

Servants of All

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 July 2023

Preacher: Andrew Midgett

[0 : 00] Well, I'd like to add my word of welcome to those expressed by Andrew. I can remember that name. That's an easy one for me to remember. And so, I don't know if you realize the passage that he read in Romans 11 is at the very end of a very deep doctoral dissertation by Paul.

He covers a lot of ground in chapters 9, 10, and 11. And so, as he gets to the end of that dissertation, he just breaks out in doxology.

And so, you know, that's why, I mean, just think about the fact that he says, you know, our God, you can't know his mind. You cannot understand who he is because he is so much greater than we are. Who has ever been his counselor? You can't tell God what to do. But then he just says, but of him and for him and to him are all things. And so, that's the God you're approaching this morning.

And so, it is a great honor for me to open God's word with you. This was not a planned scheduled time for me to be up here. Bear went on vacation again, as usual.

[1 : 07] I think he gets more time off than the president does. I mean, the guy goes on vacation all the time. And so, he says, you know, I need somebody. So, anyway, I said, dude, I will come because I love to come to New Bern and I love to see you and just to open God's word with you.

And this morning, we are going to continue in our series out of Mark. We are in Mark chapter 9. And so, we are picking up on the backside of the transfiguration.

Now, I don't know how much was said about the transfiguration a couple of weeks ago. I'm not going to try to replot a bunch of ground that's already been plowed. But I am going to say a little bit about what Peter, James, and John experienced.

Because I think our passage this morning makes a little bit more sense based on what they saw. And so, first of all, I would just remind you of this. That they did see in the transfiguration the preexistent glory of Jesus.

Now, the way it reads in the passage, it reads as if Jesus just started to shine and his clothes got bright. And so, it's almost like, you know, your mind tends to think that that's simply what it was.

[2 : 17] That he just radiated like a big spotlight on top of him. The word transfiguration means to change in form. And so, what they saw was Jesus taking on the glory that he has had from the very beginning.

His body was changing. It wasn't so much that his clothes got white. It's that his body was changing into what he has always been, the eternal son.

They also heard the father's divine voice. It tells you in the passage that a cloud overshadowed them. And then the father speaks and says, this is my beloved son.

And so, you know, this is a voice that they had never heard before. And so, he declares that Jesus is his son, which is glorifying the name of his son.

But he also tells the disciples, hey, you listen to him. You hear him. That's who you're supposed to hear. Now, what that is saying to them is this.

[3 : 18] That up to this point, Israel has always been concerned with the law and the prophets. Okay? And so, they were always concerned with what the law says. But they also always had prophets that they listened to.

And what the father is saying to the disciples now, you listen to my son. That is who you listen to. Now, that doesn't mean that the law is not good. And that doesn't mean that the prophets weren't good.

But there is a change here. And the father says, you hear what my son is saying to you. Now, Peter describes this, you know, this vision that they saw in 2 Peter chapter 1.

And he says this. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For when he received honor, this is when his father spoke. When he received honor and glory from the father, and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory. That's the cloud that overshadowed them.

[4 : 21] This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this very voice, born from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

And so Peter says, look, you need to understand that we saw something magnificent on the mountain. We saw the glory of Christ. We heard the father speak from the majestic glory. And we're not making this stuff up. So to say the least, this is a very big mountaintop experience, right? I mean, nobody other than these three men have ever seen something like this. Moses went up the mountain in Exodus, but I don't think he saw quite what the disciples saw. Elijah went up on the mountain. He heard the quiet voice of God speaking to him, but they did not see this.

And so this is a mountaintop experience. And something they will look to and remember from that night onward. However, things are getting ready to change.

[5 : 24] Because this is a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. The focus is no longer going to be healings. Doesn't mean he won't heal. It just means the focus won't be that.

It won't be miracles. There won't be miracles of walking on water or quieting the sea. All those things have been done. Now Jesus begins to teach his disciples about what is to come.

And he's pointing them to what is coming in his ministry. I mean, he's trying to declare to them what is going to happen. So if you will open your Bibles to Mark chapter 30.

And we will be, not Mark chapter 9. And we'll be looking at verses 30 through 41. Now this passage is kind of chopped up a little bit. There's like three different things in the passage. And so it's not one cohesive thought.

I'm going to try to make it cohesive this morning. But it's not one cohesive thought. And so bear with me as I read it. Beginning in verse 30 of Mark chapter 9. If you don't have a Bible, it will be up on the screen behind me.

