

He That Is Not Against Us

(Text)

I. Introduction

- A. Teacher once discussed a rift between two groups of Monks in Middle Ages
1. Well, their disagreement wasn't really over theology— it was over fashion
 - a. **Issue:** What is the approved way for godly monks to cut their hair
 - 1) One group shaved the top of their heads and left the sides long
 - 2) The other group shaved the sides of the head and left top long
 - b. Obviously, the who essence of the gospel was at stake in this issue
 - c. They couldn't agree, so they strapped on swords and went to war.
 2. **Point:** Believers can have hard time playing nice with other believers.
 - a. Differences over traditions, procedures and issues too easily divide us
 - b. Sometimes our disagreements seem as substantial as hairstyles
 - 1) Maybe we don't literally kill one another over these issues today
 - 2) But we still wound the cause of Christ because we can't get along
- B. What do we do with believers who claim Jesus but aren't part of us?
1. Terry Rush tells about driving past a building of “The Church of Satan”
 - a. For some reason he felt led to go in and talk to the people at that church
 - b. He went in and met the preacher (*warlock, grand wizard, Beelzebub, etc*)
 - c. He asked, “*Do you really think your group are only ones going to hell?*”
 2. We're reading through the New Testament together—sermons from reading
 - a. Apostles struggling with this question in Tuesday reading (**Mk 9:38-41**)
 - 1) They run into someone who was casting out demons in Jesus name
 - 2) **Problem:** They didn't know him. *Strange case of unknown exorcist*
 - b. Apostles acted in way that many disciples act— ***Sectarian Exclusion***
 - 1) Frontier churches required a chip before serving you communion
 - 2) If they didn't know you, you had to prove you were part of the group
 - 3) Apostles wanted to see this guy's membership chip before he served
 - c. Jesus responds in a totally different way—and we need to hear him
- C. Before we read the story, let's set up some of the background

II. Whoever Is Not Against Us (Mark 9:39-41)

A. The apostles have two arguments in **Mark 9** that set the stage for our text

1. **First**, they argued with a large crowd and the teachers of the law (**9:14**)

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them

a. The apostles tried to heal a boy possessed by a demon, and they failed

b. Jesus will going to drive out the demon and point father to faith

c. Apostles were arguing with rabbis when Jesus arrives to rescue them

1) Jesus gave them authority over demons in limited commission (**6:7**)

2) And they had success—*“They drove out many demons”* (**6:12**)

d. But here the apostles failed... and that’s what led to the argument!

2. **Second**, the apostles argue over who was greatest in kingdom (**9:33-34**)

³³*They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?”* ³⁴*But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

a. Does this sound like a bunch of third graders or what?

1) Peter says, *“I’m the best speaker!”* John says, *“I can out run you!”*

2) James says, *“Jesus likes me best!”* Thomas says, *“I doubt that!”*

3) I guess the apostle called *“James the Less”* is at a great disadvantage!

b. Jesus says that greatness in the kingdom is service, not status (**9:35**)

³⁵*Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”*

c. They don’t get it— Jesus repeats same lesson in next chapter (**10:43-44**)

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴*and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all*

3. Apostles argue over why they can’t exorcise a demon and who is greatest

B. Those arguments set the stage for today’s text (**Reading: Mark 9:38-41**)

1. Apostles tell Jesus they saw a stranger driving out demons in Jesus name

a. **Note:** This guy isn’t just *claiming* to do so! He is driving out demons.

