12); the Lord's rule (Ps 97:2); and the Son of Man's dominion (Dan 7:13). In the New Testament, clouds are involved in Jesus' ascension, rule, and return for judgment (Mt 26:64; Acts 1:9; Rev 1:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

*beloved Son* – The Father repeated the announcement from Jesus' Baptism for the disciples. A centurion would affirm this truth at Jesus' crucifixion. (TLSB)

*Listen to him!* The full sense includes obeying him. When God is involved, the only true hearing is obedient hearing (see Jas 1:22–25). (CSB)

There was a second answer to what Peter said, but this one in audible words from the Father in heaven: "This is My Son, the Beloved, keep on hearing Him." Read Deuteronomy 18:15-19, a clear prophecy concerning Jesus. There He was called The Prophet. Here He is called God's Beloved Son. Both have "keep on hearing Him" in common. Moses and Elijah were merely His spokesmen. But He is the author of all Truth. (Buls)

Peter had not listened when Jesus said (Mark 8:31): "The Son of man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and the chief-priests and the scribes, and must be killed, and after three days must rise again." Peter objected to that and Jesus rebuked him very sharply. Peter had great pleasure in seeing His Lord transfigured in the presence of glorified saints. But first he must rivet His attention on and learn the meaning of what the Son of man must do in his behalf in suffering, dying and rising again. (Buls)

"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" In Mark's account of Jesus' Baptism, the heavenly message is primarily for Jesus ("He [Jesus] saw heaven being torn open. . . . 'You are my Son . . .'" [Mk 1:10–11, emphasis added]). Here, however, the Father speaks for the benefit of the disciples, and adds the command, "Listen to him." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

"This is my beloved Son; listen to him." Echoing words that began Jesus' ministry at his Baptism (and the Sundays of Epiphany for us), these words give clear witness to Jesus' divine nature, approval of the Father, and wisdom of teaching. Given the context, it cuts off Peter's tent plans and directs Jesus' followers to accept his teaching about his saving work of suffering. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The command "listen to him," contains an allusion to Deut. 18:15 and serves to identify Jesus as the eschatological Prophet like Moses to whom Israel must listen because he is the final bearer of the word of God. The exhortation has bearing upon all of Jesus' words, but has particular relevance to the new instruction Jesus had been giving to his followers concerning the necessity of his suffering and of their participation in his humiliation. There can be no doubt that Mark intended his congregation in Rome to take this word to heart. (Lane)

The Scripture is how God talks to us so we can hear what he has to say. It is also the motivation for us to do his will. Note the quote below

"Christians cannot expect to resist the values of the unbelieving world if they devote one hour of the week to meditating on God's word and the other 167 hours to providing for the needs of their bodies and enjoying worldly entertainment. We need regular Bible study with fellow Christians. We need to recognize the importance of regular family devotions and personal Bible study. We need to cultivate the habit of remembering and applying the truths of God's word when we are confronted with temptations or faced with decisions in daily life. God's children will find their greatest joy and satisfaction in studying his word and thinking about it day and night." (Psalms I of People's Bible Commentary, Page 42)

It is said that the Sunday morning worship service is where we come to receive God's gifts for the purpose of taking them out to share them with the world. Those gifts are for the life of the world, not for us just to bask in.

**9:8** *but Jesus only* - The vision was temporary, but its meaning, explained by the Father, is permanent. "Jesus only" emphasizes that the man Jesus is truly the eternal Son of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Mark uses the adverb "suddenly -- immediately" with high frequency. "They looked around," evidently they expected still to see the heavenly visitors, but not so. Here is a very strong double negative: "absolutely no one any longer." (Buls)

"But they did see etc." Bengel remarks "because He was still about to suffer." And on the words "only Jesus" he says: "Hence it is evident that He is the Son, who is to be heard, not Moses, nor Elijah." There is a great lesson in these words: No matter what the circumstances of life, be they of joy or sorrow, Jesus is always saying: "Lo, I am with you." He is always Immanuel, God incarnate, with us. We must listen to His Word. (Buls)

**9:9** *tell no one*. After Jesus' resurrection the disciples were to tell everyone what they had experienced, for Jesus' finished work would have demonstrated his true and full character as the Messiah. (CSB)

Jesus continued the caution of silence. (TLSB)

*Son of Man had risen*. The heart of Jesus' prophecy was His death and resurrection. His glory did not dismiss the cross. (TLSB)

"Until the Son of Man had risen from the dead." These words frame the entire transfiguration with predictions of Jesus' death and resurrection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The first five words of this verse are a genitive absolute denoting time. The text implies that at there was silence on the part of all four. It was a very high mountain. Some time, during the descent, Jesus broke the silence. Note the word order: "to no one what they had seen should they tell." There was one exception, denoting time: "except when the Son of man would rise from the dead." (Buls)

On the use of the term "the Son of man" look at 8:31 again. (Buls)

This prohibition surely included the other nine disciples, waiting at the foot of the mountain. This prohibition implies a somber observation on the carnal nature of human thinking. Mankind wants glory without suffering. There is glory alright, but always preceded by suffering, be that of the Messiah or His followers. Read 8:34-38 again. He suffered in our stead. That we cannot suffer. But, suffering for His sake and for the sake of the Gospel are inevitable. (Buls)

Had the disciples told people what had happened on the mountain, this message would have become distorted. Not only is Jesus bent on saving us but He is also careful to say to us what we need hear at the proper time lest His saving message be lost on us. (Bulls)



*Son of Man.* Jesus' most common title for himself, used 81 times in the Gospels and never used by anyone but Jesus. In Da 7:13–14 the Son of Man is pictured as a heavenly figure who in the end times is entrusted by God with authority, glory and sovereign power. That Jesus used “Son of Man” as a Messianic title is evident by his use of it (v. 31) in juxtaposition to Peter’s use of “Christ” (v. 29). (CSB)

**9:10** *what this rising from the dead might mean.* As Jews they were familiar with the doctrine of the resurrection; it was the resurrection of the Son of Man that baffled them, because their theology had no place for a suffering and dying Messiah. (CSB)

The disciples struggled over the necessity of Jesus’ suffering. (TLSB)

**9:12** *Elijah does come first, and restores all things.* A reference to the coming of Elijah, or one like him, in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. (CSB)

John the Baptist prepared for Jesus’ arrival (cf 1:2–8). (TLSB)

*suffer many things and be treated with contempt* – Just as “Elijah” (John the Baptist; has been rejected). (CSB)

Referred to Jesus’ betrayal, trial, beatings, and crucifixion. (TLSB)

**9:13** *Elijah has come.* A reference to John the Baptist (see Mt 17:13). (CSB)

*they.* Herod and Herodias (see 6:17–29). John, like Elijah, was opposed by a weak ruler and his wicked consort. (CSB)

*as it is written of him.* What Scripture says about Elijah in his relationship to Ahab and Jezebel (1Ki 19:1–10). There is no prediction of suffering associated with Elijah’s ministry in the end times. However, what happened to Elijah under the threats of Jezebel foreshadowed what would happen to John the Baptist. The order of events suggested in vv. 11–13 is as follows: (1) Elijah ministered in the days of wicked Jezebel; (2) Elijah was a type of John the Baptist, who in turn suffered at the hands of Herodias; (3) the Son of Man suffered and was rejected a short time after John was beheaded. (CSB)

Like Elijah, who suffered the wickedness of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, John had to suffer under Herod and Herodias (cf 1Ki 17–21). (TLSB)

**9:2–13** Jesus is transfigured to display His divine glory and to prepare His disciples for His death and resurrection. We cannot imagine the glory of God, especially in Christ, who is fully human. Jesus loses none of His divine majesty in the incarnation, but His glory shines through His human nature. His glory reminds us that He freely chose death and resurrection for our sakes. • Lord, bring us to that mountain where we can see Your glory shine. Let us follow You to the glory of Your cross to celebrate Your power and to marvel at Your life given for us. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Healing of a Boy With an Evil Spirit*