[6 : 27] They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know. 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. But they did not understand the saying and were afraid to ask him.

And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house. Now this is probably most likely Peter's house. Okay. When he asked them, What were you discussing on the way?

But they kept silent. For on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. 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.

And he took a child and put him in the midst of them. And taking him in his arms, he said to them, Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.

[7 : 34] And whoever receives me receives not me, but him who sent me. 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. 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.

For the one who is not against us is for us. 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.

Now, interesting passage. Jesus up to this point has been concentrating his ministry in his hometown.

Okay, so he's in Galilee most of the time. He's been up in the north part of Israel. That is where he has spent most of his time. He now changes course and he heads from north to south.

[8 : 38] And so Jesus heads back down to the coast, back really toward Jerusalem. And the reason he does this is because the cross is in view here.

He is headed to the cross. If you remember in our series, there's a couple of times where Jesus says, My time has not yet come. My time has not yet come. Jesus was always aware of the timing of his ministry.

The time has now come. And so Jesus turns from the north and heads south straight into Jerusalem. In Luke chapter 9, it says this about this move that he makes.

He says this, When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to Jerusalem. And so it's like Jesus set a course for Jerusalem and he was not going to be deterred to the left or to the right.

Have you ever been fixated on something so much that you just couldn't get it off your mind? I mean, you know that you have something that you have to do. And so you fix your face and you just say, I cannot even live my life until I get this done.

[9 : 49] I mean, this is sort of what Jesus is doing. He knows where he's going. And it's like a millstone around his neck. And it's dragging him where he knows he has to go. And so that's like us.

We do this sometimes. And so Jesus fixes his face for Jerusalem because the course of his life, what he was here for, has been set.

It's been set. Now, if you get on a ship, and I've got one this afternoon when I go back. When you get on the ship, you can set a course on the ship and it'll stay on course.

It's straight on as long as you want to go. You sit in, hit a button, and it goes. It's an automatic pilot. It will do what you ask it to do. In some ways, Jesus knows what is coming.

And so he is going to the cross. Now, the question is, why did the disciples have such a hard time understanding what he was saying to them? Because this is the second time that he has told them, I am going to suffer, I am going to die, and I'm going to be raised again.

[10 : 53] And yet they still did not understand why. And so there is a disconnect between what Jesus is saying to them and what they're hearing. And so why is this?

Are they just not very educated and they couldn't understand what he was saying? Or what is it that made this happen? In Luke chapter 9, it says this about what Jesus said to them.

In verses 44 and 45, it says, Jesus said to his disciples, let these words sink into your ears. Listen to me, guys. I'm trying to tell you something.

Let what I'm saying sink into your minds and your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered up into the hands of men. And so he reminds them, I'm going to be delivered up.

I'm going to suffer. I'm going to die. But it says this, but they did not understand the saying, and it was concealed from them so that they might not perceive it. And so it was hidden in a sense.

[11 : 50] There's one reason why they could not understand what Jesus was saying, because it was concealed from them. But it also says this, and they were afraid to ask him about the saying. And so you have concealment, in a sense, from God, hiding these things from them.

But you also have fear, the fear to ask, what is happening? Why is this going to happen? So even though this is concealed somewhat, in this fear, we learn something.

And it is this, that natural assumptions can be contrary to the kingdom of God. Natural assumptions.

Now, I want you to think about this this morning. One of the main problems of the disciples were their natural assumptions about what the kingdom of God was going to be.

They had natural assumptions about what was going to happen. And so what Jesus was saying to them, in a sense, overshadowed their natural assumptions.

Okay? He was saying one thing, and in their minds, they were thinking another. Now, we all have natural assumptions. We all live within our own natural assumptions.

[13 : 02] We assume that we are going to live long lives. That's an assumption, that we will live long, prosperous lives. We assume that things will never change, that things are going to go just like they go.

They are just going to continue on just like they always have. We assume that that is going to happen. Israel had the assumption that the Messiah was going to come back, and he was going to restore their glory.

And this is looking all the way back to David. It looks back to Solomon, because Solomon was the greatest king they ever had as far as wealth and wisdom and power. And so they were looking back in those days, and they say, that is what we want.

We want to go back to that. And so their assumption was that the Messiah was going to do this. He was going to restore their glory. And so Jesus is beginning to clarify to them exactly what was going to happen.

