

**Armagh Baptist Church**  
**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2018 @ 6:30pm**  
**Mark 9:30-37**  
**'Who is the Greatest?'**

**Introduction**

Anytime I get to preach from Mark's Gospel there are three words that go through my head, no matter what passage I'm going to preach from:

**Identity          Mission          Call**

Those are 3 words that the people who wrote *Christianity Explored* came up with, as a grid through which we can see what Mark is trying to say in his Gospel.

We can put it another way:

Identity – **Who is Jesus?** – According to this passage.

Mission – **Why did he come?** – According to this passage.

Call – **What does he call us to do?** – According to this passage.

So let's come to this passage in Mark 9:30-37 tonight and let's ask those questions

**1. Who is Jesus – according to this passage? (vs.30-32)**

Well, what term does Jesus use to describe himself in these verses – see vs.30-32

Answer: **'The Son of Man'** – is the title Jesus uses of himself in this passage.

It appears in Mark's Gospel 13 times. It is a term Jesus uses to refer to himself. But where did he get it from?

Well it appears first of all in the Book of Ezekiel in the O.T. Over and over again it is the term that God uses to speak to his prophet Ezekiel. e.g. Read Ezekiel 2:1-7:  
***'Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel.'*** (v.3)

When we come into the next book of the Bible, the Book of Daniel (that we are currently studying on Sunday mornings) it takes on a whole new significance. It is only used twice in the Book of Daniel – once to refer to Daniel as a prophet, but the other time it is a title used of One who will come on the clouds of heaven, who is related to the Ancient Days. If the Ancient of Days is God the Father, then the Son of Man, is God the Son. And he will come on the clouds of heaven at the end of time to bring this world to an end, and to usher in his eternal kingdom.

It's Daniel 7:13-14 where that term appears most clearly. There Daniel says:

*'I saw in the night visions,  
and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
**there came one like a Son of Man,**  
and he came to **the Ancient of Days**  
and was presented before him.  
And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed.'*

Isn't it clear that **the Son of Man** in Daniel is the Lord Jesus Christ? – The One who came to earth, to live among men, the One who lived a perfect life, who never once sinned in thought, word or deed, the One who suffered at the hands of cruel men, as he died for us on the cross and rose again on the third day.

But it is this **Son of Man** who has ascended to God's right hand in Heaven – to the Ancient of Days. He is already reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords, because all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. But one day He will return as **the Son of Man**, He will come on the clouds of heaven, as it is prophecied here, and he will come to receive his Kingdom – the **'stone'** that will destroy all earthly kingdoms – and the one that will last forever –  
*'His Kingdom shall never be destroyed.'*

That's who the Son of Man is. Yes, he's a prophetic figure. And Jesus was that. He was a Prophet, bringing God's Word to rebellious Israel. But He's far more than a Prophet – He's Jesus, the very Son of God, who will one day return on the clouds of heaven to receive us to himself, and to judge the world in righteousness.

So when we come into this passage in Mark's Gospel ch.9:31, that's what we need to understand when Jesus refers to himself as **'The Son of Man'**. He's a prophetic figure – but more than that, He's the very Son of God who has been sent on a Mission to the people of Israel, and indeed to the world.

It's interesting that this title, The Son of Man is only used twice in the first half of Mark's Gospel. Both references are in Mark ch.2, verse 10 and verse 28...

*'But that you may know that **the Son of Man** has authority on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the paralytic— 'I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.'* (Mark 2:10)

*'So **the Son of Man** is lord even of the Sabbath.'* (Mark 2:28)

Do you see how both occasions are stressing the authority or the lordship of Jesus?

‘The Son of Man **has authority** on earth to forgive sins.’

‘The Son of Man **is Lord** even of the Sabbath.’

So don’t get the idea that Son of Man in some way emphasises Jesus humanity. It does that, but far more, it emphasises his authority and the fact that He is Lord.

So it only appears twice in the first half of Mark’s Gospel identifying Who Jesus is.

But as soon as we get to the turning point of Mark’s Gospel which is Mark 8:29-30, all of a sudden this term begins to get used far more often.

Because not only is it **His Identity**, it has also got to do with **His Mission**.

In Mark 8:29 Jesus asks his disciples ‘**Who do you say that I am?**’ Peter answered him, ‘**You are the Christ.**’ – He’s got it – Jesus is the Messiah! But then we read in v.30 ‘*And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.*’

But what do we read in the first verse of the next section of Mark’s Gospel – the section that is now all about **why Jesus came?** – What do we read? (v.31)

*‘And he began to teach them that **the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.**’ (Mark 8:31)*

So here we’ve moved from:

**Identity – Who Jesus is? to Mission – Why did Jesus come?**

## **2. Why did Jesus Come? – What was His Mission according to this passage?**

Well, here in **Mark 8:31** we have the first mention of Jesus to his disciples of why he has come, and what he has come to do. i.e. What was going to happen to him?

He tells them plainly (v.32a) that as the Son of Man, he’s going to suffer many things, he’s going to be rejected by the leaders of the Jewish nation and religion – the elders the chief priests and the scribes. In fact, He’s going to be killed. And after 3 days He’s going to rise again. He couldn’t say it more plainly.

But on that occasion look at Peter’s reaction. He takes Jesus aside (v.32) and he began to rebuke him! He’s just acknowledged that Jesus is the Messiah, God’s chosen king, and yet in his next breath he’s rebuking him!

