**EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

**SUPPORTERS’ CLUBS**

**EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY’S THEME**

***Introducing the Gospel***

*The exorcist who was not a disciple (Mark 9: 38-50)*

In Mark’s Gospel the second prediction of the passion is followed by two controversies, the controversy about who is greatest among the disciples, and the controversy about who counts as a disciple. In this passage Jesus affirms the exorcist who casts out demons in his name, even though this exorcist is working independently of the close band of followers. The church, like Jesus, must be willing to recognise the activity of God in a wider context.

Our image to stimulate reflection on this passage is *supporters’ clubs*.

***Core extract from the Gospel (Mark 9: 38-40; for reflection throughout the week)***

John said to him,

‘Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name,

and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.’

But Jesus said, ‘Do not stop him;

for no one who does a deed of power in my name

will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me.

Whoever is not against us is for us.’

***Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)***

Lord Jesus Christ,

you welcomed all who worked through your name.

Help us to work with your followers

from other churches and other traditions,

that your kingdom may grow;

now and always.

Amen.

**READING NEXT SUNDAY’S GOSPEL**

**Mark 9: 38-50**

**Another Exorcist**

John said to him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.’ But Jesus said, ‘Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

**Temptations to Sin**

‘If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell., And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

‘For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.’

**ENGAGING WITH THE THEME**

***Dwelling with the text (Mark 9: 38-50)***

Today’s Gospel reading offers a complex collection of materials. We are focusing attention on the first section. Begin exploring Mark’s reflection on the exorcist who was not following with the disciples by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

* What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
* What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
* What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
* What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

***Thinking and talking***

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

* Why were the disciples trying to stop the exorcist?
* How does Jesus deal with this incident?
* What do you understand by the saying ‘Whoever is not against us is for us’?
* How do you understand bearing the name of Christ?
* What does this narrative say for us today?

***Using your Bible***

Read this narrative alongside what happened earlier in the chapter.

* Mark 9: 14-18

Explore the parallel passage in Luke. Matthew has a different perspective.

* Luke 9: 49-50
* Matthew 7: 22-23

Compare parallel themes in the Old Testament.

* Numbers 11: 26-29

***Exploring online***

Widen your exploration of Mark’s reflection on the exorcist who was not following with the disciples by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

* Mark 9: 38-40
* Supporters’ clubs
* Ecumenical collaboration

***Drawing on experience***

The image to stimulate reflection on Mark’s teaching about Jesus’ acceptance of the exorcist who was not following with the disciples is *supporters’ clubs*.

* What is your experience of supporters’ clubs?
* When have you experienced conflict or collaboration among different supporters’ clubs?
* When have you experienced conflict or collaboration among different denominations?
* What have you learned about the strengths and dangers of supporters’ clubs?

***Creating and making***

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Mark’s reflection on the exorcist who did not follow with the disciples.

* Create a poster of rival supporters’ clubs.
* Create a display of supporters’ clubs memorabilia.
* Create a collage of local ecumenical activities.
* Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of diverse groups collaborating.



**EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel.

We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary’s Centre in Wales and the St Christopher’s College Trust.



The scripture quotations contained in these materials are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised Edition, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and is used with permission. All rights reserved.

Copyright © Leslie J. Francis, 2021

Canon Theologian Liverpool Cathedral

with sponsorship and support from

St Christopher’s College Trust

St Mary’s Centre, Wales