Now, if you're not yet a follower of Jesus this morning, this might speak to you in a sense, because you were here this morning with assumptions. Again, you have your own set of assumptions.

[14 : 13] It might be hard for you to understand that you need salvation because you assume some things. First of all, that you're a pretty good person. You go, well, I'm bad, but I'm not that bad.

So you kind of have that idea in your mind. Yeah, I'm pretty bad, but I'm not as bad as Elliot. Now, Elliot's bad. All right? So you do that. All right? And so we have these assumptions in our mind. And sometimes what we do is because we are sinful beings, we tend to think that, okay, in that line, because I'm not as bad as everybody else around me, I really don't need Jesus.

I really don't need forgiveness. I don't need the cross. I don't need atonement. And so what Jesus says to you and what the church says to you and what we would preach to you this morning is that what you are left with is you have to either understand who Jesus is and accept that, but you also have to believe in it.

You see, the disciples have assumptions. We live with assumptions. Even the lost live with assumptions. Those who don't follow Jesus have a lot of assumptions. So what do we do with this? [15:26] What do, you know, what do we do with the way this passage reads? Jesus' purposes were not the purposes of his disciples. God's purposes for us at times do not match our desires, what we want.

You see, we all have desires and wants and needs. And what this says to us is this, is the assumption of privilege, all right, now you understand what they're saying.

And they go from, Jesus, why are you telling us this, to they're arguing about who's the greatest. And so understand this, the assumption of privilege, the assumption in your mind that you're something when you're nothing, can destroy the unity of the kingdom.

The idea that you really are more than what you are. Listen to how it reads again. Guys, you cannot escape this.

You have to remember that this comes on the backside of the transfiguration, where they saw the glory of God. They heard the majestic glory. They saw Jesus in all his glory standing there.

[16:44] And then they're arguing about who is the greatest. It is an amazing thing. If anyone had the right to be called glorifful or glorious or more powerful or the greatest, it was Jesus.

Because he's God made flesh. He's very God of very God. And so the disciples are arguing about who in their 12 is the greatest. Considering what they just saw.

Three of them had just saw something mighty. Now think about this in your life today. If you knew someone who had just seen the same exact thing, most of us would say, well, what's wrong with me?

How come I don't get a chance to see those kind of things? We do this. I mean, it's like, well, who died and made them king? Why did they get to see something so grand? And it would be hard for us not to be jealous and say, you know, hey, you know, God, why did Peter, James, and John get to see that?

How come we didn't get a chance to see that? Jealousy does override us. You see, one part came down the mountain on a spiritual high. They had just seen something magnificent.

[17:55] They came down the mountain. They were stoked spiritually. It was great. The other group was trying to cast out a demon and had failed. And they had been ridiculed and argued with people.

And they were basically failures. So you have one set that is glorified, the other set that's down and debased. Do you see why there could be tension between them?

You see, personal jealousy is destructive in the life of the church. R.T. France, in his commentary on Mark, says this. The cliquishness, which too easily, now remember this, it too easily affects a defined group of people with a sense of mission, is among the worldly values, which must be challenged in the name of the kingdom of God.

What France is saying is that Jesus immediately took them to task. Why? Because it destroys unity in the church. The church is a unified organism when everyone understands their part.

And Jesus says, what were you talking about? And they were afraid to answer why. Because they were embarrassed. Well, we were just talking about who's the greatest. And R.T. France says that cliquishness is something that has to be defended against.

[19:13] And so with this in mind, Jesus didn't only just confront their pride. He also challenges their arrogance and their assumption. Again, there is an assumption here that they were great.

And so he reminds them of this, that servant-minded followers, those who are going to follow him, are the expectation of the kingdom of God. That is the expectation.

It's not who's going to serve me and make me feel better. It's not who's going to make me happy. It's not who's going to stroke me as an individual, who comes when I need them.

It is a servant-minded following. Listen to how it reads. And he sat down, called the twelve. And he said to them, if anyone would be first, he must be last and servant of all.

If you want to be glorified in the body of Christ, you serve each other. You have to be willing to serve. You have to be last in line, not first in line.

[20 : 12] And he says, this is what is going to make you great in the kingdom of God. Now, this hope he's looking at is not so much in this life. Because in this life, there are degradations of glory.

