

Gospel Unity

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[0 : 0 0] You may be seated. Good morning. My name's Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and His life and His death and His resurrection. And when we were in chapters 1 through 8, we were asking these two questions, who is Jesus and how do we respond to Him?

Peter finally confesses in chapter 8 that Jesus is the Christ. He's the one that's been expected from the beginning of time, from the Old Testament. And so now there's a shift that's happened where we are now with the disciples as they learn what it actually means to follow Jesus as the Christ.

[1 : 1 1] They think, as Peter does, that it's going to lead them to glory, and Jesus has to teach them over and over that it's also going to include suffering. And so two weeks ago, we saw that the disciples became a little independent, forgot that they needed Jesus, and so they were trying to cast out demons without prayer.

And they continued that self-sufficiency last week when we found them arguing about who is actually the greatest. We're going to continue that same theme this week as the disciples feel this tug, this temptation to be ones who have this special access to Jesus that no one else is going to be able to experience.

That maybe by being close to Him, they could have the glory that they hoped for. And Jesus instead teaches them a lesson about how open His arms are.

And so with that, I'm going to invite you to turn with me to God's Word. You can turn in your Bible, you can turn on your phone, or you can turn in your worship guide. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word, and God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so that's why we read now Mark 9, starting at verse 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.

[2 : 4 5] 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. Verse 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.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in Heaven, we thank You again that You're gracious and that You speak to us.

You know that we stumble around often in this life, and so You show us the right way to go. You give us Your Word to direct us and to guide us. We ask that You would do that this morning, that You would speak clearly to us in a way that we can understand.

You'd show us our need for Your grace, and You'd also encourage us with Your mercy, that we would leave here loving and trusting You more than when we came.

[4 : 06] We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. You're probably tired at this point of hearing about all the different disruptions and changes that happened in 2020 after the coronavirus came and flipped things upside down for us.

But one of the things that did not make as much press was the fact that it became the year in which podcasts blew up. Now, podcasts were apparently invented as early as 2004.

They're slowly on the rise during all those years, and suddenly when people find themselves trapped at home, more than ever they're going to listen to what it is that people have to say across the Internet.

In fact, many people began starting podcasts because they were bored and didn't know what to do as they were trapped at home. And so I don't remember if it was 2020 or 2021, but it was declared the year of the podcast, that podcasts were going to be bigger than ever before.

Now, if you're familiar with podcasts, you know you can typically access them wherever you want. Maybe you access them on the app that's on your iPhone. Maybe you hate Apple, and so instead you use Google Podcasts.

[5 : 17] Maybe you have an app like Stitcher. Maybe you go onto Spotify, but most of the time you're able to find it wherever you want. It's your convenience that dictates the source of the podcast.

Except there are a couple that buck the trend. So if you're a really big deal, I've spoken before about the secular profits of our age. Some of those secular profits have exclusive deals on their podcasts.

I think specifically Brene Brown and Joe Rogan, if you want to listen to them, you have to go through Spotify. No Apple Podcasts, no Google Podcasts, no Stitcher, because there is an exclusive contract they have.

Why? Because there's so much money to be made. In fact, there was an outcry at one point for Joe Rogan to be canceled from Spotify, and they surprised a lot of people by not canceling him.

And cynically, I'll say, there's a lot of money to be made. Bottom line matters. Money talks. And so what if someone else posted one of these podcasts?

[6 : 22] Well, Spotify would have the right to go after them. In fact, they probably would. I'm sure they have many lawyers who work for them to enforce their rights. And that would be a legitimate enforcement of this exclusive contract that they have.

Now, there's also another kind of exclusivity, not legitimate, but illegitimate claims to exclusivity. So this shows up. If you're familiar with the U.S. Constitution, you know it outlines the idea of patents, that if you invent something, you can get a patent on it so that other people can't use it without your permission and without paying you for it.

The only problem is that the patent system is sometimes abused to the point of absurdity. So you may have heard of patent number 6080436, which was issued in the year 2000 for the great and innovative invention of thermally refreshinged bread.

Thermally refreshinged bread is what you and I commonly call toast. Now, you don't need to know a lot about the history of toast to know that it existed long before the year 2000.

And so you can imagine how comical it would be for the person who owns this patent, officially issued to them by the U.S. government, to try to claim that all the makers and users and creators of toast owe them a paycheck.