**14** And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. **15** And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. **16** And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” **17** And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my

son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. 18 And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” 19 And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” 20 And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” 23 And Jesus said to him, “‘If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.” 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” 25 And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” 26 And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” 29 And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

**9:14** *the other disciples.* The nine besides Peter, James and John (see v. 2). (CSB)

*kai elthontes pros tous mathētas*, “and when they came to the disciples.” This text follows immediately after the transfiguration. Jesus, Peter, James, and John are rejoining the other nine. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*arguing with them* – From the heights of the Transfiguration Jesus and the three disciples descended to the realities of life with all its sin and sorrow. The nine were having real difficulty in defending themselves against the teacher’s of the law. Both sides recognized the disciples’ inability to heal this demon-possessed lad as actually reflecting on Jesus Himself. Jesus’ return was opportune timing. (PBC)

Jesus had been gone over night, leaving His other disciples (except Peter, James, and John) in the plain. It is immaterial, once more, whether they were in Galilee or still in the neighborhood of Caesarea-Philippi at this time; also, whether the apostles in His absence had preached and performed miracles. But when the Lord returned to His disciples, He saw, even from a distance, that there was some unusual commotion. They were in the midst of an excited crowd, and there were some scribes, probably from the neighboring synagog or even from Jerusalem, disputing with them. Things were apparently not running very smoothly in His absence. (Kretzmann)

**9:15** Immediately, as soon as the people saw and recognized Jesus, they were amazed with joy. They had not expected to see Him so soon, and matters were approaching a crisis here; so it was with a feeling of relief and joy that they all welcomed Him. Running to Him, they saluted Him most respectfully. The situation is easily conceivable: The disciples have tried to heal the boy and failed; the scribes, delighted with the failure, taunt them with it, and suggest by way of explanation the waning power of the Master, whose name they had vainly attempted to conjure with. The baffled nine make the best defense they can, or perhaps listen in silence. For that reason also the people were delighted to see Christ, because they wanted to see fair play and hoped to see a miracle. (Kretzmann)

**9:16** As soon as Jesus came within speaking distance, He inquired about the cause of the disturbance. He asked not only the scribes, but all of them, What is all this disputing about? The

scribes had begun the quarrel, and the people had probably taken sides, some with the scribes, some with the apostles. At the approach of Jesus the excitement subsided, both parties being evidently somewhat abashed by His presence. (Kretzmann)

*ti suzēteite pros autous*, “What are you arguing about?” The exact positions being attacked and defended are not clear, but it seems likely that the scribes (v 14) were seizing upon the disciples’ failure to cast out the demon (v 18) as an opportunity to discredit Jesus. The scribes (experts in or teachers of the Mosaic Law and, as lawyers, highly inclined to debate) have for some time been active naysayers toward Jesus (2:6, 16; 3:22; 7:5). In particular, they have been critical of Jesus casting out demons: “ ‘He is possessed by Beelzebul,’ and ‘by the prince of demons he casts out the demons’ ” (3:22). Even the disciples themselves were territorial about who might be properly authorized to exorcise (9:38). In other words, a disciple’s power to cast out demons—or his failure to do so—would say much about the credibility of the master. In the minds of Jesus’ opponents, the disciples’ inability to cast out this demon built their case that Jesus himself was a fraud. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

**9:17** *a spirit that makes him mute*. Other spirits had been vocal (cf 1:24; 5:7). (TLSB)

But one man out of the multitude, whose interest was a very natural and deep one, separated himself from the rest and stood forth, answering. He had brought his son, seeking the Lord in the place where the disciples were; but, Jesus being absent, he had appealed to the disciples to heal the boy, and they had not been able to do so. It was a pitiful tale which the man told. His son was lunatic, Matt. 17, 15, and possessed with a spirit, a demon that prevented his speaking. (Kretzmann)

**9:18** Demonic possession was responsible for the boy’s condition (see vv. 20, 25–26). (CSB)

The symptoms resemble the major form of epilepsy. The reference to a dumb and deaf spirit implies that the child’s situation was aggravated by an inability to speak or hear. What was involved, however, was not simply a chronic nervous disorder but demonic possession. The violence of the seizures and the reference to repeated attempts to destroy the youth by hurling him into a fire or water, indicate that the purpose of demonic possession is to distort the image of God in man. That this destruction should be heaped upon a child only serves to indicate how radical the issue is between demonic power and Jesus, the bestower of life. (Lane)

The boy's organ of speech and all his members were normal, but the spirit held them in bonds. And not only that: the demon at times took hold of him and threw him into paroxysms, or cramps, in which the boy foamed at the mouth and ground his teeth, until his body could no longer stand the strain, when he swooned away in a stupor, much like the withering of a branch under a sudden scorching blast. This recital of troubles and the fruitless effort to become rid of them affected the Lord very deeply and caused Him to voice a bitter complaint. (Kretzmann)

**9:18** His condition resembled an epileptic seizure, causing recurring convulsions and loss of consciousness, but was caused by demon possession. Cf Mt. 17:15. (TLSB)

**9:19** *them*. The father, disciples, and the gathering crowd. (TLSB)

*O faithless generation – genea apistos*, “faithless generation.” Every principal in the narrative falls under this criticism: the scribes, obviously, but also the father and the disciples. Notice, however, that *apistos* does not necessarily mean “without saving faith.” The father did

have faith. So did the disciples. But both also struggled with unbelief. On the other hand, we should also understand that the disciples' failure to cast out the demon was not because their faith was not strong enough. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*how long am I to bear with* – He was now well into the third year of instructing His disciples and thus wondered out loud when they would ever learn. How much longer would it take? (PBC)

The father and crowd had likely despaired while Jesus was absent on the mount. Note the amazement in v. 15 cf. 6:6; Lk. 24:32, 41) (TLSB)

Note: His cry about the unbelief of the generation among which He was laboring, His wish to be freed from their presence, was directed to the whole nation of the Jews. They all, with very few exceptions, had heard the Word of the Gospel with ears that heard not. The number of disciples of Jesus was very small after all His efforts, and the number of believers still smaller. Even the apostles, in spite of their confession concerning Jesus the Christ, were still affected with the unbelief of the great mass of the Jews. Upon Christ's command they now brought the boy to Him. (Kretzmann)

**9:20** No sooner, however, had the boy caught sight of the Lord than the spirit gave a demonstration of his hatred against Jesus and of his spite against the handiwork of God. He tore and twisted the sick boy in a ghastly manner, inflicting torments of every kind upon his body, as in extreme St. Vitus's dance, so that he finally fell to the ground in convulsions, where he rolled about foaming. It was an awful exhibition of the power of Satan over the body of the boy, well calculated to teach his great strength and his lasting hatred against all the works of God. (Kretzmann)

**9:21** Jesus showed interest in the boy, who was more to Jesus than a subject for a demonstration. (TLSB)

No sooner, however, had the boy caught sight of the Lord than the spirit gave a demonstration of his hatred against Jesus and of his spite against the handiwork of God. He tore and twisted the sick boy in a ghastly manner, inflicting torments of every kind upon his body, as in extreme St. Vitus's dance, so that he finally fell to the ground in convulsions, where he rolled about foaming. It was an awful exhibition of the power of Satan over the body of the boy, well calculated to teach his great strength and his lasting hatred against all the works of God. (Kretzmann)

**9:22, 24** *ei ti dunēi . . . pisteuō boēthei mou tēi apistiai*, “If you can do anything. . . . I believe; help my unbelief!” A realistic articulation of every Christian's faith. Like every member of the invisible Church, the father believed in Christ. But also as in every believer, the old Adam, unbelief, persisted. We all doubt (disbelieve!) that Christ either can or will give us particular best things at particular best times. This does not mean we have ceased to have faith and have lost our eternal salvation, but certainly is a begging to be reassured by God's Word and Sacrament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

**9:22** *to destroy him*. He had not prevented his physical growth, but had given every other evidence of his hateful presence by causing him to throw himself into fire, to be burned to death, and into water, to be drowned. We cannot be far wrong in believing that similar symptoms and experiences even today, as convulsions, madness, delirium, lunacy, and others, are due to the hatred of Satan. But it is self-evident that the devil has only so much power over the bodies of

men as is permitted him by God. So God had frustrated all attempts of the devil upon the life of that boy. Some one always had been present to save his life. Now the father appeals to Christ: Give us help and have mercy upon us! This was a sincere prayer, but unfortunately he modified it by saying: If Thou art in any way able. Here unbelief was battling with belief; he was not quite certain in his trust in Jesus. He implied some doubt as to His ability to help in this severe case of need. Jesus therefore takes time to correct this feeling, using, in a reproof way, almost the same words that the man had used towards Him: If thou only wert able. (Kretzmann)

**9:23** *If you can?... all things are possible for him who believes.* The question was not whether Jesus had the power to heal the boy but whether the father had faith to believe it. A person who truly believes will set no limits on what God can do. (CSB)

The power and love of God are constant (Ps. 62:11-12). Faith receives the gifts God had prepared (cf. 11:22-24| James 1:5-8). (TLSB)

The father's faith had nose-dived because the disciples had been unable to help him. But Jesus encouraged him. (PBC)

Here is the difficulty, the grievous mistake; there is still doubt in your heart. It is a favorite reference of Jesus that He here employs: All things are possible to him that believes. True faith has miraculous, heaven-storming qualities, Matt. 17, 20; Phil. 4, 13. This word had the desired effect with the distraught father. It opened his eyes to his lack of faith. (Kretzmann)

**9:24** *I believe; help my unbelief!* Since faith is never perfect, belief and unbelief are often mixed. (CSB)

The father cried out with faith but struggled with his son's burden and the failure of the disciples (cf. Rom. 7). "Worthiness does not depend on the greatness or smallness, the weakness or strength of faith. Instead, it depends on Christ's merit, which the distressed father of little faith (Mark 9:24) enjoyed as well as Abraham, Paul, and others who have a joyful strong faith" (FC SD VII 71). (TLSB)

It was a confession Jesus honored. For this father Jesus both healed his son and strengthened his faith. (PBC)

In deep humility he cries out: I believe; come to the assistance of my unbelief. As in the heart of all Christians, belief and unbelief were battling in his heart. But now faith and trust in the Lord were supreme. He trusts entirely in the help of Christ, also against that evil of unbelief that thrusts its head up now and then in his heart. On the part of God all things are possible, if the believer will but accept by faith what God has long ago prepared for him and enabled him to receive through help from above. (Kretzmann)

**9:25-26** The mute spirit cried out and left the healed boy who appeared to be dead. (TLSB)

**9:25** *he rebuked the evil spirit.* As much as possible, Jesus wanted to avoid further publicity. (CSB)

Meanwhile the people were coming running from all directions, and Jesus wanted to avoid unwelcome publicity. He therefore earnestly reprimanded the unclean spirit, who here caused deafness and dumbness in the boy, giving him the direct command to go out from him and to stay out. (Kretzmann)

**9:26** The devil must needs obey, but in doing so, he wreaks his vengeance upon the boy for the last time, throwing him into such terrible convulsions as he went forth from him that the boy fell down as one dead, and many openly declared their belief that he was dead. (Kretzmann)

**9:27** lifted him up – The dethroning of Satan is always a reversal of death and an affirmation of life. (Lane)

But when Jesus took him by the hand, he could readily get up and stand. Thus the glory of God, which Jesus, the Man, possessed, was once more made evident in this miracle. The Son of God had again triumphed over the devil. There is lasting comfort in this fact for all believers that put their trust unwaveringly in Christ, the Son of the living God. These the devil, with all his might and cunning, cannot harm. And though he should succeed in killing the body, the soul is safe in the hands of the heavenly Father. (Kretzmann)

**9:28** *entered the house* – Jesus often gathered the disciples by themselves after a significant event (1:29; 4:10; 4:34; 9:33). (TLSB)

The failure of the disciples to effect a cure in this case, when there had been instances of success, chapter 6, 13, perplexed them very much. They had also been deeply humiliated before the people by the sneering remarks of the scribes. When Jesus therefore came into the house where He, and probably His disciples with Him, was staying, they took the opportunity to speak to Him all alone in regard to their failure to expel the devil. Christ's answer was of a nature to cause deep humility in their hearts and to encourage them to strive for a firmer trust in Him. The question of the disciples implied: We surely had faith; we had the definite expectation to effect this cure, but we were sadly disappointed. (Kretzmann)

**9:29** *This kind*. Seems to suggest that there are different kinds of demons. (CSB)

There are different types of demons with different powers. The disciples' earlier success in exorcism (6:13) had either not prepared them for this case or made them overconfident in their own work. (TLSB)

*cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.*† The disciples apparently had taken for granted the power given to them or had come to believe that it was inherent in them. Lack of prayer indicated they had forgotten that their power over the demonic spirits was from Jesus (see 3:15; 6:7, 13). Faith works through prayer (see v. 23). (CSB)

*ei mē en proseuchēi*, lit., “except by prayer.” Prayer is not being offered as a magic formula, nor is “this kind” (*touto to genos*) more resistant to exorcism and thus requiring additional power to be cast out. The only power—of prayer and to cast out demons—is Christ himself. The point apparently is that the disciples had forgotten this. They had been successful in casting out demons before (6:13) by the power of Christ (6:7), but now, it appears, they had come to think the power was their own. Praying for God's help to drive out this demon would have been an expression of dependence on him, a trust that he and he alone could do the work. In this sense, any demon and any other challenge is overcome only by prayer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

The disciples had been tempted to believe that the gift they had received from Jesus was in their control and could be exercised at their disposal. This was a subtle form of unbelief, for it encouraged them to trust in themselves rather than in God. They had to learn that their previous

success in expelling demons provided no guarantee of continued power. Rather the power of God must be asked for on each occasion in radical reliance upon His ability alone. When faith confronts the demonic, God's omnipotence is its sole assurance, and God's sovereignty is its only restriction. This is the faith which experiences the miracle of deliverance. (Lane)

**9:14–29** Jesus descends from the transfiguration and meets a defiant demon, an anxious father, an astonished crowd, and despairing disciples. Despair threatens to overwhelm our faith too by pointing out how we fail to change or improve, suggesting that God neither cares for us nor has power to help. However, Jesus does not linger in the glory of the transfiguration, but graciously descends to a world of despair and doubt so that He might deliver us. • Lord, thank You for Your compassion, which brings You to our world of pain and dismay. Give us faith to overcome our doubts, and help us believe that all things are possible with You. Amen. (TLSB)

*Jesus Again Foretells Death, Resurrection*

**30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” 32 But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.**

**9:30-37** This pericope tells how Jesus provided the Twelve with special training as they traveled around Galilee. At the Transfiguration three of them saw Jesus' unveiled glory. Less than a year remains before Good Friday and Easter. The Lord's thoughts are already fastened on the suffering that awaits him, while the disciples focus on status and competition. Jesus intends, by his impending Passion and the value of humble service, to turn around their thinking about what matters and what does not. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

**9:30-32** The great Galilean ministry has ended. Now Jesus devotes less effort to public preaching and more to teaching the Twelve. He needs privacy. For the second time he speaks plainly about his approaching suffering, death, and resurrection (see 9:9–10), but “they did not understand what he meant” (v 32). They cannot figure out how his betrayal and death fit with his words about the kingdom of God and Good News (see Adolf Schiatter, *Die Evangelien nach Markus and Lukas* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961] 93–94). Why do they not tell their Master they are confused? Perhaps because they fear Jesus just might tell them the truth regarding all this! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Second of Jesus' three predictions of His death and resurrection. The disciples' confusion continued, even though Jesus taught them repeatedly. Luther: “The Law attacks Him and kills Him. By this deed the whole world is purged and expiated from all sins and thus it is set free from death and from every evil. But when sin and death have been abolished by this one man, God does not want to see anything else in the whole world, especially if it were to believe, except sheer cleansing and righteousness. And if any remnants of sin were to remain, still for the sake of Christ, the shining Sun, God would not notice them” (AE 26:280).

