



# **BE A LITTLE SHOT!**

Grace/Caminando con Jesús Lutheran Church

Pentecost 18 (B)

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## SERMON TEXT

### Mark 9:30-37

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#### ✝ IN NOMINE JESU ✝

The virtues of humility, unselfish service, and self-sacrifice are interesting. On the one hand, even the world sees the beauty of and praises those virtues—"Good people do for themselves; *great* people do for others" goes the saying. By the same token, selfishness, self-centeredness, and a big ego are booed. Think about what you thought of the last sport's star who bragged about himself. You likely found yourself rooting against him—"Oh, you're not cocky. I hope someone serves him up a big slice of humble pie!"

On the other hand, the truth is we all find those virtues more attractive on the other person—servanthood looks better on you than on me—and we all want to cultivate those virtues more in the other person than in ourself, because, at heart we all want to come out on top, and if the other person is humble, unselfish, and a servant, it better enables that to happen—to get our way and not be inconvenienced, not have *my* plans ruined.

But, know this: the virtues of humble service and self-sacrifice, the daily striving to use the gifts and opportunities God has given us, not to hoist ourselves up and loom large in relation to others, but to shrink down and put ourselves beneath others to hoist them up are precisely the virtues Jesus wants us to adopt, cultivate, and demonstrate personally! "Don't be a big shot," he says, "**Be a *Little Shot!***" Listen:

**Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve (and Grace Lutheran) and said, “Anyone who wants to be first *must* be the very last, and the servant of all.” (Mark 9:35)**

See what I mean? Small is the new big, the true big to Jesus. The question is will we actually follow through in this regard?

Now, it’s important to understand something here about Jesus’ call for us to be little shots. Jesus actually wants us to strive with all of our heart to be first! It’s like he’s not averse to tap into that inborn desire in us all. **“Anyone who wants to be first,”** (in some way who doesn’t) is his way of saying to you and me, “You go, boy! You go, girl! Climb the corporate ladder to the top of my company H.C.C. (Holy Christian Church)!” The difference between Jesus’ desire for us and our desire for ourselves, however, is all in *the definition!* What does it mean to be “first”? In our natural mind, of course, “first” means to be at the top, to get our way, to finally make it the front of the line, or, at least, to “keep up with the Joneses,” to be on par with what we perceive all others in our circle of influence have. To be first in Jesus’ mind means the *exact opposite*—to use the gifts God gave us to go to the back of the line—**“be the very last”**—and go to the bottom of the pile to serve and sacrifice for all others, doesn’t matter if they are friends or foes, CEOs or little children!

And, dear friends, I can’t stress this enough: Jesus means it. He’s not just saying this because it’s a cool thing to say; it sounds noble and heroic; nor is he exaggerating for dramatic effect. He is serious about it, and that means servanthood is not optional; it’s not something we can talk about doing but not actually practice! I call your attention to the word “must.” **“Anyone who wants to be first *must* be the very last, and the servant of all.”** There can be no other way! Precisely, because Jesus’ desire is for every believer to claw and scrape his or her way to the top

of his kingdom, the *absolute necessity* is for every believer, for you and me, to claw, scrape, and fight our way to the back of the line and the bottom of the pile to humbly serve and sacrifice for all others—even our enemies who don't appreciate or deserve it!

As you are already sensing, I'm sure, there's a rub, a clash! Human nature wants little or nothing (preferably nothing) to do with Jesus' definition of first and the necessary striving to be that—the humble servant of all, even enemies, and gladly and willingly sacrificing for them. To the sin-broken mind the thought of last being the new first and humble service being true greatness is just crazy! It's backwards! It's no way! Just look at the disciples. They totally missed the point of Jesus' commitment to be a humble servant and make the ultimate sacrifice for all, for them. After telling his disciples clearly, now for the second time, that he was going to be delivered into the hands of the wicked, suffer, die, and rise from death, Mark tells us **"They did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it."** Not getting it, they pretended like they didn't hear Jesus mention the cross. Well, not getting the point that being a little shot was Jesus' highest glory, his greatest greatness, if you will, they missed the point that the same was true for them. And so, on the way back home to Capernaum what do we find these grown men, these every Sunday churchgoers, doing? Acting like testosterone-charged teenage boys, bragging and arguing among themselves about who's the best disciple, who's number 1, and so who should get the best seat in the house. There they are these supposed servants of Christ ambitious not to take up their cross and serve and sacrifice for all others but to toss their crosses aside to get ahead of the other guy, so that the other man might serve and sacrifice for them!