And we see it. But what he's saying to them is, look, if you want to be great in the kingdom to come, then you become a servant of all. And so he's looking future tense.

And in order to do this, in order for us to do this well, we have to become childlike. Because it's within a child's understanding to grasp being insignificant.

You say children do not have the right of self-determination. Children don't. They kind of accept what you give them for a period until they get grown. And then they don't want to talk to you.

I know about that because all my kids are grown. But I'm just saying, when they're small, they accept what you give them. Why? Because they're kids. And they can't self-determine. We determine what they need.

[21 : 12] Okay? And so you have to be childlike. Why? Because you have to say, it's not for me to decide this. It's God who can decide this. Now, we understand that there are winners and losers.

That's something we understand. Our culture says second place is for losers. That's what our culture tells us. And it's not just sports.

It's in politics, power, money, jobs, all of it. It's all together. There is this mindset of winners and losers. And our culture says, if you're not a winner, you're in second place, so you're really a loser.

But we still get jealous of those who really are successful. Those who kind of win life's lottery.

Do you know people like that? They never struggle. Seem to never have any problems. Got plenty. I mean, money. Good looking. You know, kind of like me. I can't help it.

[22 : 13] You know, just win life's lottery. I got to get you guys awake this morning. Do you understand what I'm saying? We do look at people like that and we say, wow, why is this so hard for us? And so why is it hard?

What makes it so hard is our heart. It's what's inside of us. What's inside of me. Apostle Paul tells us what it takes in order to be childlike in our mannerisms.

He says this in Philippians 2. It's a very, you know, well-known passage. But he says this, and he's speaking to the church. Have this mind among yourselves, your mind, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

If you're a follower of Jesus, this is yours. Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

I think the New American Standard says he didn't think that being God was something he had to hold on to. But he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

[23 : 15] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Do you want to know what it takes to be childlike?

Be like Jesus. Now, I just said something that none of us can do. That's like me saying, be like Mike. If you remember when Michael Jordan first came out, was playing for the Chicago Bulls, every commercial was, be like Mike.

Well, none of us had 42-inch vertical leaps, and we couldn't hang in the air and dunk and do all the stuff he did. It was impossible for us to be like Mike. It is also almost impossible to be like Jesus.

We need the Spirit of God to do this. But we do, because of this, become very inwardly focused.

Now, what I'm saying is that sometimes we look at ourselves, we either judge ourselves wrongly or rightly, but we do tend to be very inwardly focused as a people.

And churches can do that. Churches can be very outwardly focused at times, but when things get tough, sometimes they turn right inward. And that's where their leanings are.

[24 : 26] And so the end of our passage is they speak somewhat into this. In Mark 9, 38, John says to Jesus, and he says this to him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not following us.

Okay, so John says there is someone out there who is casting out demons. He's being successful. He is having success. He's doing it in your name.

We tried to stop him because he was not one of us. Do you see that? He is not one of us. Now, I'm not going to say to you this morning that the church should be inclusive of all false doctrines. Let anybody come in. There is a centrality of the gospel that puts everything else in its proper place. There's truth, and then there's error. The gospel is truth.

The rest is just talk. It's conversation. So I'm not saying that the church needs to be inclusive in that way because the true gospel separates.

[25 : 35] It really does. It separates. But John's response had a bit of exclusiveness to it, right? I mean, it was being somewhat exclusive because what he's saying is, look, this guy doesn't belong with us.

He is not one of us. He's on the outside. And yet he was succeeding. Remember the last time the disciples tried to cast out demons, they failed.

And Jesus came up and did it. But the disciples had failed. And so this guy's having success. And so in many ways, this could really blow the disciples' identity because their identity was, we are the 12.

We are the ones. He is the man, and we're with him. There is an exclusive relationship in their minds, which really makes Jesus' answer to them amazing in a sense.

Listen to what it says. Jesus says, do not stop him. Do not hinder him. This guy's having success, Jesus. We tried to stop him.

[26 : 42] Don't you try to stop him. All right? No one does mighty works in my name. No one who does this soon afterward will be able to speak evil of me.

If he's doing it in my name, don't stop him because he won't speak evil of me later. You see, I don't think Jesus was too worried about appearances.

He was very comfortable in his own skin. He understood who he was. And that's why the Philippians passage is so amazing because Jesus didn't walk around and say, do you not know who you were talking with?