**9:30** *passed through Galilee.* Jesus' public ministry in and around Galilee was completed, and he was now on his way to Jerusalem to suffer and die (see 10:32–34). As he had been doing for several months, Jesus continued to focus his teaching ministry on the Twelve (v. 31). (CSB)

They left the area around Caesarea Philippi. From this point on Jesus spends much time with the disciples. (Buls)

As he has done previously in Mark, Jesus takes time to be alone with the Twelve to teach them about what will happen. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

The re-entrance into Galilee marks a return to familiar territory, but the public ministry which had stirred the province was not to be resumed. This was simply the first leg of the journey from the territory of Herod Philip through Galilee and Perea to Jerusalem. The subject of the brief section covering the return to Galilee (9:30-50) is Jesus' instruction of the Twelve, first concerning His destiny, and then their responsibility toward one another and toward men of faith beyond their immediate circle. Jesus' intention that His presence in Galilee should be unrecognized reflects not only the desire to instruct the disciples without interruption but a sense of compulsion to press toward Jerusalem where His Messianic mission is to be fulfilled. (Lane)

Thence," from the country or region where they had been for some time; this points to Gaulanitis. They now made a journey through Galilee, their last trip with the Lord through these familiar scenes. He did no public preaching at this time, He wanted no loud heralding. (Kretzmann)

**9:31-32** These announcements (Mk 8:31; 9:9-13, 30-32) concerning Jesus' death and resurrection constitute the middle of the Gospel as Jesus finishes his ministry in Galilee and moves on to Judea and the ultimate fulfillment in his passion. The only addition here is that Jesus is going to be *paradidotai* ("delivered"; passive tense), indicating the betrayal of Judas. This announcement to the disciples is as clear a proclamation of the Gospel story as there could be. Yet, v 32 notes that they did not understand it. The disciples do something with this announcement that seems out of character. They didn't ask him to explain his words. To the end, they did not comprehend what Jesus had taught them many times until they actually saw it completed. But the power of his resurrection and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit made them understand, and moreover transformed them into powerful witnesses of the truth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

**9:31** *Son of Man*. Here is the reason. "He continued to teach them in particular." Note again that he uses the term "Son of man." (Buls)

Bengel: It is already being plotted. Look at John 6:60-71. (Buls)

"Into the hands of" is metaphorical for "power." "Men" will exercise this power at God's permission. "Although He be killed He will rise." In the Matthew account the verb for "kill" occurs only once and "rise" is the passive "will be raised." For a parallel thought, applied to the believer, look at John 11:25: "Though he die, he shall live." At Mark 8:31 Jesus indicated the necessity. Here He speaks of the certainty and adds the element of betrayal. (Buls)

*he was teaching his disciples* – Jesus once more sets a powerful example of what a good teacher does (continually re-teaches until they get it).

*edidasken gar tous mathētas autou*, "for he was teaching his disciples." This sets the stage quite ironically for what is to follow. Jesus' teaching that he, the master, was willingly on his way to be killed should have made clear to the disciples that pretensions to worldly greatness had no place in their economy. Obviously it was not just the upcoming itinerary that "they did not understand" (v 32). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

His purpose was to be alone with His disciples, for their instruction had not yet proceeded to the point it should reach before the time of His great Passion. He got into the habit of referring to His approaching suffering, above all. The entire subject of His teaching touched upon this important



Gospel-lesson. The entire Passion was so vivid before His eyes that He speaks of it in the present tense: He is delivered into the hands of men. First Judas would deliver Him into the hands of the Jewish rulers, then these would deliver Him into the hands of the Roman governor. Note the thought included here: The Son of Man, the redeemer in His divine-human nature, having might and authority over all things, delivered into the hands of men, mere men, weak men, that in themselves are powerless before Him. And they kill him. That was their object, and that was, in their opinion, the end of Him and of His aspirations. For Him, however, it is not the end, but only the beginning. After three days He will arise. The remark of the evangelist at this point is almost pitiful. After all the teaching and repeated teaching and referring to the truth of the Old Testament prophecy that Jesus had done, the disciples went along the way with Him in ignorance as to the word that He was uttering. (Kretzmann)

is going to be delivered – This is a passive action. He is allowing it to happen to him.

For the second time He speaks plainly about His approaching suffering and death, and resurrection (see 9:9-10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

The King James Version translates the same Greek word as “shall be betrayed” in Matthew 17. (PBC)

**9:32** *they did not understand.* There was constant misunderstanding. And "afraid" is a constant state of fear even to ask a single question. By the way, their lack of understanding cannot be blamed on Jesus. Look at Matthew 17:23 and Luke 9:45. The amazing thing is that Jesus was so patient (and still is with us.) Lack of faith was displaced by fear which led to the pride about to be revealed in the next verses. (Buls)

Partly why the disciples didn't understand was that it was a totally foreign concept to the Jews then (and even now) that the Messiah should die. Since they had that mindset, it kept them from realizing what Jesus was telling them. It is keeping many Jews today from believing and having salvation in Jesus. (Buls)

*were afraid to ask him* – It is someone near Christ who gave Him over to those who will kill Him. No wonder the disciples are afraid to ask any further questions. Rather, they push His coming passion out of their minds, and instead argue about who of them will be the greatest in the coming kingdom of heaven. (PBC)

**9:30–32** Jesus repeats the prophecy of His Passion and resurrection while the disciples listen in frightened silence. Death is frightening and confusing when we cannot see the promised resurrection. Yet, Jesus bears our fears as well as our sins on the cross in order to deliver us. • Lord, break our fear of death by reminding us that You have died, never to die again. Today, open our frightened hearts with the resurrection's promise; one day, open our closed eyes with the resurrection's power. Amen. (TLSB)

*Who Is the Greatest?*

**33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. 35 And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” 36 And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms,**

**he said to them, 37 “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”**

**9:33-34** The Lord asks about their discussion out on the road. Like children caught with hands in the cookie jar, they clam up because arguing about who is “the greatest” is unworthy of their calling. (*meizōn* is a comparative used as a superlative, a practice common in Koine Greek.) But Christ doesn’t avoid the problem. Their competitive mindset shows they misunderstood what he was going to do in Jerusalem (v 31). They are tangled in a culture that worries too much about questions of procedure and rank (see William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974] 339). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

**9:33-35** Jesus is making his last visit to Capernaum. He continues his teaching as he prepares the disciples for what is to come. He wants the remaining 11 disciples to be unified after he ascends into heaven and warns about what could tear them apart: petty jealousy, envy, and working against each other to be elevated to a higher position. When Jesus points out that “if anyone wills to be first” he uses the words *ei[ ti] qevlei* as meaning “one must determine, set his will upon being first. The thing does not drop into one’s lap, it requires will, effort. . . . First and last as men may view the two are not considered here. While the first who is last and thus the last who is first refer to the disciple’s life here among his brethren, they will both be found also in heaven, in the reward of glory bestowed upon him there” (Lenski, *Mark*, 391–92). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

**9:33** *Capernaum*. This is His last time there. And it's in private at that. The Galilean ministry is over. Many commentaries, but not all, indicate that it was Jesus' house, but that's not the important thing. What is important is that it was in private. (Buls)

Now a soft question: "What were you discussing on the way?" The translations are perhaps confusing at this point. Of course Jesus knew. Look at Luke 9:47. He asks the question to make them face their sin. The very fact that He asks them shows that they discussed this out of His ear shot. (Buls)

Christ’s last stop in Capernaum is a busy one and is spent for the most part in instructing His disciples. Mark devotes the rest of the chapter to it, and Matthew all of chapter 18. (PBC)

*the house*. Probably the one belonging to Peter and Andrew (see 1:29). (CSB)

*what were you discussing on the way* – Because He knew they were coming up with wrong answers, he wanted them to put the question to Him. (PBC)