[7 : 40] There's legitimate things that are exclusive and illegitimate things that are not actually exclusive, and that's what we hit up against in this passage.

John comes to Jesus knowing that Jesus is his Joe Rogan and he is Spotify. Jesus, someone else has been playing your tracks without permission.

Verse 38, Hey, teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not following us. Don't worry, Jesus.

We called your lawyers. And we sent them a cease and desist letter because we know that we, the disciples, are the exclusive platform for the Jesus show.

If there's healing that's going to happen, it needs to run through us. We can't let these prophets get out of control. We can't lose the money and the fame and the glory that is to be made.

[8 : 43] And Jesus has some hard news for the disciples. When it comes to his healing and power, when it comes to the news of the gospel, he is not Joe Rogan on Spotify.

He is like toast. The disciples are trying to patent something that belongs to everyone. In verse 39, Jesus is simply saying, Actually, anyone can make toast.

You can't hold a patent on that. Anyone who works in my name has access to my power. You can spread the gospel just by doing it.

You do not need permission from the 12 disciples. Now, you might want to give the disciples a break at this point.

You could say, well, we saw in Mark chapter 3 and chapter 6 that Jesus had given them this special commission to go out teaching and healing and casting out demons. And so it would just be natural that they would assume at this point that these people had not received that special commission.

[9 : 53] Maybe we just need to cut the disciples a break. Give them the benefit of the doubt that they're just confused. The only problem with that is that the disciples actually play their cards in a painful way in verse 38.

Following here in the gospel of Mark is a key word that has already shown up nine times before this episode.

Every single one of those times, the word follow refers to Jesus. After this episode, this word is going to show up seven more times in reference to Jesus.

The very last time this word was used was in Mark chapter 8, verse 3. Jesus said, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

The disciples have turned something upside down. There is a confusion about what's actually happening. Jesus has told them nine times before, and he'll tell them seven times later, that the following is about him.

[11 : 16] And the disciples still think it's about them. They are more concerned with people following them than following after Jesus.

There is this insecurity, this jealousy that they're experiencing. They thought they were the ones who had special access to Jesus. And suddenly, these people are not just succeeding, they're succeeding where the disciples failed.

Remember the problem two episodes ago. The disciples were not able to cast out a demon. And what are these people doing? They are able to do what the disciples could not.

Remember Jesus told them, chapter 9, verse 29, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer. And after that humbling, last time the disciples are still arguing about who is the greatest.

And so they've forgotten where the true power comes from. They've forgotten where the true glory comes from. They are making the same mistake that they made last week and the week before.

[12 : 25] The disciples want the power to rest with them when in fact it rests with Jesus. The disciples want a life of independence and all Jesus offers them is dependence.

Last week we talked about the fact that there's this principle that Jesus gives them where in the gospel we push ourselves down and lift other people up rather than vice versa.

We see the same thing here this morning but adding a different layer. Our goal is seeking Jesus' glory, not our own. Our goal in the Christian life is seeking Jesus' glory, not our own.

And yet the disciples are more interested in people following them than Jesus. They are more interested in their name than Jesus' name. The confusion that Peter introduced in chapter 8 still continues.

And so the point, the humbling point is this. If your goal is Jesus' glory, you will rejoice when other people succeed. If your goal is Jesus' glory, you will rejoice when other people succeed.

[13 : 38] Even when, especially when, people who are serving Christ see more fruit and success than you. Because the fact that it's more than yours is irrelevant.

What matters, what's important, what is underscored and underlined here is that Jesus' name and his glory are filling the earth. That is what should fill the disciples' heart with joy.

And so Jesus here is going to give us three principles to understand the unity that we actually have together as we are following Jesus as one people. Those three principles we'll go through quickly.

Principle one, power always has a source. Principle two, there's no exclusive group. Principle three, small things matter. One, power always has a source.

Two, there's no exclusive group. And three, small things matter. So first, in verse 39, Jesus helps them understand that power always has a source. I want you to think about it like this.

[14 : 42] Some of you know that at the end of June, I had an outside spigot on my house that had a leak, and I ended up flooding my basement. So I had the joy of having ProServe come in and rip out all my flooring and bring in their dryers to heat it all out.

And so my basement was completely unusable. Actually, it still is. It hasn't been restored yet. That's another story for another time. But I had a burst spigot from a frozen pipe over the winter.

So I had the plumber come out to fix this because I wanted to use my outside hose again. But I had one fear in all of this, which is that there is not just one outside spigot over my basement, there are two outside spigots.

And so in the back of my mind, I thought, what if the other spigot has a leak as well? So I was afraid to turn it on. I wasn't going to turn it on. So I wasn't going to use any outside hose because I didn't know for sure.

So I explained this to the plumber. I said, look, we're going to get this one broken pipe fixed. The drywall has been cut out. What about the other one? We're not going to cut out the drywall just to take a look at it, right?

[15 : 44] I can't see what's behind that wall. And yet I'm afraid to turn it on because what if I flood my basement all over again and I have a whole other insurance deductible? My plumber said, look, we're going to do this to check it out.

I'll put a pressure gauge on that other spigot and we're going to turn it on. If there's a leak, the pressure will be low. If there isn't a leak, the pressure will be high. We'll never have to look at the source.

We don't have to look inside because the power will confirm the source that's inside. And of course, he turns it on. The pressure goes all the way up.

And so we know there's no leak, right? Point is this, that this high pressure, this level of pressure only comes from an intact pipe. That's the only way the pressure gauge could go up all the way.

The power we see confirms the source we can't see. We know from the pressure the pipe has no leaks. We know from the casting out of demons that the source is divine.

[16 : 49] If there's true power, then these people are truly working for Jesus. If they are actually casting out demons, then their source is legitimate.

Jesus doesn't have to tear open the wall to see. He doesn't have to investigate more into this group to know if they are using his name correctly. You can't fake water pressure.

You cannot fake the supernatural power of God at work. And so verse 39, when he says, no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me, he's saying this, the outside spigot with high pressure will not shortly thereafter spring a leak in August.

It has pressure now, it'll have pressure later. The power confirms the source. The point is this, when we see the transformation of hearts and lives, when we see the defeat of evil in this world, when we see the fruits of the spirit springing up within us and other people around us, we know the source.

We don't have to wonder whether God is at work. We know he is. The presence of God is accompanied by the power of God.

[18 : 23] That's what happens when someone legitimately does something in Jesus' name. Now, you all know that I am hardcore, ride or die Presbyterian.

I went to a Presbyterian college. I went to a Presbyterian seminary. I was baptized into a Presbyterian church. We're Presbyterian church right here, right now. And, I would rather you go to an Anglican or a Baptist church where the power of God is at work than to a Presbyterian church that is dying and limp.

I would rather you go to an Anglican or Baptist church where the power of God is at work than a Presbyterian church that is dying and limp. There is no one group or denomination that has a monopoly on God and his power.

Jesus is telling the disciples here, his power is there for those who work in his name. Power reveals the source.

The power doesn't just reveal the source, but he gives us a second principle here in verse 40 that there is no exclusive group for the one who is not against us is for us.

[19 : 47] In other words, there's only two types of people in this world. There's not, you know, normal, regular Christians and then super elite, private knowledge Christians. There are those who follow me and those who don't follow me.

Those who follow me have access to my power. And so this urge, this desire in the human heart to be in this elite group, to have secret knowledge, to have extra power, it's all an illusion.

It's all a delusion. You are not on some secret elite team. You're in one of two camps. Either you're for Jesus or you are against Jesus.

You are special not because you have done something great or significant. You are not special because you belong to the right denomination or group.

You are special and you are only special because Jesus chose you. Like every other Christian.

[20 : 59] You are special and you are only special because Jesus chose you. That's the heart of the gospel, right? God doesn't look on us and determine whether we're worth something based on our actions or our merit.

No, Romans 5, 8, while we were still sinners, Christ died for you. Your significance and your status is not because of the way God uses you.

It is simply because God chooses you. Your significance and status does not come from the way that God uses you. It comes simply because He chooses you.

The disciples are looking for identity and value and security in what they can perform and do and Jesus here says, find identity and value simply in the fact that you belong to me.

That's enough. That is enough for us here this morning. So principle one, power reveals the source.

[22 : 05] Principle two, there's no exclusive group. It's not your great actions that earn you some favor from God. And principle three is a follow-on to that. Even small, unimpressive acts matter for good or for ill.

That's why He tells us, verses 41, 42, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose His reward. God is not impressed with the same things that we're impressed with.

He's talking to these disciples who think that maybe if they're powerful and great enough, maybe if they have the right group and they do things that no other people can do, that they can access this reward, this significance that others can't.

