**SUBJECT**  
Serve them at New Testament Rank

**TEXT**  
Mark 9:35

**TITLE**  
The Joy of Unselfish Service

**SCRIPTURE READING**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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**CLASSIFICATION:**
- EXPOSITORY
- BIOGRAPHICAL
- TEXTUAL
- TOPICAL
- DEVOTIONAL
INTRO: NO ONE IS INDISPENSABLE! NOT EVEN THOSE OF US WHO ARE SO READY TO REMIND OTHERS OF THIS FACT. BUT IF THERE BE ANY ONE OF THE FOUR GOSPELS THAT BORDERS ON INDISPENSABILITY IT MUST BE THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

SERVING AS A RICH SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR SO MUCH THAT IS FOUND IN THE GOSPELS OF MATTHEW AND LUKE, MARK’S ACCOUNT DOES COME CLOSE TO BEING INDISPENSABLE.

MARK HAS 661 VERSES. AND OF THESE 661 VERSES MATTHEW REPRODUCES NO LESS THAN 606, USING 51% OF MARK’S ACTUAL WORDS.

LUKE IN HIS ACCOUNT REPRODUCES 320 OF MARK’S VERSES AND USES 53% OF HIS ACTUAL WORDS. IN FACT THERE ARE ONLY 24 VERSES IN MARK WHICH DO NOT APPEAR EITHER IN MATTHEW OR LUKE. ADD TO THIS THE FACT THAT BOTH MATTHEW AND LUKE LARGELY FOLLOW MARK’S ORDER OF EVENTS AND YOU SEE HOW CLOSE MARK’S GOSPEL COMES TO BEING INDISPENSABLE.

WHERE THE PRIMARY EMPHASIS OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW IS THE "MESSIAHSHIP OF CHRIST," THE PRIMARY EMPHASIS OF MARK IS THE "SERVANTHOOD OF CHRIST," AND HOW QUICKLY MARK MOVES TO HIS CENTRAL THEME!

IN 8 BRIEF VERSES HE PASSES OVER 30 YEARS OF OUR LORD’S LIFE. IN 7 MORE VERSES MARK HAS RECORDED THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST. HE IS BUSY RECRUITING DISCIPLES, IN THE 16th VERSE.

THEN QUICKLY MARK MOVES TO HIS FIRST RECORDED ACT OF CHRIST’S UNSELFISH SERVICE. BEFORE MARK CONCLUDES HIS FIRST CHAPTER, FOUR MIRACLES HAVE BEEN REPORTED AND CHRIST IS CAST IN THE ROLE OF AN UNSELFISH SERVANT. HE IS PERFECTLY CAST FOR THIS ROLE. IT REQUIRES NO "ACTING" OR "DRAMATICS" ON CHRIST’S PART. HE IS SIMPLY BEING HIMSELF -- A
SERVANT OF ALL.

SEEING CHRIST THROUGH THE EYES OF MARK AS
SERVANT OF ALL, WE DISCOVER THE "JOY OF UNSELFISH
SERVICE."

THE JOY OF UNSELFISH SERVICE IS:

I. THE JOY OF MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR OTHERS

--Mark 1:33-34

--EXEGESIS: After healing the man with the unclean
spirit (in verse 23) and curing the mother-in-law
of Simon Peter of her fever (verse 30) Christ con-
tinues to make life better for others. (Read vss.
33-34a).

--NOTE: Following closely upon this report came the
news that Jesus had healed Simon Peter's wife's
mother. No doubt Simon's home was well known
in the city and many people were acquainted with
the illness there. It is not difficult to imagine
the excitement that ran all over the city as the
people, relieved of their daily duties because of the
sabbath, gave themselves to the discussion of what
was taking place right within the bounds of their
own city.

Just as soon as sunset released them, the whole
city rushed to Simon's door. The majority of these
were drawn by what we call "curiosity." I should not
be surprised if curiosity is the greatest drawing card
known to people in general. Some years back when
the authorities were trying to solve the mystery of
the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, a woman with
a child of about the same age showed up in a hotel
in a little town in the Cumberlands in Tennessee.
The rumor got out that this was the kidnapped baby,
and newspaper reporters from all over the nation
rushed to this obscure town, while the masses with-
in a radius of one hundred miles literally jammed
the highways in their efforts to reach the place of
momentary interest and excitement. As I study the life of Jesus I am persuaded that the throngs of people were drawn to him by curiosity. There were many in this company, however, who came with the expectant faith that Jesus might heal their loved ones. These were easily discoverable in the curious multitude: mothers were carrying their sick babies; loved ones led or half-supported the lame, the paralyzed, the demon-possessed, the blind; groups brought on pallets the helpless and almost hopeless; all afflicted or sick or defective or suffering ones must have their chance even at nightfall, because the great Healer might not be available again. What a compliment to our Lord that the people believed he had the power and the willingness to heal their diseases and to relieve their distresses. (Hill, pp. 27-28).