Is that how you would treat someone you believed to be your King? I don’t think so! Peter has a lot to learn. In fact Jesus rebuked Peter by saying,

*‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’*

Peter couldn’t understand, if Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah, then how could he be going to Jerusalem to be killed by Jewish leaders, to be put to death! That just wasn’t part of the package as far as Peter was concerned.

The Messiah he was looking forward to, was one that was going to reign on David’s throne in Jerusalem, and restore the Kingdom to Israel. Hopefully he would overthrow the Romans, but he certainly wasn’t going to die!

When we come into our passage for tonight (**Mark 9:30-37**) we have Jesus now predicting his death for a second time. Look at vs.30-32...

*‘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.’*

It’s believed the Transfiguration took place about 150 miles away from Jerusalem to the north. Caesarea Philippi where Peter has just made his confession of Christ was near Dan. The only large mountain near there is Mount Hermon, so that’s probably where the Transfiguration took place before the eyes of Peter, James and John. Now they’re beginning to make their way south towards Jerusalem. And that’s why Jesus is beginning to tell his disciples what’s going to happen to him whenever they get there. He’s going to be killed, but he’s going to rise again.

So now, according to ch.9:30 they are passing through Galilee, and Jesus doesn’t want anybody to know they are there, because he’s spending time with his immediate disciples, he’s trying to teach them, he wants them to get this, to understand what’s going to happen to him when they get to Jerusalem:

***“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.”***

He even mentions that he’s going to be killed, twice here, to try to get it through to them, but still we read, they did not understand the saying, and they’re afraid to ask him anything more about it.

The third time he tells them this is in **Mark 10:32-34**. According to v.32 they’re getting even closer to Jerusalem. Jesus isn’t holding back, He’s away on ahead of them. The disciples are amazed at this. But again he tells the 12 disciples what’s going to happen to him when he gets there. (Read vs.33-34).

So three times Jesus explains his mission to these disciples. And three times they fail to grasp it. They just don't get it.

**The First time**, Peter rebukes Jesus for talking like that.

**The Second time**, the disciples were arguing among themselves about who was going to be the greatest in Christ's Kingdom (9:33-34).

**The Third time**, James and John have the nerve to come straight out and ask Jesus if they could have the best places in his kingdom, sitting right and left of him! The audacity! They just made their demands and expected Jesus to jump to their tune! They had no thought whatsoever about what Jesus was about to go through!

So tonight we've seen Jesus' **Identity**: He's the Son of Man prophesied by Daniel. We've seen Jesus' **Mission**: He has come to give his life as a ransom for many as it says in Mark 10:45. He's going to be killed, but on the third day he will rise again.

So that just leaves us with **His Call** upon our lives...

### **3. What does Jesus Call us to do? – according to this passage (Mark 9:33-37)**

Well, in v.33, they have now arrived in Capernaum. That's where Jesus had moved his base for his mission, after he was rejected in Nazareth, his home town. Capernaum was just at the north of the Sea of Galilee, where the Jordan River joined it.

And when he was in the house (where he normally stayed when he was there) he asked his disciples a searching question:

***'What were you discussing on the way?'***

But they kept silent – Why? – Because on the way they had been arguing with each other about who was the greatest! And probably who deserved the best seats - in their idea of what Jesus' kingdom was going to be like in Jerusalem! They just weren't getting what he was trying to tell them about his death and resurrection.

So he sits down with them – all twelve – and he says this to them:

***'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.'***

When our kids were small they used to listen to ***'Psalty – the great big blue singing song-book!'*** It was an American Children's set of videos with all kinds of Christian songs on them. One of them was:

***'If you want to be great in God's Kingdom  
Gotta be the servant of all.***

***If you want to be great in God's Kingdom  
Gotta be the servant of all.'***

It was one of those annoying tunes, that once you got it into your head, you just couldn't get it out of it again! But it certainly got the point across!

If you want to be great in God's kingdom, you shouldn't be looking for positions, like these disciples were – you should be prepared to be the servant of all.

And then to illustrate His point, Jesus took a little child and had him stand in the midst of them. He took him up in his arms, and he said to them (v.37)...

***'Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me,  
and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.'***

It's helpful to read Matthew's Gospel here as well. (Read Matt 18:1-6).

Jesus is making two points here:

- 1. Even a child can enter God's Kingdom**, by simple child-like faith and trust. That's all it takes. We shouldn't be full of pride looking for the best places in the kingdom, as if we deserved those places more than anybody else. No, we should be glad to get in at all, so we should come humbly to Jesus. None of us deserves to get into God's Kingdom; we should come humbly.
- 2. If we receive Christ as our Saviour, then we've found God the Father also.** You cannot separate the Godhead. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are inseparable. You cannot have one without the other. Beware of anybody who tells you to trust Christ now, and then pray to receive the Holy Spirit at a later date, and then take God as your Father!

In John's Gospel Jesus said, *'He that has seen me, has seen the Father.  
I and the Father are one.'*

We can talk about God's Kingdom, or Christ's Kingdom, it's exactly the same. What we need to do is make sure we are in the Kingdom. Not outside of it.

### **Conclusion**

If you're saved tonight, even if you came to Christ as a little child, do what Colossians 1:12-14 says:

***'Give thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain (or the kingdom) of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His Beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.'***

Jesus is the Son of Man. He came to die for us & rise again. He calls us to come!