Jesus knew of the discussion and, by His omniscience, knew also its topic. Therefore the Lord takes occasion to teach them a badly needed lesson. While He had gone before them, busy with the thoughts pertaining to the way of redemption, they had been engrossed with their vain thoughts, how they might enhance their own glory. They must learn, above all, the lesson of the great paradox in the kingdom of God. (Kretzmann)

**9:34** *they kept silent*. No doubt due to embarrassment. (CSB)

Like children caught with hands in the cookie jar. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

*who was the greatest.* Questions of rank and status are normal and played an important role in the life of Jewish groups at this time, but they had no place in Jesus' value system (see v. 35; 10:42–45). (CSB)

Ironically, after the transfiguration and Jesus' Passion prediction, the disciples debated which of them was greatest. (TLSB)

There was an embarrassing pause at this juncture though Matthew 18:1 clearly indicates that someone of the disciples finally broke silence. "Because" explains the painful silence. "They had argued" denotes close reciprocal associational. Jesus hadn't actually heard it. "Argued" means to discuss in the sense of arguing. Although it happened along the way, Jesus confronts them in private. He did not intervene while they were making fools of themselves but waited for a quiet moment. Furthermore, perhaps He foresaw that He needed a little child to teach them a lesson. The child becomes available in the house. (Buls)

*tiz meizōn*, "who was the greatest." A recurrent discussion among the disciples. It also came up, even more inappropriately timed, in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday (Lk 22:24). On another occasion, Jesus himself brought up the "greater than" issue regarding John the Baptist (Mt 11:11). In that case too, Jesus turned the discussion upside down. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Because death was involved, they wanted to move to a new topic. So, they choose this issue. It too, had been explained to them but of course they hadn't gotten that straight either. In a sense this relates to the concept of Jesus' death in that this is about an earthly kingdom and that was what they thought the Messiah would come to establish.

In Mark the dispute over greatness indicates the degree to which the disciples had failed to understand Jesus' solemn affirmation concerning His abandonment to the will of men. It also shows how impregnated they were with the temper of their own culture where questions of precedence and rank were constantly arising. (Lane)

The hearts and the heads of the disciples were yet filled with false Messianic hopes; the idea of a temporal kingdom would not down. And this matter they had discussed on the way, among themselves, disputing about rank, quarreling about who should be considered the greatest in their midst. The question may have been broached at this time because Jesus had taken only three of them: along on the mount of transfiguration. (Kretzmann)

**9:35** Greatness according to a fallen world comes by climbing over others, pushing yourself up by putting others down, building your strength on another's weakness. God turns conventional wisdom upside down. In God's kingdom, precisely by placing oneself beneath the weakest, a person gets ahead and becomes great. Jesus invests the term "servant" with new splendor. Servanthood is not to be shunned, but actually something to which we must aspire. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

*Sat down.* To teach them that, He called the Twelve before Him, in a very formal and impressive way. They should, for once, get His full meaning. (Kretzmann)

"Sitting down" denotes the deliberate care with which He treated the matter. Judas was there and had heard Jesus prophesy the betrayal in verse 31. What a beautiful veiled warning! "And said," Mark has 151 historic presents, Matthew 78 and Luke only 4. No wonder Mark's account is

so vivid. "Anyone" is universal, pertaining to all people. That is amazing. The next two verbs have caused translations and commentators a problem: (Buls)

Does "wants" mean "wishes" or "wills" (has the will and determination)? Does "must be" means "shall" "will" (by his own volition) or "must?" Compare the translations for these various ideas. The problem is solved by noting the "and" is exegetical: "namely a servant to all." There is the key to the whole sentence. (Buls)

At this point the disciples were likely influenced by false notions about the Kingdom. Compare Matthew 18:1. They were still thinking of an earthly kingdom with earthly rulers and wondered what they rank would be in this kingdom. They were thinking of anything but service. They were oblivious to being like Jesus. Mark 10:44-45; Luke 22:27; John 13:1-15; Philippians 2:5-8. By the way, Mark 9:35 does not speak of how one becomes a Christian. It denotes Christian living. But the disciples needed to repent of their pride. See Matthew 18:3. (Buls)

Jesus is actually inviting the disciples to be first, but on terms radically opposite those of the flesh and the world. *Anyone* can be first. According to the world very few are. But firstness in the Kingdom means lastness of all and service to all. That requires repentance, constant repentance. (Buls)

*if anyone would be first* – The word for “wants” is *ethelo* which has determination connected to it. It will require thoughtfulness before hand. It is not wrong to aspire to leadership. – No service is too lowly, not even meeting the needs of a child. (PBC)

*thelei prōtos einai*, “would be first.” This presents a delicate but crucial distinction of Law and Gospel. In our fallenness, every human being wants to be first; essentially we each want to be God. Jesus does not condemn being first. However, desiring to be first can never be the motivation by which one becomes first, and it must not be preached that way. As soon as one does anything out of a desire to be first, he has not made himself last; he has put himself first by following a desire for himself. Therefore, the preacher desiring to make his hearers truly “great” (to motivate them to truly humble service) will proclaim that Christ, by making himself last, has already made us “first.” This is, of course, the reality. Every redeemed soul is of first importance to God. As the new man or woman hears this, that soul believes he or she can gain nothing further for self. The believer is thus free to serve God and neighbor, putting self last. That, then, is living as one who is first, the greatest. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*last of all* – Servant Leadership begins by serving.

In the Church of Jesus the reverse is true. There the rank is in proportion to the service offered. The humbler a person is and the more willing he is to serve his fellow-men, the higher he will stand in the economy of God. Instead of urging ambition for high position and power, Christ knows of only one valid reason for fame before Him and His Father, humble, unpretentious service, without a thought of reward. (Kretzmann)

**9:36-37** Next Jesus places a child in their midst, an object lesson they did not quickly grasp (see Mk 10:13). Children can be exasperating. They don't always notice or value your service, nor are they in a position to reward you. In the world's way of reckoning, then, it makes sense not to bother with them. But Jesus approaches the question of service in a completely different way. Service isn't great because of the dividends you may reap. It is great when performed for someone great, with no promise of reward in this life. When Jesus says that receiving a child is

the same as receiving himself, he endows service with a wonderful greatness. The verb in v 37, *dechomai* (NW: “welcome”) signifies much more than a surface “Hi, how are ya?”—a warm embrace, as one welcomes a dear friend to dinner. Lowly service performed for the Christ shouldn’t be carried out with a sullen spirit of obligation, but with the joy of receiving a valued guest. With just such joy the Lord himself kept walking toward Jerusalem and the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Pastors ought to “welcome” every opportunity to preach on this text. It affords the opportunity to issue a corrective to that “me first” mindset that plagues the world and the church today just as it afflicted the Twelve, and it anchors this corrective in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ, who willingly served selfish people like us by his suffering and death—people who cannot reward him for his sacrifice. At the same time we uncompromisingly reject the fallen world’s way of getting ahead, we warm our hearers with the comfort of the Gospel! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Here we find a connection between this week’s text and next week’s as those who welcome this little child in Christ’s name welcome Christ and God. That the one doing the welcoming does so because of faith in the Gospel Jesus has given to him is the important aspect. In the parallel text in Matthew it is also the faith that a child possesses that is noted as one who entirely trusts in the Word of the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 4)

**9:36** *he took a child* – *paheedeeon* – This was a very young child perhaps even an infant. This child represented not even a hint of power. Children have been and continue to be taken advantage of and harmed. They also are the most gullible in life and have great trust in what they are told. Jesus is teaching the disciples to eschew power and to have faith in his gospel actions.