They can finally have the meaning that they're searching for. And what Jesus is telling them here is, look, those are all great things. It is great to cast out demons.

You know what's also great? The small, unseen, simple task of giving someone a cup of water. You don't need to cast out demons to be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven.

[23 : 21] Even those who simply hand out glasses of water will be received. Even small things matter. You do not have to worry about being great and impressive.

You already belong to God. You do not have to worry about being great or impressive. You already belong to God. And so there's many things that God does not estimate in the same way that we do.

Last week, we ordained and installed three new elders. You know what? Being an elder is great. It is a phenomenal way to serve the church.

You know what's also great? It's great to speak gentle and kind and loving words to your spouse over many years.

You know that we have plans for phase two of this building at Cheyenne Mountain. Those were drawn up in hopes that this church would grow to a point where we would need a larger sanctuary.

[24 : 30] And you know what? If that happens, that's great. You know what's also great? Being a congregation where love covers a multitude of sins.

That's great. Being a congregation where we have a greeting time and we encourage someone who's hurting. Even that will not lose its reward.

You know what? If you wrote a book and that book helped millions of people and it transformed their lives, that would be truly great. I would be happy for you. You know what's also great?

Getting a cup of coffee at a Starbucks that's burnt with someone who's awkward and encouraging them. And no one sees or remembers.

In Jesus' eyes, that is also great. Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

[25 : 40] Whatever you do for Jesus is recognized by Jesus. The smallest aid to Jesus' mission will not be forgotten. And the sobering word in verse 42 is that the smallest opposition to Jesus' mission will not go unpunished.

The smallest aid to Jesus' mission will not be forgotten. The smallest opposition to Jesus' mission will not go unpunished. In fact, some people think verse 42 is a direct warning to the disciples, telling them, don't get in the way of other people doing ministry in my name.

Give up your desire for greatness and power. Give up your desire to be the ones whose names are recognized and applauded. Don't cause other people who are serving me to stumble.

Instead, give them a glass of water. You don't need to be great or do large and spectacular things.

You just need to follow Jesus together. Now this final question this passage raises is where does this great temptation come from?

[27 : 00] Where does the temptation come to serve in some magnificent way that exceeds and outpaces other people around us so that we can know somehow that we matter? Well, it goes back to what we talked about two weeks ago.

You've got to find food somewhere. You have to find meaning and significance somewhere. If you are not finding it in the security and the love of Jesus Christ, success and power and exclusivity will always look good.

If you do not have good food, poison will always be tempting. And so we're not done with this theme yet. I'm going to say the same thing that I said to you two weeks ago. You have to replace an old thing with a new thing.

You have to find joy in something. You cannot get over that old crush until you get that new crush. You cannot overcome the allure of power until you're secure in the love of God.

In a similar passage in Luke chapter 10, Jesus actually makes this explicit. The disciples have cast out demons in his name. They're so excited and they return to Jesus filled with joy because of the way in which he has used them with great power and authority.

[28 : 21] And Jesus gives them this gentle rebuke. Luke chapter 10, verse 20. Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Let your joy be found, not in the way that God uses you, but in the fact that he's already chosen you.

Let it be found in the fact that you cannot lose the inheritance that has been stored up for you that you look forward to receiving in full on the last day. Let that be the glory that you look forward to and the treasure that you store up.

Let that be the place where you find your joy. You already have everything you need right now because God's love for you is secure.

Yes, God has people with different roles in his kingdom, all pushing towards one mission, no matter how great or how small, serving God.

[29 : 28] When John F. Kennedy announced the plan to reach the moon, to be the first country to put a man on the moon, one of the things that he's noted for is the clarity with which he outlined the mission that the country had.

He made it clear that there was one goal that everyone was pointed towards. In fact, he did this so well that there's a famous story of a janitor who was working around this idea, this goal, and when he was interviewed, he said, I am not mopping floors.

I'm putting a man on the moon. When we serve Jesus Christ, as we serve Jesus Christ, we are not doing it to make for ourselves a name.

We are doing it for a greater purpose and mission, whether we are casting out demons or giving someone a glass of water. Either way, our hope is what Jesus says in Matthew 25, that he would say this, well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you this morning that your love for us is secure, that we can find meaning and significance, not in accomplishments or praise from others, but in knowing that we belong to you.

[31 : 02] We ask that you would grow our understanding of that, that we would rejoice, not in what we've done, but in the fact that our names are written in heaven. We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.