

“Scandals & Salt”

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Mark 9:33-50

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.” 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. 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.”

Read Mark 9:33-50 aloud (see left).

Background:

In Mark 9:33, we jump into the middle of a conversation. Jesus just told the disciples that he will go to Jerusalem, be arrested, tried, put to death and rise again. How do they respond? They respond with the exact opposite conversation. They debate who is most important among them in the worldly kingdom. In the passage, Jesus presents his upside-down kingdom where he models the highest sacrificing all for the lowest. The smallest child is the most important. He instructs us to be salt in the world. Salt purifies, preserves and gives taste. We are to be the same in the world by loving the least among us to give them a taste of the love of Christ; to provide an easy path to know their loving Savior. We would be better off to tie a millstone around our neck and throw ourselves into the sea than be a stumbling block to the least. In light of the disconnect we see in the disciples, Tim challenges us to examine our own disconnected scandals and how Christ’s work in the body frees us to exercise our spirit through our bodies to be salt in our communities.

Discuss:

1. Discuss the disconnect between Jesus and the disciples. How does Jesus describe his upside kingdom?
2. Where do we see this disconnect in our families, lives, church and community? How should we respond?
3. What are our scandals? Are we anxious about our status?
4. How does our anxiety about our status cause us to interact in our community? Do we turn it upside down?
5. How does the kingdom of the world manifest particularly in Austin?
6. How does Christian culture behave like the disciples (vv. 38-40)?
7. How does Jesus teach us to turn this all upside down?
8. What is our saltiness? What does it mean?
9. What did salt do in sacrifices in the Old Testament?
10. What does it represent and teach us?
11. How does it apply in our church community?
12. For whom are we called to be salty?
13. Can we be salty and stumbling blocks?
14. What good things need cutting off for others not to stumble?
15. Through what are our spirits exercised?
16. How can we use the 10 Spiritual Formation Practices to mirror the repetitive and bodily references in verses 42-49?
17. How has Jesus already done this for us?

Other Texts: Genesis 19:1, 12-16, 24-26. 1 Corinthians 8:1, 7-13