



## **“Getting Real”**

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### **Scripture (CEB):**

#### **Mark 9:30-37**

<sup>30</sup> From there Jesus and his followers went through Galilee, but he didn’t want anyone to know it. <sup>31</sup> This was because he was teaching his disciples, “The Son of Man (the New Human Being) will be delivered into human hands. They will kill him. Three days after he is killed he will rise up.” <sup>32</sup> But they didn’t understand this kind of talk, and they were afraid to ask him.

<sup>33</sup> They entered Capernaum. When they had come into a house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about during the journey?” <sup>34</sup> They didn’t respond, since on the way they had been debating with each other about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> He sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be least of all and the servant of all.” <sup>36</sup> Jesus reached for a little child, placed the child among the Twelve, and embraced that child. Then he said, <sup>37</sup> “Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me isn’t actually welcoming me but rather the one who sent me.”

### **Sermon:**

Jesus is getting real with his followers.

Just last week we heard Jesus declare he would be killed, and then he scolded Peter for his fantasies about a conquering Messiah.

Now, he is doing it again.

Again, he foretells his death, and that he will rise after three days.

Again, the disciples don't understand. But this time, they remember that he scolded Peter, and they don't say anything.

Yet again, Jesus explains what it means to follow him. And yet again, the disciples have their accustomed cultural pattern that they are working out of and Jesus, well, he destroys it.

No one in the ancient world paid much attention to children. They stayed close to their mothers or nannies, and out of the world of adults. Especially adult males.

They had zero position until around 12 or 13, when they became an adult.

This is hard for us to imagine...we have such a different world!

Childhood is supposed to be a wonderful time, and children are supposed to have a huge part in the lives of both parents, when they are small and vulnerable.

Families are expected to engage intensively with their little ones.

And let's be honest, children are a huge market in our capitalist world. Their toys, their clothes, their college funds...their instruments for band, their sports teams that start as young as 3 years of age...oh, we fuss and we focus on our little ones, yes we do!

This was not so 2,000 years ago.

So, it certainly was a huge shock as Jesus tears apart their world view and their self-understanding of who does what and how things go in God's reign.

He is their leader and teacher, full of God's power, and someday, the disciples hope, full of might. So they argue...

Who will be his generals, his ambassadors, his right hand man? Who will share in his fame, his success, his authority?

As it turns out...anyone who honors the little ones, the powerless ones, the nobodies of the world.

Anyone who serves others, rather than insisting on being served by others. That one will see the face of God. That one is great in the eyes of God.

Oh yeah, Jesus is putting it out there and they don't like it, they don't get it.

Yet this is indeed what it means to follow him, and this is indeed, why there are so many right now in our world, who are completely disgusted by Christianity. In so many places, the hypocrisy and lies, the abuse of power, the crimes against the children and the lowly show how completely people do not want to accept the teachings of Jesus.

Yet, that is what we must be about.

Westminster, “tie on your walking shoes” and let’s be clear: this is our work.

We love God:

1. By loving our neighbors...around this church, across our town, when they flee across our southern desert, when they step out of jail, or step off a jet after being exiled from their native land. We love our neighbors at Lewis and Clark High School, and in our own neighborhoods, in our school district, wherever there are invisible people hidden behind the powerful people.

We love God:

2. By serving others. And that can mean teaching the children of our church, or helping to set up a party. It can mean packing food and water for others downtown, or after Hurricane Florence. It can be the service of listening to another with love and care, or the service of finding socks and mittens in the winter for those who are facing homelessness.

We love God:

3. By transforming the world. That may sound pretty big, but every time we hit the streets for the rights of immigrant families, or march in a PRIDE parade in solidarity with our GLBTQ+ siblings, every time we go to city hall and fight for a living wage, or health care for all...we are trying to transform the world. I believe we are trying to help God’s intent and God’s design be known in the world. The Kin-dom of God to be made real across our planet.

Yes, we seek to see God, and love God, be known by God...through loving our neighbors, serving others, and transforming the world.

Love. Serve. Transform.

Transform the world by serving and by loving.

Transform. Serve. Love.

Good people of Westminster: THIS IS OUR MISSION, OUR TASK, OUR WORK.

Of course, we have fun. And we learn and we study and we discuss. We drink coffee, and we support one another in our human losses. We celebrate the birthdays, and we make sure the heat and the lights are on for everyone who walks through our doors. We sign petitions, and we share hugs, and zucchini!

But, let's be clear as we respond to Jesus' teaching...

We love, we serve, we seek to transform the world.

Love must define us.

Service should be shining out of us.

Transformation in the world can be seen through us and by us.

Let these words be our nouns...they identify us.

Let these words be our verbs...they show the world how we live.

Jesus was getting down to the brass tacks with his friends. It could not have been easy for them to let go of their hopes and dreams of wealth and power and success, dreaming of the day they would be standing on the necks of their enemies, sitting on their thrones and in their palaces after driving them out.

It can never succeed this way. It is just more bloodshed, and more weeping.

Jesus was trying to end it.

With the might of love.

And the might of service.

And the might of these tools to transform the world.

Love. Serve. Transform the world.