No, we don't have to look far at all to see examples of the rub, the clash, the beef, that human nature has with Jesus' definition

of first. We don't have to search long and hard, far and wide to find real-life examples of the fallen mind considering the thought that last is the new first and being a little shot is true greatness to be the silliest and stupidest thing it has ever heard. We can see it here in the disciples. Truth be told, we don't even have to look that far. We can see it in each and every one of us! See in you the aversion to take up your cross to be the humble servant of all and sacrifice for all others, even those who don't appreciate or deserve your service and sacrifice, every time you've yelled, "Listen to *me!* You're not listening to me!" "Fine! Have it your way. It's always got to be your way." See your own nature clash with Jesus' call to humble service and self-sacrifice every time you've been asked to stop what you're doing for someone else and you got that perturbed, bothered feeling inside, and you thought and mumbled to yourself—Oh, now what! What does she want?—"Yeah, what is it? I'm busy. Can it wait?" See it in every cry of, "It's not fair. I do everything for you and I never get so much as a thank you. I put up with so much. I'm sick and tired of it. If you don't appreciate me, if they don't appreciate it, I'm not doing any more." See it in your lack of compassion to listen to and take seriously the complaints of others, while desiring and demanding that others listen to and take your complaints seriously, and getting angry with them if they don't.—"Oh, quit your whining, already. You've got nothing to complain about. At least you don't have this or you have that. I, on the other hand, now I've got something to complain about." See it in every feeling of envy. See it every time these words of an expert on conflict resolution have proven true in you:

We generally tend to think of an enemy as being insignificant, subhuman, irrelevant, foolish, wrongheaded, dishonest, and/or dishonorable... In contrast, we tend to deceive ourselves into believing that we are always wise, right, and honest. Seeing our enemy,

or ourselves, in this distorted way leads us to believe the lie that we have the right to treat our enemy with indifference or impatience [and, therefore,] have a right and the authority to judge the enemy's motives and punish him or her for wrongs.

But, "Anyone who wants to be first must—*must*—be the very last and servant of all." "Be truly great! Be a little shot!" says your Savior to you. "Be a really great pastor, Pastor Salinas, be a little shot," says my Savior to me. Will you be, will I be a humble servant of all poised and ready to sacrifice for all? Oh yes! Yes, you will! Yes, I will! How so? Just as one day Jesus will return and transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body, even now through his word Jesus will come to us and transform our hearts and minds to look like his glorious servant heart and mind. Our great servant-King will do us this service, he will work this transformation and renewal to be his look-alikes and the servants he calls us to be, as he places on our hearts three great and glorious truths from our text:

1. His unflinching determination to be a little shot for the likes of you and me. See his unflinching determination to humbly serve and sacrifice for you and me in the greatest way we need serving and sacrificing—in the giving of himself to forgive our big shot natures and the big shot attitudes and actions they exude! See that humble servant heart driven to serve and sacrifice for you and me in that way in the verbs of his declaration to his disciples, "**The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him...he will rise.**" Why *will* that happen? Why *must* that happen? Why was he so eager and determined to suffer horribly, die, and rise from death? Because, seeing our sinful pride, and yet, loving us so deeply anyway he just had to wash away every speck of it, so that we could please God

daily and be loved by him eternally! Wow! What a beautiful Savior! What a beautiful Servant to you and to me!

2. There is great blessing for us in being little shots in imitation of Jesus' own perfect service and self-sacrifice for all others, especially the lowliest and those who cannot pay us back, like children. There are, in fact, numerous and great blessings and undeserved rewards for imitating our Savior's humble service and self-sacrifice. But among the greatest is the one our Jesus states here: **"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."** Imagine that! When we look into the eyes of our family, our fellow Christians, even and especially, our brothers and sisters of Sunday School age, when we look into the eyes of our enemies, even, and see in them Jesus staring back, and for that reason sacrifice for and serve them, we aren't hallucinating; we really are serving our Savior who served us first and best! We are kissing on the cheek and serving our Father who gave up his Son for us!
3. Our Lord Jesus even now in his state of exaltation and from his position of total power and authority at the right hand of God the Father *continues being a "little shot," a humble servant to you and me*, even as he was here in his state of humiliation where he leaves the beautiful vacation spot of Caesarea Philippi for the suffering and death of a cross at Jerusalem. As we see Jesus humbly serve us here he wants us to recognize him serving us daily in countless ways, not the least of which is this: to defend, vindicate, and graciously reward us as we imitate him in being little shots. Jesus, of course, knows what we do only better: we take a huge risk in going to the back of the line and bottom of the pile to humbly serve and sacrifice for all others. The risk we take is

that our service and sacrifice will not be appreciated, will be taken advantage of, and even persecuted. Knowing the risk perfectly our Savior rules over everything to defend us, right our wrongs, and graciously reward us when the risk proves true and our service and sacrifice go unappreciated, are taken advantage of, and persecuted! Jesus wants us to recognize this and sing daily as we did today with David in Ps. 31—I will trust in you and not be afraid, not even to imitate you in humbly serving and sacrificing for all.

In the light of those beautiful truths, what else can we do, what else can we be but what Jesus calls us to be today: **Be a Little Shot!** See him humbly serve and sacrifice for us, and let us all do as a KFC commercial said a few years back—“Put our *little boy* pants on and step it up.” Let each one of us not even wait to be asked to do something for a family member or friend, for church, for that person who is not our favorite! Let us all proactively seek ways to sacrifice and serve and let us all, therefore, be a truly great church filled with truly great people! Amen.

**SOLI DEO GLORIA**