Don't you understand who I am? He never did that. He was very comfortable in his own skin. And so Jesus never kept people away. He never pushed them away.

He always included them. That's why he spent time with the tax collectors and sinners. Jesus pulled those people near him. He included them.

[27 : 44] And so I want to ask you a question this morning. Are you as a body inclusive or are you exclusive? When I was probably about 13, I think, I've been trying to remember the age.

It's either 12 or 13. My father and our family went to a Baptist church in Moorhead. And my father had met a young man who lived in about a 10 by 10 shack.

I kid you not. I walked in it 10 by 10. That's all it was. He had absolutely zero. He was poor, poor, poor.

And so my father was trying to help him out. He fed him, gave him some money, tried to give him something to eat. He went home, got some of his clothes. And my father was about my size.

And this guy was about our size. And so dad went home, got pants, shirts. He got some old stuff and he gave it to him. He got him a jacket so he could go to church with us.

[28 : 45] And we went to church the following Sunday morning. And the people ostracized him. In fact, they went to my father and they said, How dare you bring him in here? That is being exclusive.

And we left the church because of that. Dad said, that's it. If you can't help somebody like that, who are you going to help? You understand what this is about? This idea of they're not with us.

We are with us. There is a, there is a, it's very hard not to be that way. R.T. France speaking about this issue says this. And I'm closing.

I got to close pretty quick. He says, the unknown exorcist, there is no name given for this man, represents the outside circle. Now what he's saying is the church can see itself as what?

An inside circle. So we are inside the circle. We're the, we're, you know, we're it. He's on the outside circle and is to be welcomed as such.

[29 : 48] Okay. There are indeed opponents and outsiders as we repeatedly see in the rest of the gospel. There are those who oppose the gospel.

There are those who oppose the church. Yes, that is true. And we understand that. But disciples are called to be cautious in drawing lines of demarcation.

Do you know what a demarcation line is? On a chart, navigation chart. If you looked at Moorhead City, looked at the channel, right off the point of beach, there's a line.

It goes from point to point. And it's called a demarcation line. And what it says is on this side of the line, inside, inland rules of the road apply.

On the other side of the line, ocean rules apply. And so there are two sets of rules. You have inland navigation rules and offshore navigation rules. That's where they meet.

[30 : 45] And so on either side, you have something. And so as followers of Jesus, it's not our job to decide who's on what side of the line. That is not for us to do.

And he says this, they are to be a church. Us, we are to be a church and not a sect. And so that is where you have to land this morning.

Jesus is moving to Jerusalem. All right, he is moving there. His disciples do not understand where he is going.

He is making a course for Jerusalem. And the cross is coming. His disciples are arguing with each other about who is great. Jesus teaches them about the kingdom and what it means to be in the kingdom.

And that it is a servant mentality. It's not a service be serving someone serving you. And also, it's also not about who's in or who's out.

[31 : 45] That's for God to decide. That is for him to decide. And so as we close this morning, I would just simply say this. May God great us. And I'll add me in there with you.

The grace to believe in true kingdom values. Those values that are from Jesus. The gospel. May we hold on to that. Will he give us the grace to flee from pride?

Because guys, I'm telling you, we're all proud. Every last one in this room, I'm times 10. But the rest of you, I won't put you that high. I know that I'm a proud person. All of us deal with pride.

That he would give us the grace to flee from it. To flee from jealousy. And looking at someone and saying, why are you getting all the love? What's wrong with me?

To flee from that mindset. To flee from it. To be inclusive. To be inclusive. Yes, come.

[32 : 45] It doesn't matter. So that the kingdom of God might prosper in our day. You want to see the kingdom of God grow? That's the way it is.

All right? Let me pray for us. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for a passage that is very difficult, Father, to put together in a cohesive thought.

Yet, Father God, it shows us so much. It shows us about our pride. It shows us about how we should serve each other, Lord God. It shows us about other men and how we view them and how we think sometimes that we are so much better than each other, Lord God.

And so I pray for this body and for all the sites in One Harbor Church, Lord God, that you would protect us. Help us to be inclusive. Oh, but Father God, help us to hold on to the gospel for all it is worth.

For it is the truth. And everything else is a lie. And so, Lord God, give us great strength and endurance to do so. We love you, Father. We need you, Jesus.

[33 : 46] Holy Spirit, we desire your presence. And we just ask all these things in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.