A little child was used as an object lesson for the Apostles. KJV, RSV, NIV, NASB: "Took him in his arms." But NEB: "Put his arm round him." The latter is weak. Don't water it down. (Buls)

That Jesus used a child in illustrating his answer brings a needed lesson to our own age, an age with so many unwanted children, with a murderous mania for aborting children. What greater reason can we have for sharing the gospel? (PBC)

The distinguishing traits of a child are: absence of arrogance, simplicity and humility. (Ylvisaker)

In order to bring home this lesson still more thoroughly, He took a little child that may have been playing in the neighborhood, placed it in their midst, fondled it in His arms to show His deep regard, His tender love for children, and then told the disciples, that in receiving a child, in rendering to one of these little ones a service, they were rendering one to Him. (Kretzmann)

**9:37** *whoever receives one these* – *dechomai* signifies much more than a surface “Hi, how are ya?” – a warm embrace, as one welcomes a dear friend to dinner. Lowly service performed for Christ shouldn’t be carried out with a sullen spirit of obligation, but with the joy of receiving a valued guest. With just such joy the Lord Himself kept walking toward Jerusalem and the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

Jesus emphasizes service and humility. Though the child appeared insignificant, he was treasured by the connected to the Lord, who focused on serving others. In the kingdom of God, every disciple represents the Lord. (TLSB)

"Welcome," four times in this verse, does not speak of justification, becoming a Christian, but rather sanctification, the attitude with which we deal with others. Furthermore, it is not limited to children for verse 35 says: "Servant of *all*." Our attitude toward all, and in this instance a child, actually denotes our attitude toward the Father and the Son. And our whole attitude is indicated by our attitude toward just ONE such child. The receiving and dealing with the child is based on knowledge of and faith in what Jesus has revealed. Note again that this is open to anyone, "whoever." It is not a limitation but an invitation. (Buls)

What underlies the thought of the whole verse is that the receiver must be like the child, humble, the antithesis to pride and arrogance. Is the verse best translated: "Not only Me but also the One who sent Me" or "Not Me but the One who sent Me." ? Lenski, Beck, Hendriksen and the Peschitto prefer the first. The other translations prefer the second. (Buls)

Suggestion: What is overlooked in this argument is that Jesus Himself is the greatest example of humility. He humbly did what He did to have us deal directly with the Father in heaven. This does not mean that He is downgrading His necessary Mediator role. Not at all. The truly humble person does not downgrade the importance of what he is doing or what he is. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: The disciples, of course, were repentant and were of the true faith but thought too highly of themselves and therefore they had to take care that they would not lose the faith and the Kingdom through pride and arrogance. And so it behooves all believers, who still have the proud flesh, to be admonished to repent and to become as little children, small and humble in their own estimation, as simple and modest as children. Above all, before God we should be truly humble but also should make ourselves subject to each other, each one be servant of the next person. (Buls)

*hen tōn toioutōn paidiōn*, "one such child." In Matthew's parallel, an additional verse is added (Mt 18:4), in which Jesus offers the child as an example of humility and greatness in the kingdom. Here in Mark, the child is an apt illustration of one to receive because the child cannot repay. One gains no earthly recognition by receiving a child. The chief point, though, is receiving "in my [Jesus'] name" (*epi tōi onomati mou*). Receiving anyone of any age in Jesus' name is an act of faith in the Savior. One who has faith in Christ is great. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

**9:33–37** Confused by Jesus' prediction of His death, the disciples return to a subject they know well, their own greatness. Jesus shows them that true status is found in serving those whom God values. When we are tempted to debate who is the greatest, we should instead look to where the Master hangs on the cross. He represents us before the Father in order to redeem us, and He leads us by the cross into a new life. • Lord, forgive us for our battles over greatness. Remind us that You alone are great, for You have served the least among us. Amen. (TLSB)

*Whoever Is Not Against Us Is for Us*

**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 mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of

**me. 40 For the one who is not against us is for us. 41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.**

**9:38-50** This Gospel immediately follows last week's (see previous sermon study). Its thrust is related, but it is not identical. In vv 30–37 Jesus warns against trying to become great the way the world does. In this Sunday's text, he is concerned about the pride that moves his followers to condemn—and potentially exclude—others, while they go easy on themselves. Jesus points out that it actually ought to be the other way around (cf. also the Epistle). They should be grateful for what God does in them and in others. At the same time, they need to discipline themselves, realizing that the way they live today has eternal consequences. Keep in mind that these admonitions follow the manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:2–12). The disciples' conduct is to reflect that Jesus is their Redeemer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

- Verses 38-41 are paralleled at Luke 9:49-50 in shorter form; (Buls)
- Verses 42-47 are paralleled at Matthew 18:6-9 and Luke 17:1-2; (Buls)
- Verses 48-50 are peculiar to Mark. (Buls)

Textual matters:

- a. Verses 44 and 46 are not found in the best manuscripts. Nor in modern translations. (Buls)
- b. Verse 38: the words "and he followeth not us (KJV)" are not found in the best manuscripts and are therefore omitted by RSV, NEB, BECK, NIV and NASB. (Buls)
- c. Verse 49: Nestle's Greek text reading is the preferred reading followed by the five translations mentioned above. On this verse the UBS Textual Commentary states: "At a very early period a scribe, having found in Leviticus 2:13 a clue to the meaning of Jesus' enigmatic statement, wrote the OT passage in the margin of his copy of Mark. In subsequent copyings the marginal gloss was either substituted for the words of the text, or was added to the text." (Buls)

Verses 38-41 form a unit. 42 is transitional. Verses 43-50 form a second unit. (Buls)

**9:38** *we tried to stop him*. The disciples were protecting their exclusive status with Jesus. (TLSB)

*not following us*. The man apparently was a believer, but he was not one of the exclusive company of the Twelve. Nevertheless he acted in Jesus' name and had done what the disciples, on at least one occasion, had not been able to do (see vv. 14–18, 28). (CSB)

There is no conjunction or particle. John interrupts Jesus. What he says indicates that he was not sure whether he had done the right thing. "We were trying to prevent him." Note that he says "us" not "you." He judges simply by membership in the circle of the disciples, who had been commanded to drive out devils. (Buls)

Adolf Schlatter (*Die Evangelien nach Markus and Lukas* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961] 96) believes that John objected to the man driving out demons because the man's efforts were incomplete and only half-right. There may be envy at work here, too, since that man seemed to be functioning in an unauthorized, unofficial way (cf. Joshua in the OT Reading). The conative

imperfect *ekōluomen* indicates that the disciples tried to hinder the man's actions (BDF § 326). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

We saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." The "us" (*hēmin*) may show elitism on the part of the disciples, but the unnamed exorcist is able to do what the disciples could not (9:18). Though he is not a part of the Twelve, he must believe because "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer" (9:29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Numbers 11:27-29, "<sup>27</sup> A young man ran and told Moses, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.' <sup>28</sup> Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, 'Moses, my lord, stop them!' <sup>29</sup> But Moses replied, 'Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!'"

The assurance that a special and intimate relationship exists between Jesus and the Twelve (verse 37) prompted John to call Jesus attention to an unsuccessful attempt to prevent an unauthorized use of His power and name by an anonymous exorcist. This is the only time when Mark calls attention to John alone. It is striking, however, that after each of the three major prophecies of the passion the evangelist inserts the response of one of the three disciples who were closest to Jesus: Peter (8:32f), John (9:38), and James, with John (10:35-37). Mark shows in this way that even the most privileged of the disciples failed to understand what the passion signified for their life and mission. The use of the first person plural ("we saw...we forbade him...not following us") indicates that John was speaking for all of the disciples. (Lane)

The irony of John's disclosure, at this point in the narrative, is that in chapter 9:14-18 the disciples themselves had been powerless in a situation involving demonic resistance to exorcism. The action of the Twelve toward a stranger who was effective in exercising Jesus' power only points to their own ineptness and lack of understanding. The Twelve had an unduly narrow perspective toward the work of God. The man had grasped that an essential dimension of Jesus' mission was the confrontation and defeat of Satan. (Lane)

**9:39** *Do not stop him.* Jesus' view of discipleship was far more inclusive than the narrow view held by the Twelve. (CSB)

"Stop preventing him" likely indicates that the man is still doing so. "In the next moment" is "in the same breath." "Say anything bad" or "speak evil" means "he believes in Me." (Buls)

