**Whoever Welcomes this Little Child**

**Luke 9:46-56**

**Key Verse 48 “Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.””**

**Introduction**

 Jesus is like a good carpenter who carves a statue out of a block of marble using a chisel. Likewise his disciples were yet to be refined in their rough edges. Malachi 3:2b-3a reads, “For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. **3** He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.” This passage helps each of us to grow as great servants of God through his teachings. May the Lord help us to overcome our self ambitions as well as prejudices and keep growing as useful servants for world mission.

**1. Read verses 46-48. What did the disciples argue about? (46) What does this reveal about them? What did Jesus do? (47) What does it mean to welcome a little child in Jesus' name? (48a) What will happen to the one who welcomes a child in His name?**

**1-1, Read verses 46-48.**

 **46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them,“Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”**

**1-2, What did the disciples argue about? (46)**

 ***An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.***

**1-3, What does this reveal about them?**

* When Jesus was transfigured in glory, he took only Peter, John and James with him. These three must have felt privileged.
* But the nine disciples who were left behind might have felt inferior to them.
* When they failed to drive out the demon, they could have a sense of failure.
* According to verse 43a, “And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.”
* They might have desired to be great like Jesus who drove demon out of a boy.
* When Jesus predicted his death a second time in verses 43b-45, they might have felt as if they needed to elect the next leader among them.
* As a matter of fact, it seems to us that Jesus had in mind a clear structure among them when he called them for it was His own business.

In Mark 3:13-19 read,

 “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. **14** He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach **15** and to have authority to drive out demons. **16** These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), **17** James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), **18** Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot **19** and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.”

* Jesus also pointed out in Luke 13:30, “Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”
* Any structure would not help them, but more importantly Jesus' words would help them to grow in their inner persons.
* Jesus’ teaching is like an open book style to those whose desires to grow in Him without limit.
* In Matthew 20:20-28, Jesus dealt with the request of the mother of James and John wisely and we can read between the lines.

 Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.“What is it you want?” he asked. She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.”“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, **but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father**.” When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

**1-4, What did Jesus do? (47)**

***Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him.***

* Here Jesus used a visual aid. He took a little child and had him stand beside him. This must have made the disciples stop and think.
* In that society, children were usually disregarded. So this little child must have suddenly felt very special.
* Jesus turned their concept of greatness upside down, challenging them to welcome a little child in his name. That would be great in Jesus' sight.
* Little children need to be cared for in many ways. They need love; they need affirmation; they need to be fed; they need to be trained in basic things.
* Their needs cannot be put on hold until it is convenient to care for them. They need immediate care.
* One who welcomes a little child accepts a great responsibility, requiring sacrifice. Investing in little children does not yield immediate results.
* It takes years for a child to become productive. There is no human glory in caring for little children.
* It looks like a very tedious job, a one-sided investment, or a losing business.
* Those driven by selfish ambition cannot do it for they try to avoid little children.
* To welcome a little child, the disciples needed to lose their selfish ambition.
* They needed to stop thinking about their own greatness and first learn compassion for a helpless young child by dying to themselves.

**1-5, What does it mean to welcome a little child in Jesus' name? (48a)**

 ***Then he said to them,“Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me***

* The words "in my name" are important.
* He wanted them to welcome people into relationship with him.
* We can find a good example in apostle Paul who met Onesimus, a runaway slave, who was in prison for theft.
* From a human point of view, Onesimus looked worthless and Paul seemed too busy to be concerned about him.
* However, Paul welcomed Onesimus in Jesus' name. Onesimus accepted the gospel through Paul and was changed to a useful man.

**1-6, What will happen to the one who welcomes a child in His name?**

 ***“*Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; *and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”***

* When we welcome little ones in Jesus, we welcome Jesus himself into the relationship.
* So those who welcome little ones in Jesus' name are greatly blessed for they would learn Jesus' mind and heart deeply and grow to maturity.
* Those who mature in Christ are not necessarily the ones who fill their heads with knowledge. Rather, they are those caring for Jesus' little ones from their hearts.
* To grow in Christ we should care for one person with the word of God and prayer. When we care for one person in Jesus' name, Jesus is honored.
* Where Jesus is honored, the Father God himself comes to dwell. When God comes to dwell with a person, that person becomes truly great.
* Though the disciples were weak and immature, God was with them through Jesus. God made them great, great enough to preach the gospel to all nations.
* 1 Peter 5:5 points out, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble"
* When Jesus said "the least among you all is the greatest," he meant the most humble person is the greatest.
* When apostle Paul was driven by selfish ambition to make himself great, he became an enemy of God and a destroyer of the early Christians.
* Then Jesus met him in person and found that he was a terribly sinner.
* But he admitted that Jesus died on the cross for his sins.
* Paul accepted this grace with all his heart and began to follow Jesus. He wanted to learn everything from Jesus.

Philippians 2:5-8 read,

 "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross."

* Learning Jesus' humbleness made Paul truly great in the sight of God. But Paul did not seek this at all. He must only have wanted to know Christ better.

