

# Jesus' New World Order

Message 10

## *Status in God's Kingdom*

Mark 9:1-10:52

### ***Introduction***

Good evening everyone! We're so glad you chose to come back for this second meeting of Nincompoops Anonymous, the premier hangout for all weak-minded people at Lehigh. Some twisted people waste their whole lives struggling to excel, but not us. We reject excellence! Mediocrity is our goal. Now you might think we're not entirely serious, but you would be entirely wrong. We pursue mediocrity with *conviction*, because we're convinced it pleases God. God calls us to be humble, so we avoid anything which might call attention to ourselves. If we do something that gets the attention of the world, we immediately change it so that we not fall into the sin of pride. We're glad you came tonight, but to be perfectly honest, we hope this group doesn't minister to you too well. We revel in all aspects of mediocrity, and invite you to do so, too. Humility rules! Praise God!

The church has always been schizophrenic about success. Everyone will give lip service to ministry which saves the lost and strengthens believers. Some people roar into life with a drive to succeed, and the rest of us feel ambivalent about them. We can't really criticize gospel ministry, but we recoil from the proud trappings of success. Neil Postman, in his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, observed that television, by its nature as a visual medium, is poorly suited to fostering real thought and is miserable at communicating transcendent truth. Yet the church flirts with television as preachers from every theological camp struggle to get air time. And we rejoice that Christianity is finding its place in the media, while we doubt the sincerity of finely polished preachers who always have a perfect hairstyle. To completely complicate matters, scripture is used both to justify and to condemn such success.

Where does this leave you, as a Christian student at Lehigh? Should you aim for excellence – or should you humbly seek the lower place? Should you work to win the national prize in Materials Science, or should you let others take first place and you focus on serving Jesus? Should you accept the concertmaster's chair in the orchestra, or should you take a more relaxed position and love Jesus instead of the limelight? Should you shoot for the 3.5 GPA and the fifth year free, or is God more important than another year of education? Last week we heard that the path to discipleship begins with self-denial and goes right through the cross. If that's the case, how are we going to justify self-promotion?

### ***Death of the King***

Jesus' teaching on self-denial was prompted by Peter's reaction when Jesus predicted His death. In Mark 8:31-32 we find Jesus teaching "them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly." Jesus often taught in parables, but this time He made a very simple statement. He would die and rise again. Until now Jesus' stature had grown to epic, yes even divine proportions in the minds of the disciples. They saw, with their own eyes, Jesus heal disease, calm the storm, raise the dead, and even forgive sins. Who could this be, they said over and over? Finally they got it. Peter spoke for them all when he said, "You are the Christ." (8:29) At last they realized that this Jesus they had been following was in fact the Messiah prophesied so long ago. He fulfilled every expectation, and then some! The end of suffering was at hand. He who could calm the waves and raise the dead would rule Israel in peace and prosperity. So almost in spite of themselves, they finally believed what was too good to be true.

But then Jesus ruined it! He said He was going to die. Peter's reaction was not a carefully reasoned,

theologically nuanced conclusion – it was the cry of the heart. No! Our Messiah shall not die! After hoping against hope, wishing it were true that the Messiah had come, and finally concluding that it *was* true – it was too unbearable to think that He would die. So Peter burst out contradicting Jesus’ prediction, and was said soundly rebuked for it. It was in this context that Jesus taught the disciples that they also – anyone, in fact, who would be Jesus’ disciple – must deny himself, subordinate his sinful desires, and live as though dead.

Chapter nine opens with one of the most splendid episodes of the gospels. After having been totally trounced by Jesus, Peter, along with James and John accompany Him to a mountain, where they see a heavenly vision – although it’s not exactly a vision. Real men appeared – out of nowhere. Dead men – but they were alive. Not only alive, but more alive than Peter, James and John. Men who glowed, sparkled, shone brighter than the sun, men who showed the glory of God. Peter, never one to keep quiet when he had the chance to stick his foot in his mouth, made a silly suggestion – and then they heard the voice of God! One day Peter is being called Satan, and the same week he is ushered into God’s presence! What is going on here?

When Jesus and the three disciples return to ground, they discover the rest of the gang struggling, and failing, to cast out a demon. Again, Jesus accomplishes it effortlessly. Then Jesus again predicts His death. But this time the disciples keep quiet. They are totally baffled, but no one dares speak. Their ears were zinging with the sharpness of Jesus rebuke to Peter when he spoke about Jesus’ death. the disciples are afraid to talk to Jesus, so what do they do? They talk to themselves.

Greatest – ctr. Jesus death

Children, rich, rewards

Road to death.

Amazed

fearful

Death – 3<sup>rd</sup> time.

Greatness – by serving others.

Greatness is a legitimate goal

Greatness is reached by taking the lowest role

Greatness comes by imitating Jesus

Jesus enables you to achieve greatness

Bartimaeus followed Jesus to Jerusalem – joyfully.

Thus it has always been

Martin Luther and the reformers

Jim Elliott

Mary and Joseph

You