Exorcism, a divine work that should be stopped. One who worked good in God's name would not curse His name. (TLSB)

Contrary to John's expectation, Jesus sides with the "unauthorized" man: give him the benefit of the doubt! The Lord is patient enough to put up with imperfections. He is prepared to commend even those who have a long way to go, but in whom God's Spirit has obviously done some work. Moses in Numbers 11 reflects this same attitude. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

**9:40** This verse seems to contradict the severe statement of Mt. 12:30, "He who is not for me is against me." Actually, they are not as contradictory as they might seem, because they speak of different situations. Matthew's passage warns the hearer against the danger of his own half-hearted commitment. This one in Mark seeks to prevent arrogance towards those who have not



yet “arrived,” and inspire gratitude for what the Lord has done in the lives of others. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

Though the man was not part of Jesus’ traveling company, the blessed result of his casting out demons in Jesus’ name parallels what Paul saw happening during his imprisonment in Rome (Phil 1:15–18): Jesus is being proclaimed. Notice, however, the significant difference between this case and the one Jesus warns against so sternly in Mt 12:30. When one is not “against us,” that is, this particular entourage of believers, he may in fact still be “for us”—still a part of the Church. But when it comes to a relationship with not just this particular assembly but with Jesus himself, a single, unmistakable position is required: “Whoever is not *with me* is [indeed!] against me.” Neutrality regarding Jesus himself is opposition to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

This verse states a Christian axiom. Note Matthew 12:30, an opposite thought, found in a context of those who reject Jesus. The use of “us” in verse 40 includes Jesus. In verse 38 it obviously excludes Jesus. Both this verse and Matthew 12:30 tell us that no one can be neutral to Jesus. (Buls)

The sharp recognition of only two sides (“against us” and “for us”) radicalizes the demand to welcome participation in the mission, even from unexpected quarters. If committed, he cannot work against it at the same time. (Lane)

**9:41** *whoever gives you a cup of water.* God remembers even small acts of kindness extended to believers because they are believers. (CSB)

Smallest kindness of God could be as simple as giving a cup of water. Even a small generous act gives glory to Christ. (v. 37). (TLSB)

This explanation cites a specific case which however is general. Intended sense: a deed, no matter how insignificant, done “on the ground that you are Christ’s” will always be rewarded. That is the attitude they should have toward such as are mentioned in verses 38-39, not an attitude of exclusion. (Buls)

What a contrast to John’s concern in verse 38! While John was upset about the man doing good because he was “unofficial,” Jesus says that even the smallest act of kindness done for His followers will be rewarded. He wants to engender an appreciative and encouraging attitude towards those whom the disciples may readily dismiss as weak. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

The offering of a cup of water to quench the biting thirst induced by the burning heat of the eastern sun is an act of hospitality (cf. v 37) as well as an example of the humble service commended to the disciples in verse 35. It becomes a significant act when the drink is offered to a man because he is a disciple and belongs to Jesus. This statement presupposes the same frame of reference integral to verse 37, that the emissary of a man is as the man himself, and what is done to emissary is done to the one who sent him. (Lane)

*his reward.* Including God’s approval. (CSB)

**9:38–41** Jesus opens the disciples’ eyes to see those who do God’s work in dramatic or simple ways. The work of God goes far beyond us. He shows His power and kindness through great life-

changing miracles and simple cups of water. • Lord, thank You for Your work through the lives of others. Lead me to welcome those miracles and mercies that You show through every one of Your people. Amen. (TLSB)

### *Causing to Sin*

**42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 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, to the unquenchable fire. 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. 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, 48 ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ 49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 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.”**

**9:42** *one of these little ones who believe in me.* † Perhaps the little children mentioned in vv. 36–37. Jesus’ point is clear: To cause even those whom we might consider to be the least of believers to sin will bring serious judgment. (CSB)

The very opposite of verse 37 and a glaring contrast with verse 41. It is a general statement covering all instances of this kind. "Cause to sin" is "to entrap." NEB: "Leads astray." "Believe in Me" surely means faith in Christ. Little children can believe. KJV, RSV and NASB make the apodosis a contrary to fact condition "and had been cast into the sea." Grammars argue about the meaning of "if" or "that" here. It makes little difference. The meaning is clear: "Better to die a violent and cruel death than to cause one of these little believers to sin." Christians *must* control their flesh so as not to mislead others. (Buls)

The Lord intensifies his remarks about accepting the weak. He is so serious about embracing “these little ones who believe in me” that causing them to sin (*skandalizō*, “cause to fall, offend, entrap”) will elicit severe punishment. Although “little ones” can certainly include children, it is better in this context not to exclude adults who may be new to the faith or immature. As William Lane observes, “The stern warning has immediate relevance for those who had sought to prevent the exercise of faith in Jesus’ name” (*The Gospel of Mark* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974] 345). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

*skandalisēi*, “cause to sin,” literally “to fall (from faith).” *mikrōn*, “little ones,” believers, not just children. *mulos*, “millstone,” denotes the type of grinding stone so heavy that it must be turned by a donkey. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

The stern warning has immediate relevance for those who had sought to prevent the exercise of faith in Jesus name, and corresponds in severity to the word addressed to Peter when he sought to turn Jesus from the path of obedience (8:33). (Lane)

On the other hand, if anyone scandalizes, offends, causes one of these little ones that believe on Christ, especially also little children, to do wrong or to get an impression which will cause such a person to think less highly of Christ and of the Christian Church, this is an offense which the Lord cannot condemn too strongly. Far better, He says, It would be for such a person to be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck before such an offense is committed. Here a grave

responsibility is placed upon all parents, teachers, and all whose duty brings them into contact with children and with such as are small in the kingdom of God, the Christians that are weak in Christian knowledge. (Kretzmann)

*millstone.* A heavy stone slab turned by a donkey in grinding grain. (CSB)

**9:43-48** Of course, the tendency to “scandalize” or cause others to sin begins with a weakness in ourselves. While we ought to accept others despite their shortcomings, we need to be strong and self-disciplined in combating our own sinful tendencies. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The fact that Jesus says the same thing three times about various body parts underlines the seriousness of the matter. If hands, feet, or eyes really were the cause of evil in us, we should not hesitate to part with them, since living a handicapped life in this world isn’t nearly as frightful as spending eternity in hell, described here in the terms of Is 66:24 as everlasting punishment with a worm that never finishes chewing and a fire that is never done burning its victim. To be sure, the parts of our body are not really the seat of evil in us; the point is that we ought to keep a close eye on sin in our life and stop it before it flourishes. Thus, we who often are rough on others should be much rougher on ourselves. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Hyperbole, as Scripture forbids self-mutilation (Lev 19:28; Deut 14:1; 1 Cor 6:19–20; et al.). These verses teach that participation in the kingdom is worth any price or sacrifice. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**9:43** Nothing is more important than faith unto eternal life. (TLSB)

*cut it off.* Hyperbole, a figure of speech that exaggerates to make its point, is used here to emphasize the need for drastic action. Often sin can be conquered only by radical “spiritual surgery.” (CSB)

*life.* Eternal life in the presence of God. (CSB)

*hell.* The Greek word for “hell” is *geena* from Hebrew name for the Hinnom Valley southwest of Jerusalem, where humans were sacrificed (2 Ch. 28:3; 33:6) and garbage was dumped (2 Ki. 23:10). Fire was constantly present in the Hinnom Valley due to sacrifices and burning trash; this became a figure for the everlasting fire of hell, as the ESV translation suggests. Used only in Mark (vv. 43, 45, 47). (TLSB)

Verses 43-47 (with 44 and 46 omitted) comprise a three-fold warning to the Christian with reference to self: (Buls)

