

October 18 2015

**Scripture Lessons ~**

*Psalm 91:9-16*

*Hebrews 6:9-12*

*Mark 9:38-41*

**Sermon**      *Disagreeing Agreeably*

Oh I don't care how old you are, I don't think any of us have been able to watch television in the last 35 or 40 years without at least seeing one episode of the Beverly Hill Billies somewhere, and somehow. If you recall the character of Granny you remember her to be a woman of great spunk, always more ready to jump into action than to think before she acted. And more often or not in any given episode of shows through a series of comic misunderstanding Granny battle lines would be drawn to solve some crisis more often or not at the end of a double barrel shotgun. With this question always resulting she would squint one eye and she would ask "Are ya for us or are you against us. "Are you for us or you against us? You know it is a black or white question that Jesus' disciples might have asked in today's lesson from Mark's gospel of the person, John said was casting out demons in Jesus' name, but was not a part of that inner circle of the twelve disciples. Are you for us or are you against us?

Now as we have spoken before the whole Biblical phenomena of casting out of demons and I confess to you it is something with which I have had no personal experience at least in a literal sense. Certainly with many of you, I can look at an Adolph Hitler and I could look at a Joshua Stalin and I can see in their role in history an evil that weighed in far off ways of some of the individual parts. But thank God for I have never experienced in modern times what is called an exorcism. From there we have talked together in terms of physical illness such as chemical imbalance or epilepsy or what I would call fighting personal demons like drug dependence or depression or bitterness or grief in our lives. However, as you see what was happening in this story, the question in Jesus' disciples' mind was still clear, it was still the same. Is this man casting out demons for us or is this man against us? As usual that no matter who the gospel writer or what the episode in Jesus' life somehow, he is able to transcend the given situation and challenge his disciples of old and us his modern day followers to think outside the box, to think beyond the black, to think beyond the white question into deeper insights of our faith.

First, I think that Jesus says, "Hey if this guy is doing a good thing in my name- don't stop him because he can't be all bad" and then he leaves us with a short pithy statement to ponder "whoever who is not against us, is for us." "Whoever is not

against us, is for us.” Wow! How many more possibilities are opening up to us? How much more hope is possible in our world if Jesus words and those of Granny Clampett, our thinking, and Jesus; disciples’ thinking on that day. Instead of going through life negativity defining everything by what we are against, how about changing things around and finding everything by what we are for in the world. Instead of looking at others around us and judging them and judging their actions in how we disagree; looking at them and rejoicing at things that we do agree about; and embracing our commonalities rather instead of dwelling on our differences constantly.

Jesus could have done what his disciples did, Jesus could have jumped into judgment as we often do and replied to his disciples concern, by saying something like this, “You know guys, you are right, this guy is not one of us, I don’t care how much good this man doing, I don’t even care if he is doing it in my name, if he is not part of our group, he’s got to be stopped.” But instead, Jesus refused to follow that narrow way, that all or nothing, with throwing out the bath water ideology in favor of presuming a greater good; making alive with a kindred spirit; knowing full well he was not a part of his inner circle which wasn’t all that perfect in the first place. So how does Jesus’ approach; how does Jesus’ words shake out for us in the midst of daily life in the modern world?

Well, my case on it is Jesus is so intent on us as his followers of sharing the gospel, sharing the good news for God’s love for a hurting world in everything that we say and everything that we do; that he would have us put all the petty differences aside in our pursue of that one true goal. That means that what we have been dealing with our family, our friends, our coworkers or schoolmates or members of our own church family sometimes we have to agree to disagree or as some people put it disagree agreeably sometimes in order to work together for our common goals in the world. You know there are so many small things, there are so many petty things there are so many unimportant things can sidetrack us in our work in sharing God’s love in this hurting world that we often hardly break the surface in solving the world’s problems together. So let’s try something. How about taking a different approach rather than jumping to hasty conclusions rather than rushing to action, rather than assuming the worse about people, rather than speaking before we think, we consider our commonality with others; consider where we agree rather than where we disagree, rather than weakening and diluting our efforts and we can gain strength together as followers of Jesus in casting out life’s demons in the name of Jesus.