2. What did the apostles do? Well, they made him stop casting our demons.

a. Why? Well, at least they’re completely honest— *“He is not one of us”*

1) What the apostles don’t say—*“He’s doing what we just failed to do!”*

2) Like the Pharisees often do, the apostles here are guarding their turf.

b. They don’t want some outsider/stranger succeeding where they had failed

3. Jesus basic point here— “*Whoever is not against us is for us*”
 - a. Jesus illustrates with two points that are **opposite sides** of the **same coin**--
 - 1) One who performs a miracle thru Jesus won't say evil against Him.
 - 2) One who only gives a cup of water in Jesus name will be rewarded.
 - b. **POINT**: Both **miracle** and **cup of water** are done in Jesus' name
- C. What Jesus says here sounds strangely familiar... but it also sounds WRONG!
1. We're more familiar with **Matt 12:30**, which sounds like direct opposite

“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

 - a. **Matthew 12** is dealing with the **direct** opposition by the Pharisees.
 - 1) They **overtly** oppose Jesus's and deny his miracles and authority
 - 2) In fact, they attribute Jesus authority over demons to Satan himself
 - b. The unnamed exorcist in Mark 9 is doing Jesus' work in Jesus name
 - c. The only problem is this guy doesn't have the approval of the apostles
 2. Both texts are really saying the same thing— *there's no middle ground*
 - a. One cannot be neutral to Christ— either you are for Him or against Him
 - 1) The Pharisees denied Christ, so we know where they stand
 - 2) Unknown exorcist worked in Jesus name... *we know where he stood*
 - b. Apostles didn't know him, but then *“if he is against us, then he's for us”*
 3. **Basic Point**: Exorcist was unknown to the apostles but known by Christ!
 - a. For the apostles to oppose this man meant they were opposing Jesus
 - b. The only one who gets to accept/deny this man as a disciple is Jesus!

III. Conclusion: Important Observations

- A. **First**, Jesus doesn't claim everyone who claims Him (**Matt 7:21**)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

 1. There are false disciples who won't “*put up with sound doctrine*” (**2 Tim 4:3**)
 - a. Not everyone who claims to be doing God's will really is (**Matt 7:22**)

Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons
 - b. We need to remember who it is that decides on discipleship (**Matt 7:23**)

Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’
 2. Jesus is the Judge here, and He makes his judgment at end (“*on that day*”)
 3. Wheat and Weeds (**Matt 13**). *What happens if you pull up weeds too early?*

B. Second, it is not the job of disciples to judge other disciples (**Rom 14:4**)

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand

1. Paul cautions Christians at Rome not to judge others based on issues
 - a. Is it OK to eat meat? To observe holy days? To drink wine?
 - b. It is not the job to judge other disciples. That job is reserved for Master
 - c. **Note:** Paul says that God can make them stand (*even if wrong on issue*)
2. All questions of salvation belong to God and are God's alone.
 - a. Had visitor years here because they attended uncle's funeral
 - 1) They talked about how good, kind, serving, dedicated the uncle was
 - 2) Then said, "Real shame he is going to hell." (*Not part of right group*)
 - b. That is WAY above our pay grade! All salvation issues are God's alone
 - c. Aren't you glad! Are you glad some brothers and sisters don't get vote!

C. Third, there will always be **tension** between these first two points

1. We must scrutinize teaching and its implications **w/o** judging one's heart
 - a. There are things that I will find unbiblical— and I must avoid them.
 - b. That is not the same as judging or rejecting the disciples who do them!
2. There is tension between scrutinizing doctrine and accepting people
 - a. Some in my church are wrong at points... and still my brother/sister
 - b. That is also true of those outside my own particular religious tribe

D. Fourth, Jesus' command about the known exorcist is "*Do not stop him!*"

1. We have to admit here—we've no idea who this unknown disciple is
 - a. He's not like sons of Sceva using Jesus name improperly (**Act 19:13-16**)
 - b. Maybe this guy came to know Jesus on the apostles day off or something
 - c. **Point:** Even though THEY didn't know Him, JESUS knew Him!
2. **Note:** Jesus doesn't invite this guy, whoever he is, to join their group!
 - a. But He does tells the apostles not to stop him or hinder his work
 - b. God used people to do His work who outside their circle. *Imagine that!*

E. May God let us lift up Jesus and point to Him without judging other disciples

1. Being in "*the truth*" is not subscribing to particular view on particular issue
2. Being in the truth is knowing Jesus... and being known. *Do you know Him*