

Mark 9: 38-41

38 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.' 39 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. 40 Whoever is not against us is for us. 41 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.

Commentary: Following Jesus is not about securing some corner of the market of spiritual blessings and success. We are called to follow Jesus because he is the way. Following him is its own reward. Jesus is very inclusive and accepting of people, even those who do not fit the typical Christian, church-going, fellowship-participating type of spirituality. Who are we to judge? We are mere servants after all.

In fact, Jesus is encouraging his servant-followers to see signs of his divine-love energy to be alive and active in places that don't necessarily know his name. How do we as followers of Christ, who bear his name, work together as those who value compassion and care, with those in the world outside his fellowship, who also carry such values in what they do and how they do it? How do we stand up for justice with those outside Christ's fellowship and bear witness to the Jesus who stood in solidarity with all those marginalized and oppressed, even to death on a cross? How do we find friends both inside and outside the church who know life's greatest value and meaning is in service, generosity and fellowship with the hurting?

In this time of Covid-19, it is all the more urgent that we find friends who prioritize such values and put their lives and resources behind them. We must see Christ and his Spirit where others just see darkness and isolation because we are ready to enter such spaces in his name.

Prayer: Even as we can sometimes feel isolated and alone, O God, fill us with an assurance and an awareness that you are present everywhere. You call us to be your instruments... channels of your love-energy... As we create space within us, may you fill us and pass through us into the world around us... Open us up to see you in others and to find friends, even where we do not expect to find them... Amen.