- a. These words do not condone self-mutilation and therefore are not to be taken literally. If they were taken literally we would soon have no members left, for our flesh tempts us often. They are sternest law: drown all lust and temptation immediately. Note the three aorist imperatives in 43, 45 and 47. (Buls)
- b. The warning not to scandalize others occurs only once, verse 42, but the warning not to scandalize self is given thrice. (Buls)
- c. "To enter life," verse 43, occurs again in 45 and 47. "Enter the Kingdom" is the eschatological Kingdom of God in heaven. The

word "life" occurs four times in Mark, twice here and at 10:17,30. It reminds one of the very frequent use in John's Gospel. (Buls)

- d. "Go into hell," verse 43, he enters hell on his own accord but in 45 and 47 we note that he has no choice. The word used for hell here "geenna," in verses 43, 45 and 47 always means "hell" in the New Testament. (Buls)

**9:44, 46** Christ here mentions some other members that are very apt to offend, to commit sin, to lead others into sin. The law of sin is always active in our members. Here it is necessary that a person keep these members in subjection. For the Lord speaks figuratively and does not want to be understood, as Luther says, that He here advocates physical mutilation or dismemberment, since that would obviously not take the sin and the desire to sin out of the heart. It is the heart which must be controlled by the spirit of love toward Christ and our neighbor, in order that the hand, the foot, the eye do not perform that which sin desires them to do. Whosoever places his members into the service of sin, of uncleanness, and unrighteousness here in this life, will hereafter pay the penalty for such transgression in all eternity. But whosoever, with the help of the Holy Ghost, brings his members into subjection, trains them, holds his desires in check, does not permit sin to reign in his body, he will retain faith and a good conscience, he will keep body and soul unto life eternal. (Kretzmann)

**9:47** *kingdom of God*. See note on Mt 3:2. (CSB)

Heaven and eternal life in contrast to eternal death. (TLSB)

**9:48** Isa 66:24 speaks of the punishment for rebellion against God. As the final word of Isaiah's message, the passage became familiar as a picture of endless destruction.(CSB)

*worm does not die*. Worms were always present in the rubbish dump. (CSB)

The torments of hell. (TLSB)

"Their" is the damned in hell. Hell is pictured as everlasting internal corruption and putrefaction and external torture. Look at 2 Thessalonians 1:9, eternal objects of God's wrath. (Buls)

Verses 42-48 are a stern warning. Who is not guilty and who does not need warning? (Buls)

"Their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched," quoted from Is 66:24.

Note: This passage makes such a deep impression on account of the earnestness of the Savior and because of His solemn reference to the fire of hell, and to the worm that will not die, and to the fire that will not be quenched. The fires of the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where all the refuse of the city was burned, were commonly taken as a type of the fires of hell. As these fires burned without ceasing, day and night, so the fires of hell will offer no respite. And as the worms were continually feeding on the remains of carcasses and refuse that was dumped out into that valley, so some of the torments of hell will be like the ceaseless gnawing of worms. To try to crack jokes at the expense of the doctrine of hell, or to deny this doctrine outright, for the flimsiest reasons, is decidedly blasphemous in view of such passages as the present and Luke 16, 28. (Kretzmann)

**9:49†** The saying may mean that everyone who enters hell will suffer its fire, or (if only loosely connected with the preceding) it may mean that every Christian in this life can expect to undergo the fire of suffering and purification. As every sacrifice had to be salted to be acceptable to God (Lev 2:13), so the followers of Jesus must be purified by the fire of self-denial (vv. 43–47) to be acceptable servants. See Mal 3:2–3 for fire as God’s means of purifying his servants and Php 2:17 for the apostolic ministry portrayed as sacrifice. (CSB)

Fire purified and salt preserved. Christians may be kept in the true faith through the trials they endure. (TLSB)

This verse is a Gospel promise. It explains, and denotes the way out for the condemned sinner who is conscious of his guilt. "Everyone" denotes every Christian. "Will be salted" means "will be cleansed, will be purified." "With fire" is dative of means and denotes the Word of God. Look at John 15:2-3. Note that "fire" has a radically different meaning here than in verse 48. For a parallel example compare Luke 3:16-17, where "fire" has distinctly different meanings. By the way, the difference between Lutheran and Reformed theology is evident in the explanation of verse 49. Lenski interprets "fire" as the Word and the Spirit. But Hendriksen: "A fiery trial will come upon everybody, for the purpose of purification." Obviously he says this because he does not believe that the Word is the means of grace. (Buls)

The preceding verse referred to the everlasting fire of hell. Here the fire appears to be the pain we endure as we say no to evil and die to sin. It isn’t easy; it’s a struggle, much like the sharp sting of salt poured into an open wound. Mal. 3:2-4 likens the Messiah’s purification of His people to the refining of gold and silver, intense heat melts the metal so the dross may be removed. In this way, the Lord “seasons” (salts) His people, preserving and purifying them so they bring more honor to Him and build up others. Schlatter feels that Jesus tells us to pick our fire; either the salty fire of self-discipline in this life, or the frightful ire that never ends. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

*puri*. Fire in this context is testing and purification by trial. *halisthēsetai*, “salted,” calls to mind the salting of Old Testament sacrifices to make them pure and acceptable (Lev 2:13).

**9:50** *Salt is good*. The distinctive mark of discipleship typified by salt is allegiance to Jesus and the gospel. (CSB)

*Have salt in yourselves.*† Those thus purified (v. 49) become “the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13). (CSB)

The first three words are axiomatic. Everyone will agree with this statement. Note that predicate adjective is placed for emphasis: "The salt is truly good." And likely the article indicates a particular type of salt, the Word and the Spirit. (Buls)

Next follows a rhetorical question, a good teaching device. Without salt there can be no seasoning. Without the Word and Spirit there can be no forgiveness, no battle against sin, no everlasting life. By the way, this sentence does away with the idea: "Once in grace, always in grace." (Buls)

The final sentence is a compound sentence, with compound imperatives, contrasting reflexive and reciprocal action. A connecting word "and so" in the Greek, not translated here, likely means "and thus." Only when we have the Word and Spirit in ourselves can we have peace

among ourselves. We have come full circle from verses 34 and 35. The only cure for pride, prejudice, offense and living in sin is the salt of the Word and the Spirit. This will keep us at peace with each other. Note again that verses 48-50 are found only here in Mark. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: He who tames his members with the help of the Holy Spirit, holds himself within bounds, does not give sin free reign, he keeps his faith and a good conscience, keeps his body and should to everlasting life. The Lord demands a painful offering from His disciples, the offering of their own members . . . Christians, who are sanctified and make progress in sanctification through the Word and Spirit of the Lord, must always have this salt and with God's Word and Spirit must part ways with the rotten deeds of the world, rather than to permit themselves to be lured into sin by the world, but must practice mutual peace and must not consider themselves superior to others. (Buls)

*be at peace with one other.* Strife is resolved and peace restored when we recognize in one another a common commitment to Jesus and the gospel. (CSB)

Faith brought peace, which was especially needed among contentious disciples. (TLSB)

The idea expressed in the previous verse continues here with the necessity of maintaining one's "saltiness" through repentance and self-discipline; otherwise, the Christian becomes useless, like salt that has lost its flavor. The trials we endure prompt us to be more accepting and encouraging of our imperfect fellow believers, resulting in "peace with each other" – the solution for John's critical attitude toward the man casting out demons in verse 38. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

*halas*, "salt." Salt was collected from pits, marshes, and basins where salt water evaporated. This salt was mixed with impurities, especially if it was from the Dead Sea. Symbolic meanings for salt include wisdom, generosity, and wit (Col 4:6); purification and exorcism (Ezek 16:4; Mt 5:13; 2 Ki 2:20–22); salary or currency (Ezek 4:14); covenant (Num 18:19; 2 Chr 15:5); curse and judgment (Judg 9:45).

**9:42–50** Nothing is more important than retaining the faith unto eternal life. Let nothing come between you and the Savior. Though He tests us with fire, He does not consume His own people. Rejoice, for God graciously gives us the faith in which He preserves us to eternity. • Lord, give us the lasting faith that can persevere through every trial. Empty our hands of anything that competes with You, and let us hold firmly to You eternally. Amen. (TLSB)