

Living your best life?

Mark 9.38-50

In which the disciples notice that other people, from outside of their group, are casting out demons in Jesus' name – and they tell Jesus about it, expecting him to stop them. But Jesus explains that these people are just as much a part of his kingdom as the disciples are

Now read **Mark 9.38-50** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

In this passage, Jesus is saying that while people might belong to one group or another, or perhaps no group at all, everyone who acts in his name is united under him. The way some people live out their faith may be a little different to ours, other Christians may have slightly different views to us, or belong to a different church denomination. The challenge can be to see God at work in others and/or to see God at work in ourselves. Sometimes we just need to look beyond what we think we know.



Ask yourself: How do you feel about the call to be brave enough to BE the light?



Read the story of a man who helps refugees because of his own experience. <https://www.humansofnewyork.com/tagged/refugee-stories#4>
How do you see God in this man? How does he see God in others?

REFLECT

Play some quiet music while you reflect on these words from Mother Teresa, 'To be able to love one another, we must pray much, for prayer gives a clean heart and a clean heart can see God in our neighbour. If now we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten how to see God in one another...' Consider somebody and think about how you can see God in them.

LOOK

Visit www.illusions.org/ or just type 'optical illusions' into a search engine. It can sometimes be hard to look beyond how things appear to see what lies beneath. Look out this week for glimpses of God in the people around you. Each evening, identify how you saw God at work in one person or action.



Write

Sometimes the hardest thing can be to see God in ourselves. We often find it much easier to focus on what we think is wrong with us, than what is good. Write your name on the top of a piece of paper. If you can do this with others, pass each piece of paper around everyone in turn. Everyone should write a quality of God that they see in the person named, at the top of the piece of paper, until the paper returns to its owner. If you are on your own, ask God to reveal to you, how he is at work in your life and write those things down.



BAKE

Make a cake using a simple recipe. For each ingredient (eggs, flour, sugar, butter) think of two other items that can be made with that ingredient (omelette, bread, etc.). Just like the same eggs or flour can look and taste very different from one creation to another – depending on what else has been added and how ingredients have been treated, God can look very different in one person to another. Our cultures, backgrounds, experiences and personalities mean we all show God in different ways – but it's the same God in us all.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus,' said John, one of the disciples, excitedly. 'We saw a man using your name to drive out demons. We tried to stop him, because he wasn't in our group.'

'Don't stop him, let him continue,' Jesus said, calmly. 'No one can use my name to do something good and then be against me. If someone gives you a drink because you belong to me, God sees that, and they will get their reward. But if someone should encourage others to do wrong things, they will have their punishment. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a huge millstone around their neck.'

Jesus wanted them to understand how important it was to do the right things, not to be confused and influenced by the wrong people, and not to be tempted to do the wrong things. He gave them an example to help them. He said, 'Salt is good, but suppose it loses its salty taste – that's bad! How can it become salty again?'

Be salty yourself by making sure you do good things. Encourage other people to do good things. Make sure you are kind as individuals and live in peace together.'

Mark 9.38-50



Did you know?

- Demon possession might be interpreted as someone who is disturbed, distressed or suffering from mental illness.
- A millstone is an enormous heavy stone with grooves that was used for grinding grain to make bread. It needed an animal to turn it.
- Salt in ancient times was more valuable than it is today.

Mark 9.38-50 (NRSV)

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 afterward 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.

"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."