What hope and joy must have been theirs just to know that Christ had come to make life better for others!

---NOTE:--- Whereas Matthew is intent on proving the Messiahship of Christ by quoting Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Christ, Mark is quite content simply to record the wonderful works of Christ and allow them to testify of his deity. Only God through such unselfish service could make life better for others!

**Nineteen miracles of Christ are recorded in this short book, all of which demonstrate the joy Christ received from making life better for others.**

- **In Eight of these miracles he makes life better for others by healing diseases.**
- **In Five by proving His power over nature.**
- **In Four he makes life better for others by casting out demons, and**
- **In Two by reversing the natural process of death.**

**1. By Putting People Above Programs**

---Mark 2:1-4 & 11-12a---
EXEGESIS: News of Christ's coming to Capernaum had spread like wild fire. Life in Palestine was very public. In the morning the door of the house was opened and any who wished could enter. When the word got out that Christ was in the house, in no time, a crowd had filled the house and the door was jammed and people even blocked the windows. They had come to see and to hear Jesus.

And so (vs. 2b) "He preached the word unto them." A formal preaching service was in progress. Then one solitary human need arose. A young man, too ill (a paralytic) even to walk, was carried by four friends to see Jesus.

Unable to press through the crowd, the ingenious four went up the outside stairway to the roof. They removed a portion of the roof and lowered their helpless friend into the presence of Christ.

Immediately Christ interrupts the "worship service," turns from the crowds and focuses his attention on this one needy man.

In so doing Christ is saying, "People are more important than programs." "One lonely sinner is more important than a series of sermons."

Paul echoes the same conviction when he writes, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." And we prove our love for others not through public proclamation but through personal and unselfish service.

APPLY: Programs, schedules and our own sacred routines are always getting in the way of people. If permitted to do so, they will rob us of the joy of unselfish service that comes only when we put people first.

That Sunday School teacher who feels that his sole responsibility is to stay with the "Program," show up on time, teach the lesson is missing
The joy of unselfish service. That joy is ours only when we put people above programs by being in their homes, ministering to their individual needs and enlisting new people in Bible study. Otherwise teaching or preaching or any other avenue of service can be little more than a spiritual ego trip.

The Joy of Unselfish service is the joy of making life better for others by putting people above programs.

ILLUS: The Pharisees had a "program of Sabbath observance." Jesus did not fit into their program because he put people first.

Possibly Jesus' disregard for the Pharisaic rules for sabbath observance aroused more antagonism in the minds and hearts of the legalists than any other one thing. This question itself is a perfect illustration of the conflict between programs and people. (Mark 2:23-28). One time Jesus and his disciples were going through a field of grain - and as they were making their way through the standing grain the disciples pulled off some heads of grain and ate the kernels, thus going through the process of reaping and threshing, strictly forbidden on the sabbath. The Pharisees quickly pounced upon this act and asked Jesus why his disciples disregarded the sabbath laws.

The Master countered with an incident with which they were familiar. He cited the case of David, who violated the law by appropriating for himself and his hungry associates the shewbread, which it was not lawful for any but priests to eat. Necessity, therefore, justified the violation of technical laws. It was more important that the hunger of the disciples be met than that empty legalism be maintained.

In verse 27 Mark makes an invaluable contribution to the sacred record; his account containing
only the profound words, "The sabbath was made for man (Mankind), and not man for the sabbath."

Thus Jesus declared for all time the superiority of people to programs. The sabbath was made to promote the welfare of mankind, and must not be used to cripple man's growth and usefulness. (Hill, p. 39).

The emphasis of Christ on people and the emphasis of the Pharisees on program may well explain why the joy of Jesus stood in such sharp contrast to the religion of the Pharisees.

2. By Dealing With Man's Most Basic Need

Mark 2:5-12a

--EXEGESIS: To the surprise of all Jesus said nothing about paralysis. Instead He said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (vs. 5). The word "son" was used to address a boy or a small child. But here Jesus used it as a tender address to this sick man. He did not upbraid him as a sinner, but spoke kindly to him as a sinner in need of His ministry. Jesus hated sin but loved sinners...

Why did Jesus speak of sins, a spiritual ailment, rather than the man's physical condition? It is possible that his sins had caused his paralysis. So Jesus began at the proper place. He went to the heart of the matter. Though men might not think so, his greater need was spiritual healing. (Hobbs, pp. 41-42).

