

Mark 9:38-50

September 26, 2021

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

- Stumbling blocks (thinking about)
 - `things that get in our way
 - Cause us to lose sight, focus
 - Who we are? Individually, corporately
 - Hinder us from being the beautiful people God called “good” at the dawn of creation
 - Hinder our ability to “have salt among ourselves. Be at peace with each other.”
 - Stumbling blocks we need to let go of, set free from
- J and disciples moving south – toward Jerusalem
 - J amped up his teaching on discipleship
 - Twice now told them what is to come
 - Death
 - They can’t yet hear the “resurrection” part – new life
 - We Can!
 - Jesus has been all about revealing God’s kingdom
 - Abundance
 - Freeing from whatever it is that binds/hinders us
 - Restoration
 - New life
 - Love one another
- What Jesus is getting out again today
- Golf Swing
 - Hit wayward shots
 - Not as clean and crisp contact
 - Lessons as a kid
 - Starts with grip
 - Pressure – too tight, holding on, “death” grip
 - Limit everything else

- Hear instruction, “let go. Ease up”
 - When do this, everything flows smoothly. Release the tension.
- What I hear in this passage
 - Let go of those stumbling blocks we put in the way of our relationship with Jesus, God, one another
 - What are they?
 - Grudges
 - Resentments
 - Scarcity mindset
 - Comparing ourselves to another congregation
 - Jealousy, envy for what they are doing
 - Undo expectations on ourselves or another brother or sister
 - Diminishes seeing and trusting the gifts God has equipped us with
 - Diminishes seeing and trusting the gifts God has equipped another with
 - Diminishes seeing and trusting the gifts God has equipped our congregation with
 - Failing to see possibility, opportunity
 - What happens?
 - Lose focus, sight, purpose
 - Instead our energy, focus might get put on revenge
 - Anger, casting blame
 - Lose the ability to be the beautiful body of Christ
 - Do God’s work
 - Be vessels of peace
 - Let go of the old and usher in the new
- Speaking of salt
 - Water softener at parsonage not working properly a while back
 - Wasn’t able to do the work it was intended to do – soften the water
 - Not an expert on exactly how this happens
 - But what I do know is that softener has to drain water
 - I suspect maybe to flush out residue down the drain
 - What happened?

- The tube exiting the softner had become blocked
 - A bag of salt had inadvertently been placed upon it exerting too much pressure, closing off the “artery” not allowing water to be let go
 - Once this pressure let go of – water flowed freely
 - Softner once again did that it was created to do
- What is our stumbling block?
 - Need to let go of
 - Individually and as a community
 - Community
 - Don’t compare ourselves other congregations
 - Trust the gifts God has equipped us with
 - Focus on that – not what “X” congregation is doing
 - What is that for us?
 - It seems in my tenure here we are pretty good about feeding people
 - Just as one small cup of water can make a difference so can one small plate of spaghetti
 - How have we fed people?
 - Bus tours
 - Cookie Walks
 - Monthly meals
 - Funerals
 - Pot-lucks
 - Meal packaging events
 - Serving meal at Ronald McDonald House
 - Gifts for operation backpack, hunger programs at schools
 - Many others
- That’s what we’re doing tonight
 - Feeding, God’s work
 - Feeding with the word of God – small note says they are loved by Jesus
 - Using our hands
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- What would it look like?
 - Let go of all those other stumbling blocks and focused on feeding others
 - Maybe that's our gift
- Closing
 - Think of whatever it is that might be your stumbling block today
 - In your relationship with God
 - A relationship with another brother or sister in Christ
 - Your ability to be the beautiful person God created you to be
 - Our ability to be the body of Christ, spread salt, be at peace with one another
 - Hold that in your hands. Clinch it tightly.
 - Now, open your hands to God. Ease up the tension. Let it go.
 - Let go of that stumbling block.
 - Let the good news of Jesus Christ flow freely.
 - Let the new life in Christ course through your bodies.