

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Mark 9:30-37

Year B - Proper 20, Text: Mark 9:30-37
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Leading up to this lesson, Jesus had predicted His coming passion for the first time in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi.

Although Mark does not offer specific details about Jesus' itinerary in the verses that follow, he refers to events associated with Jesus' transfiguration in 9:1–13. The location of the mountain on which the transfiguration took place is debated. However, during the course of the event, a voice from the cloud (9:7) referred to Jesus as King (a descendant of David; see Psalm 2:7), and Prophet (a new Moses; see Deut. 18:15).

In the conversation that takes place while Jesus and Peter, James, and John descend from the mountain, Jesus twice refers to Himself as “the Son of Man”; see Daniel 7:13. In Mark 9:14-29, we read of Jesus healing a young boy of what sounds like epilepsy, or seizures caused by demonic possession.

Verses 9:30–32: Jesus predicts His passion a second time; this takes place somewhere in Galilee. During this sequence of events, Jesus wants no one but the disciples to know of His whereabouts and teachings.

When speaking of His coming passion in Jerusalem, Jesus again refers to Himself as the Son of Man (v. 31). Once again, His disciples do not understand the message (v. 32) but are afraid to ask Him to explain the significance of what He has shared with them.

Verse 9:33: Eventually, the group arrives in Capernaum on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. After they enter a house there, Jesus questions the disciples concerning what they had been arguing about along the way.

Verse 9:34: Feeling intimidated and a little guilty, the disciples choose not to respond to Jesus' question. Sadly, they still do not understand Jesus' message and the nature of His Messianic Servant ministry. And worse, they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest!

Verse 9:35: Jesus sits down, calls the Twelve, and tells them that those who want to be first must be last of all and servant of all! The disciples had been focusing on issues such as power, priority, and prestige. Their understanding of greatest had to do with hierarchical leadership. We might well ask, “Do we understand Jesus' message any better than His first disciples did?”

Jesus responds by stressing that authority is assumed by serving all people, not by lording it over them. Above all, authority means to show concern for the little ones, the children, those who have the least power. Jesus' desire is that, as He and the disciples approach Jerusalem, they will prepare themselves for the exercise of power in service and stop thinking of themselves as if they were to become the leaders of a new establishment.

Verses 9:36–37: Jesus then places a little child among them, takes it in His arms, and tells the disciples that those who welcome such a child in Jesus' name welcome Jesus — and whoever welcomes Jesus actually welcomes the One (Jesus' Father) Who sent Him.