Had Christ only healed this man's body and not his soul, in time he would die--then what? This man's most basic need in this life and in the life to come was met when Jesus said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

--APPLY: Our basic need...
II. THE JOY OF LIVING BEFORE YOU DIE

--Mark 8:35 "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.

--NOTE: A very wise man once said, "Fear this: That you might die before you live."

And you only really live when you lose yourself in unselfish service to others.

There are certain things which are lost by being kept and saved by being used. Any talent that a man possesses is like that. If he uses it, it will develop into something still greater. If he refuses to use it he will in the end lose it.

God gave us life to spend and not to keep. If we live carefully, holding on to life, always thinking first of our own profit, ease, comfort, security... if our sole aim is to make life as long and as trouble-free as possible. If we will make no effort except for ourselves, we are losing life all the time. But if we spend life for others, if we forget health and time and wealth and comfort in our desire to do something for Jesus and for the men for whom Jesus died, we are winning life all the time.

What would have happened to the world if doctors and scientists and inventors had not been prepared to risk experiments often on their own bodies? What would have happened to life if everyone had wished for nothing but to remain comfortably at home, and there had been no such person as an explorer or a pioneer?

What would happen if every mother refused to take the risk of bearing a child? What would happen if all men spent all they had upon themselves?

The very essence of life is in risking life and spending life, not in saving it and hoarding it. True, it is the way of weariness, of exhaustion, of giving to the uttermost--but it is better any day to burn out than to rust out, to live before you die, for
this is the way to experience the joy of Unselfish Service. (Barclay, pp. 208 & 210).

---ILLUS: (Optional) In the 4th Century there was a monk in the east named Telemachus. Desert, Rome. Roman general, Stilicho, returned from victory over the Goths. Part of celebration was the gladiator games. No longer Christians but those captured in war had to fight to the death. Telemachus leaped over barrier, still in his hermits robes, between gladiators. Crowds threw stones at him. "Let the games go on." Commander of games gave an order. A gladiator's sword struck Telemachus and he fell dead on the floor of the coliseum. Suddenly silent. Shocked that a holy man should have been killed in such a way. The games ended abruptly that day -- never to be held again! By losing his life, Telemachus ended the games and saved countless lives. He lived more during those brief moments between the two gladiators than he had lived all his life in the desert. Telemachus experienced the joy of living before he died!

---APPLY: In God's appointed course for you, it may be that today was to have been the day when you were to live before you die.

Yet you would let it slip as if it were any other day. The man whose today is like his yesterday lacks a sense of God's timings. No servant of the Lord should be content with present attainment; for to be satisfied with what is, is to be a loser of opportunities. (Nee, p. 2). On the other hand, to lose your life in unselfish service is to experience the joy of living before you die.

To see the eyes of a little child light up because you sacrificed a luxury that he might have a necessity; to see a person forgiven by God and restored to a life with dignity and purpose because you took time that could have been spent in some needed recreation and invested it in telling him of Christ -- this is to live before you die!
III. THE JOY OF DRAWING ATTENTION TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

--Mark 2:11–12b (Phillips, "We have never seen anything like this before!")

**EXEGESIS:** Jesus did not heal this man nor forgive his sins to draw attention to himself. Rather, the purpose of his unselfish service was to draw attention to his Heavenly Father on whose mission he had come to earth.

And he was successful in attaining his purpose. The unbiased crowd, amazed at what Christ had done, gave the glory to God.

**APPLY:** In a time when it is so difficult to draw people's attention to our Heavenly Father, there is no better way than the way of Unselfish Service.

With so many interested only in self, only in accumulating, only in keeping, it is a refreshing experience indeed for someone to see you busily involved in unselfish service.

Like your Savior, you will stand out as an exception to the rule. An amazed world will see your good works but will glorify your Father which is in heaven.

As was the experience of those early disciples who lost themselves in unselfish service, it will be said of you, "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." And if this be done the mission of our unselfish service will be accomplished!

**CON:** Have you discovered the Joy of Unselfish Service? If not, this joy can be yours today. Our Lord promised, "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake...the same shall find it."

When you lose your life in unselfish service you will discover:
- The Joy of Making Life Better for Others
- The Joy of Living Before you Die and
- The Joy of Drawing Attention to Our Heavenly Father.


THE JOY OF UNSELFISH SERVICE

USED: FBC, San Angelo, Tx, 1/14/79 a.m. (XXX+++) Zonderman
Zonderman 1982
FBC San Angelo, TX 1-25-85 (XXX++) 1L; 1MB.