**2. Read verses 49-50. Why did John and the others want to stop a man from driving out demons in Jesus' name? What does this show about John? What did Jesus say? What can we learn from Jesus?**

**2-1, Read verses 49-50.**

**49 “Master,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.” 50 “Do not stop him,” Jesus said, “for whoever is not against you is for you.”**

**2-2, Why did John and the others want to stop a man from driving out demons in Jesus' name?**

 ***“we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.”***

**2-3, What does this show about John?**

* Once, when John opened his mouth, he revealed a tendency toward exclusiveness.
* He thought that only he and the chosen disciples had the right to work in Jesus' name; those who had not been called and trained like them, and who did not follow Jesus in their group, had no right to work in Jesus' name.
* So they tried to stop a man who was driving out demons in Jesus' name.

**2-4, What did Jesus say?**

***But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for whoever is not against you is for you".***

**2-5, What can we learn from Jesus?**

* Jesus taught them to accept and recognize those who worked in his name.
* The disciples should see the big picture, the advance of the kingdom of God, not just the success of their own group.
* As a practical application, we should welcome those who work in Jesus' name, as he is taught in the Bible, even though they are not part of our group.

**3. Read verse 51. What does it mean by, “...The time approached for Jesus to be taken up to heaven?” (9:22, 44) What did Jesus do? (51b) What can we learn from Jesus’ resolution?**

**3-1, Read verse 51.**

**51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.**

**3-2, What does it mean by, “...The time approached for Jesus to be taken up to heaven?” (9:22, 44)**

 **And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”** (9:22)

 **“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” 45 But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.** (9:44)

***The time approached***

 **They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.** (9:31)

 According to footnote, departure is “exodus”

* There are several places in the book of Luke related with the time.
* When his time of service was completed, he returned home. (1:23)
* While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, (2:6)
* On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.
* **22** When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord **23** (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), **24** and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” (2:21-24)
* For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. **23** How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. **24** They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (21:22-24)

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-10 read,**

 “**There is a time for everything,** and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. **He has made everything beautiful in its time.”**

***As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven***

* Jesus’ ascension marks the culmination of the Christ event, embracing Jesus’ conception, birth, suffering, death, burial, and resurrection.
* It may remind us of Proverbs 15:24, “The path of life leads upward for the prudent to keep them from going down to the realm of the dead.”
* As Jesus became flesh and made his dwelling among us, he set a good example in choosing the path of life leading upward.

**3-3, What did Jesus do? (51b)**

***Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.***

**3-4, What can we learn from Jesus’ resolution?**

* The word "resolutely" tells us that Jesus was firmly decided, and had made an implicit commitment to suffer, die and rise again to fulfill God's will.
* In this way Jesus would purchase our redemption from sin, triumph over death for all people, and then go back to the Father in heaven.
* Usually, when sinful men face such a pain-filled task, they postpone dealing with it as long as possible.
* But Jesus settled the matter in advance of the event, through a clear and firm decision.

**4. Read verses 52-56. What did Jesus do before entering a Samaritan village when he was heading for Jerusalem? (52) How did the people respond? (53) What did James and John ask Jesus to do? (54) What does this reveal about them? How did Jesus correct them and what can we learn from Jesus? (55-56)**

**4-1, Read verses 52-56.**

 **52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 56 Then he and his disciples went to another village.**

**4-2, What did Jesus do before entering a Samaritan village when he was heading for Jerusalem? (52)**

***And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him***

**4-3, How did the people respond? (53)**

***but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.***

* The fact that Jesus was going to Jerusalem made him not welcomed in Samaria.
* Jesus was going to be hung on a cross in Jerusalem to fulfill God’s purpose but the Samaritans could only despise him and reject him for they were blind spiritually.

**4-4, What did James and John ask Jesus to do? (54)**

***When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?”***

**4-5, What does this reveal about them?**

* Here was a self-righteous call for instant judgment. The disciples were more concerned about Jesus being rejected than the will of God.
* They were no different than the Samaritans that rejected Jesus. Jesus had been rejected and the disciples wanted to burn up the town.
* Prejudice makes us spiritually blind and causes us to reject others due to nationality, culture, socioeconomic status, gender, religious beliefs, or skin color.

**4-6, How did Jesus correct them and what can we learn from Jesus? (55-56)**

 ***But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 56 Then he and his disciples went to another village.***

* Jesus rebuked them and went on to another village.
* Ultimately, Jesus responded to prejudice through the cross. Jesus laid down his life for all people.
* After his resurrection, he sent gospel workers back to Samaria. Jesus' cross solves prejudice from the root.
* At the cross of Jesus, all men are found guilty of sin. The universal nature of sin and its terrible consequences relegate human distinctions to triviality.
* The universal love of God that embraces peoples of every tribe and language and nation is given to whoever believes, without regard to human conditions.
* A truly great person resolves human prejudices in the cross of Jesus Christ. Then he can welcome those who are different in the love of Christ.

**Conclusion**

 Jesus wanted the disciples to accept weak and needy people, share the gospel with them through word and deed, bear with them patiently, and raise them as useful people to God and man. It is easy to ignore weak and needy people when we are self ambitious like immature disciples at this passage. Also it is easy to be narrow minded people like John who showed his exclusiveness and prejudice. But thank God who called us without giving up. May the Lord help us to grow as God’s great servants who can serve many needy people like our Lord Jesus.

**One word: Who is least among you all is THE GREATEST!**