

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**Title: The Way of Jesus and The Way of Disciples****Lesson: Mark 9:30-37 NRSV**

³⁰ They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; ³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." ³² But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. ³³ Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" ³⁴ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵ He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶ Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

(Slide 1) There is a saying: "Only the loudest whiner gets what he wants." In other words, this means that people who whine the loudest get what they want. The loudest whiner means power. If we put this into our lives, we can see many people tend to think that they have much money and power to get what they want. This is the logic the world generally thinks. By the way, Jesus walked on the opposite way from the logic of the world saying, "Take up your cross," "Serve others," and "Welcome children." Christians are disciples who follow the way of Jesus. To follow the way of life of Jesus as a disciple, we must take up our cross, serve others, and welcome children like him.

(Slide 2) The Gospels refer to Jesus as "the leader and builder of life." The ancient Greek word 'Archegos' means leader, founder, builder, monarch.... The way of Jesus is the way of a leader. His disciples can rebuild their lives by following the way. The goal of the discipleship way is to follow the way of Jesus. That is why Jesus was called 'Archegos' in the New Testament, that

is, leader and teacher. The Lord leads us to build our new life by following Him.

1) **The way of Jesus**

(Slide 3) Jesus prophesized his suffering again. Last Sunday, He prophesied of the Passion of Christ for the first time (Mark 8:31) and today's scripture is the second prophecy about the Passion of Christ. (Mark 9:31) He said, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." (31) However, the disciples didn't understand what Jesus said because they followed Jesus because he performed many miracles and they believed in that miracles would make him king. They expected that their position would be raised and would be the loudest whiner when Jesus became king. Although Jesus said that he would suffer and die on the cross, his disciples were imagining and expecting his glory and their glory, so they couldn't understand and imagine what he said. The way of Jesus and the way of disciples were totally contradictory. Verse 32 tells that "The disciples didn't understand what Jesus was saying and were afraid to ask him." Why were they afraid to ask? They would not have asked because their dreams might be shattered by the truth of Jesus.

The cross Jesus spoke of is not a way to win over others, but a decision to lose. The purpose of Jesus' invitation to us is to call those who will lose the world with him. He told us to deny ourselves and take up our crosses and follow him because "those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for God's sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." (Mark 8:35) For Apostle Paul, the cross was a symbol of grace and liberation. It was a triumph of non-violence over the dark forces. Jesus' love was perfected on the cross. The cross is meaningful to us because it is not the way of suffering or sacrifice, but the way of freedom, the way of salvation, and the way of liberation.

The cross of Jesus is a new life and is the image of God's love and the way of salvation. I believe that the risen Lord is with me. I hope you also believe that the risen Lord is with you. To follow the cross is to feel the Lord by my side. Therefore, even in difficult situations, the strength to overcome it can be found in the cross of hope.

2) The way of disciples

(Slide 4) Jesus's disciples didn't understand the way of Jesus so their mistakes and misunderstandings, and betrayal continued until they met the risen Christ after the crucifixion. For example, Peter confessed that "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29) but as soon as he heard the prophesy of the Passion of Christ, he closed his mind. And, when they heard the second prophesy about the Passion of Christ, they argued who was the greatest. (34) This is because they totally didn't understand what the way of Jesus is. Jesus clearly explained it to them saying, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." (35) It is a big paradox. People tend to be the loudest whiner to get what they want so they strive to gain their power, money, and fame. But Jesus tells not to be the first, but to be the last who serves others.

(Slide 5) Rev. Henry Appenzeller is the first Methodist missionary in Korea. He found Chungdong first Methodist Church and Paichai school in 1885. For your information, I had served the church as a youth pastor for more than three and a half years until I came to the states. Anyhow, the Paichai school motto is today's scripture lesson: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant." At that time, Korea had a status system. It was a social common sense for slaves to serve noblemen. By the way, the gospels were new to them and gave them a new value, freedom, and equality saying, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant." Today we may be all too familiar with the word Gospel, but the gospel is essentially about giving new life, freedom, and liberation to people.

People tend to be the loudest whiner to get what they want. They want to have power, money, and fame to be served by others. However, gospel shakes and breaks our common sense, stereotype, prejudice, bias, all kinds of discriminations, and all kinds of boundaries.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Who are the poor in spirit? Children's hearts are pure, and they are poor in spirit. They genuinely trust and follow God. They are another image of God.

3) The way of grace

(Slide 6) Jesus took a little child and put it among them and said, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” (37)

(Slide 7) In the book, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” the author Nietzsche suggested three models of human: Camel, Lion, and child. A camel is patient and runs into the desert with all their heavy burdens on their backs. A lion pursues their freedom and tries to become the master of the desert. A child is an ideal human being who enjoys the true joy of creation. The author says that the little child does things that camels and lions cannot do.

Our society educates us to be like a camel and like a lion. So, many camels and lions in society carry burdens on their back. They support this society with a strong sense of responsibility and duty but find no joy in their lives. The way of Jesus is not the way to force us to sacrifice. He doesn't call us to suffer, but he leads us to find what we have lost and to make us perfect. The way of Jesus is the way of grace, and it gives us a new life.

In the conversation between Jesus and his disciples, he doesn't persuade his disciples and seduce using plausible material or honor. Rather he says the exact opposite of what the disciples want because it is to rebuild a new life.

If we are real disciples of Christ, we must believe in and love Jesus, who intervenes in our lives, and take up the cross of salvation with Him because it is the way of Jesus and the way of grace, and the way of salvation, and the way of freedom, the way to enter the kingdom of God, and the way of liberation.

May our Father, his Son, and the Holy Spirit lead and guide us to the way of truth. Amen.