Mark 9:33-36

A lesson about serving

Jesus has a lot to say to us about our service to him. I find it quite cool that he uses children throughout the Gospels to teach us on what a real relationship with him is like and how to properly serve Him.

Some passages about Jesus and children:

1. Jesus was a child.
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. (Isaiah 9:6)

2. Jesus took children in his arms and blessed them.
“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them.” . . . And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. (Mark 10:14-16)

3. Jesus healed a child of a foreign woman.
“O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly. (Matthew 15:28)

4. Jesus cast a demon out of a child.
And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. (Matthew 17:18)

5. Jesus raised a child from the dead.
Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”And immediately the girl got up. (Mark 5:41-42)

6. Jesus used a child’s loaves and fish to feed five thousand people.
“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” (John 6:9-10)

7. Jesus said you should become like a child.
"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3-4)

8. When Jesus came, children cried “Hosanna!” to the Son of David.
The chief priests and the scribes saw . . . the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Matthew 21:15)

9. Jesus predicted the terrible days when fathers would give their children up to death.
"And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child." (Mark 13:12)

And our text is Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" 34But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

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

36He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

(Pray)

Children and Health

http://www.globalactionforchildren.org/static/the_facts/

- An estimated **11 million children under age five** die each year from **preventable or treatable diseases**. In 2004, an estimated 10.5 million children died before they reached age five, most from preventable diseases. *(World Health Organization)*
- In 2002, **vaccine-preventable diseases killed 1.2 million children** - 14 percent of global deaths among children. *(World Health Organization)*
- Each year, more than 10 million children in low- and middle-income countries die before reaching their fifth birthday. **Seven in 10** of these deaths are **due to just five preventable and treatable conditions**, or often a combination of them: pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, measles, and malnutrition. *(World Health Organization)*

Children and Nutrition

- In the developing world, **146 million children under age five - 27 percent -** are **underweight**, the worst situation being in South Asia where **nearly half** (46 percent) of children under the age of five are underweight. *(UNICEF)*
- Every day, **more than 16,000 children - one child every five seconds -** dies from **hunger-related causes**. *(Bread for the World)*

Children in Conflict

- **An estimated 20 million children** have been forced to flee their homes because of **conflict and human rights violations**. **More than 1 million** have been **orphaned or separated from their families**. *(UNICEF)*

Child Abuse

- An estimated **40 million children under the age of 15** suffer from **abuse and neglect**, and require health and social care. *(World Health Organization)*
- Millions more children are being **trafficked, forced into debt bondage or other forms of slavery, and forced into prostitution and/or pornography**.
    - **0.3 million** in armed conflict
    - **1.2 million** being trafficked
    - **1.8 million** forced into prostitution/pornography *(International Labor Organization)*

Child Labor

- More than **352 million children - 23 percent of children aged five to 17** - were **"economically active"** in 2000, with half engaged in work that would likely "harm their health, safety, and moral development." *(International Labor Organization)*
- **73 million working children** are **less than 10 years old**. *(International Labor Organization)*
- Each year, **22,000 children** die in **work-related accidents**. *(International Labor Organization)*
- The largest number of working children age 14 and under is found in the **Asia-Pacific region,** with **127 million children** engaged in child labor. However, **sub-Saharan Africa** has the highest proportion, where nearly a third of children under age 14 - 48 **million** - are involved in child labor. *(International Labor Organization)*

Poverty

Number of children in the world
http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp
2.2 billion
Number in poverty
1 billion (every second child)

Abortion! (USA)

http://www.cirtl.org/abfacts.htm

That's 1.5 million babies each year;
That's 4,000 babies every day;
That's 1 baby every 20 seconds;
That's Approximately 40 million babies since 1973

Child Pornography

3 billion annually (worldwide)

- God's word is our authority and our instruction on how we should relate to children. It is so sad to learn of the tragic deaths of Children who have died do to a lack of spiritual insight into our Lord's words. ***This text tells us why this is true in our world***.
- Two important statements
    - Vs. 35 (**the who** should we be serving) & 37 (The **why)**

Vs. 34 The pursuit of greatness

Jesus does not say that desiring to be great is bad?

- Sin has **corrupted** this desire in us to

1. it has been corrupted into a longing not to be great, **but to be known as great**; and (a subtle shift in our thinking)
2. it has been corrupted into a longing not to be great, **but to be greater** than someone else. (the disciples discussion)

Jesus corrects them on how to become great!

Vs. 35 -But true greatness (Jesus says) is the **willingness to be last**. And true greatness is not positioning yourself so that others praise you, but true greatness is putting yourself in a position to serve everyone—to be a blessing to as many as you possibly can. (John Piper)

Take pastors, for example: the measure of true greatness is not how many people come to his church, or how many books he has written, or how many conferences he speaks at, or how many stations carry his radio program. The measure of true greatness is to what degree has the impulse to self-exaltation been crucified? How much heartfelt desire to serve others has there been? How much readiness and willingness to decrease while others increase?

Beware how you measure greatness in the servants of the Lord. Paul said, "Do not pronounce judgment before the time, until the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5; cf. Romans 2:29). (Piper)

Children are part of the all we are called to Serve! Vs. 35b

Must be servant of all!

- This is the way to strip the perversion from sin in being the greatest servant!!!
- Jesus then takes a child and puts him or her on his lap!

So Jesus say's to the disciples "What do you think of ministering in the nursery, toddler, children's, youth ministries? "

- I'm sure the disciples though the children were "not of importance", not real ministry. But oh, how wrong that is! God's only Son took the child and said this is a part of ***the all*** I was talking about!
- How we are not to despise children or look down on them, or think that is women's work etc..

Why bring the child in it?

Jesus brings the child in it because a child <u>cannot return your service</u> to him or her. There is usually no pat on the back or a "thank you" that follows your service. Come to think of it sometimes there can be a bad response you get from your service to a child.

- I can play the most beautiful classical guitar piece in the world and a child can look at it and say, "I don't like that"!
- But serving the children brings out my motivation! (There is no returned glory for me!)
- Also in serving the lame, crippled & Blind! (Luke 14:21)

Vs 36 "Serving children in Jesus name- Receiving God!

Jesus now takes the focus off of the value of the child (for the sake of children) and onto the receiving of God! Jesus makes this into a theological discussion! It's about God!!! The pursuit of God!!!

Jesus essentially says to the disciples! "Do you want to receive more of God?"

- Serving a child in the name of the child, humanity or America or anything else **falls short** of God's will for us in serving children! (Though a very modern way of thinking)
- We serve children best when it is in the name of Jesus! (God is to be the **center** of all our service) (The centrality of Jesus in everything!)

- We serve children best when our service shows that God satisfies and is our everything, **not** the petty pat on the back! (God is most glorified in me, when I am most satisfied in HIM!)

Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven **but you?**
And earth has nothing I desire **besides you**.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail,
but **God** is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.

Genesis 15:1 "**I am** your sheield, your very great reward!"

Putting Jesus' Two Statements Together

Now put the two things Jesus said together. In verse 35 he said: if you would be first, you must be last of all and servant of all (especially children). And in verse 37 he said: if you receive a child in my name, you receive God. In other words, when I call you to be the servant of all, including children, I am not calling you to some heroic self-sacrifice. I am calling you to stop chasing the bubbles of man's praise and start pursuing God. Stop trying to receive praise in the service of men and starting receiving God in the service of children. What do you want? Do you want the fleeting praise of mortal men? Or do you want God? (Piper)