

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS? (MK 9:30-37)

The Rev. Corinne Hodges, Sun., Sept. 20, 2009, SJOC

- I. "Success" by Emerson (see next page)
- II. How does one define success?
 - A. Jesus' teaching moment in Gospel today:
 1. Argument about who is the greatest
 2. Jesus asks them what talking about
 3. Apostles' silence, but Jesus knows
 4. Prepares to teach: sits, "come over, has their attention
 5. Technique: show who best in great reversal:
 - A. Use of words:
 1. To be first, must be last
 2. Last=servant (lowest in class/last fed, in line, considered in society, looked down upon, ignored)
 - B. Use of visual aid (Not all disciples quick studies or perhaps just visual people=how they learn best)
 1. Middle of adult men, top
 2. Brings little child (bottom lowest status in household)
 3. Takes in arms, lovingly (show affection, care)
 4. Welcome child>me>God
 6. Nothing more said of scene & perhaps not necessary
 - A. Can imagine grown men speechless, awe, humbled by this lesson
 - B. Some perhaps angry, jealous, resentful, in the very least mystified
 7. Through a radical example, important lesson:
 - A. Greatest in Kingdom, not who expect, in fact exact opposite
 - B. Pretty surprising/shocking

- III. This lesson seems to go against all we too have been taught in our daily life & by society
 - A. As child:
 1. Writing contests & blue ribbon
 2. Sweating it out, competing against others for spots on team
 - B. As adult, lesson continue w/ plenty of visual aids:
 1. Plenty of visual aids of examples of how those at the top are the successful, respected, powerful & popular ones
 3. Success in our earthly world is simply top-down
 2. Yet in heaven, life eternal, Jesus says it's otherwise
- IV. This week's discussion on what makes a church successful:
 - A. The "expected" signs of success:
 1. Lots of people, money, programs, kids
 - B. Pleasantly surprised what topped our list. Our church is successful if we:
 1. Make difference in surrounding community
 2. Help people become more fully human by knowing, loving and serving the Lord
 - C. Our answers like Jesus', turned regular definition of success on its head & I am sure God delighted in our responses
- V. So how do you define success for yourself & your family?
 - A. Christ wants to teach us about the real priorities in life—for they are often not what we think or experience them to be in the here and now
 - B. His lesson on values and status may leave us, just like it did the disciples, speechless and humbled, but that is not such a bad thing

Success

To laugh often and much
to win the respect of intelligent people
and the affection of children;
to earn the appreciation of honest critics
and endure the betrayal of false friends;
to appreciate beauty;
to find the best in others;
to leave the world a bit better,
whether by a healthy child,
a garden patch
or a redeemed social condition;
to know even one life has breathed easier
because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson