

## **19th Sunday after Pentecost**

Mark 9:38 "Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." 39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not against us is for us... 50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

### **Disciples Keep Your Edge! Same Team! Uncover Spiritual Land Mines! Maintain Your Advantage!**

Grace mercy and peace to you from the Lord, God Almighty the Maker of heaven and earth, who fearfully and wonderfully made you, and so graciously saved you.

Introduction: "We're number one! We are the champs!" We hear those chants almost daily. We can also say that Jesus is the champion. He is the greatest. He achieved the greatest and finished His life at the top by giving his life as a ransom for the world of sinners. We are on His team. "We're number one! Second to none!" We are the champions!" How are we recognized? We will not be recognized as champions by the world until the last day. On that last day of the world, we will be seen for whom we truly are – the disciples of Jesus Christ – the dearly loved children of God – champions over sin, death and the devil. What do we do until then? The sad truth is since we are not recognized as champions and winners now, we can lose our edge. We can forget who we are. We can start gauging winners and champions according to the world's standards. As followers of Jesus Christ, who has won for us the crown of life, forgiveness of sins and entrance into eternal paradise, we must "Keep our Edge!" Remember Same Team! Same Team! Remember to Uncover Spiritual Land Mines! And to Maintain Our Advantage over the world as the Champions we are as followers of Jesus!

Part 1. Remember, "Same Team!" "He can't do that!" the disciples cried to Jesus. A man the disciples didn't know was helping people under the influence of demon possessions. He was driving out demons in the name of Jesus. The disciples thought that they were special to Jesus so He gave them special privileges – like driving out demons. They then thought that, well if everyone drove out demons then they wouldn't be special anymore. The disciples at their worst were simply so jealous for power and authority to stand above others and be recognized as greater than others that they were upset at someone else getting a special gift from Jesus. The disciples failed to recognize a very simple and yet extremely important phrase, "in the name of Jesus". It is repeated three times in our text, "in your name", "in my name". That phrase simply meant that the man who was driving out demons was on the same team with the disciples and Jesus. He was working for the same goal, with the same power and with the same blessing the disciples received from Jesus. It's all in the name of Jesus. What's in a name? A name is really a person's reputation. It's everything we know about that person. Jesus Christ. What pops into your mind? Maybe our stained glass windows? Life, death, resurrection and ascension? That is the name of Jesus – His life's work of salvation that is who He is. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to offer His life as the ransom for many. That stranger to the disciples was on the same team with them.

One of the many things I shout out to my daughters when they are on the soccer field or basketball court is because they get so focused trying to keep their eye on the ball, scoring a goal or making a basket that they battle not only against their opponents and staying within the rules of the game, but they even fight against their own teammates! And the coaches and parents all start shouting, "Same Team! Same Team!" Transferring a family to another WELS church closer to their home that they will actively serve the Lord and His kingdom is a time of rejoicing! Same Team! News about the growth of a fellow WELS church's school growing or attendance picking up is a time for thanksgiving and joy! Same Team! In the name of Jesus remember same team.

Part 2. Uncover Spiritual Land Mines. The disciples were right in noticing a difference between themselves and the man who was driving out demons in the name of Jesus. The disciples had more training at Jesus feet. They had more knowledge; and maybe they had more faith in Jesus as their Savior than the other man.

But their reaction to this difference was totally wrong. Instead of hindering the man from using Jesus name for the blessing of others, they should have been encouraging the man. Jesus calls the man a “little one”, not in age but in spiritual understanding, spiritual faith and spiritual wisdom. The disciple’s actions were actually causing the man to sin. Let’s give the disciples the benefit of the doubt and say that they had good intentions. But even so, their good intentions were causing others to sin. They were creating an opportunity for the devil to pull this man and others away from Jesus and His Word.

Sin is serious. Sin blows up faith. Sin if left to continue to explode in a believer’s heart will eventually pulverize our faith into oblivion. And without faith there is no connection to Christ, no protection from Judgment and instead only a fearful expectation of hell. A hell that lasts forever in death and suffering.

Sin hides itself under our noses. Sin camouflages itself as something harmless or even fun. If undetected and not removed it goes to work like a ticking time bomb to destroy our faith when we least expect it. Jesus says if your hand causes you to sin – cut it off. He uses that picture here not to blame body parts for sins but to show the seriousness of sin. We all know that sin does not start in our hand or eye. Sin starts in our hearts and minds with evil thoughts and feelings. By the time we visibly see sin in action it has already been working and exploding faith in the heart. As believers, we know the serious threat sin holds for our faith and for the faith of the new believer, those immature in faith. We need a sin squad. We need to remove sin when we see it. We need to label sin when it is visible. Far too often, we see a believer dealing with sin like it is something that can be carefully controlled, or simply ignored. They let sins go unchecked in their own life and in the lives of their loved ones. We as believers are the sin squad. We know the deadly explosion it causes. We know the eternal consequence it leads to – hell. We know the Lord holds us accountable for those young in the faith. Jesus tells us his disciples that it would be better for us to be thrown into the heart of the sea with a large rock around our neck than to be the cause of one of these weak immature believers to explode over sin.

Part 3. Maintain your Advantage. Well then what advantage do we have being in God’s Word, becoming mature and a strong believer? It sounds like a deadly job, high expectation from the Lord for us disciples to be the sin squad for ourselves and for others. As disciples of Jesus, those 12 men had a great advantage over that young believer who was driving out demons in Jesus name – they sat at Jesus feet and learned from him night and day for three years. The words of Jesus seasoned all that they said and did. Jesus was right there with them, helping them to understand sin and grace, temptations and service, life and death, worldly kingdom and his Glorious Spiritual Kingdom. Jesus’ Words, their teacher with them, was their winning edge.

Jesus used the picture of salt which was used as a preservative in those days, but salt didn’t last forever. If you wanted to preserve something longer you would have to re-salt. We are Christ’s disciples. We have an advantage over this sinful world and the devil himself. We have salt in us. We have the Word of God that uncovers sins that grants us forgiveness of sins, removing them forever. But if we forget to re-salt our hearts and minds with God’s Word we will loose our edge, our advantage over sin in this sinful world. Maintain your Saltiness. Test yourself, how salty are you? Are you known as “the Christian” at work? In your neighborhood, do people know they can come to you for advice about life’s problems? Do you ever quote bible passages for a friend in need? When religion comes up do you clam up? If you are loosing your saltiness, your edge, it’s time to get some seasoning. Take at least a pinch of God’s Word a day, to keep your advantage.

“Quitters never win” is a great motto. My heroes growing up always had grit. They weren’t the perfect gifted sports figures but the ones with determination and passion –grit. Science proves that the best indicator for success is not an IQ test, GPS, SAT scores. Instead it is perseverance and passion. Grit! When we as Christians stick our noses into God’s Word, we are reminded of what the Lord has made us – his forgiven children. We are then reminded of what He is doing for us, His children. Knowing who we are and what the Lord is doing for us, we then are solidified in our hearts and minds of where we are going – heaven. The Word of God truly is our advantage to give us grit! Perseverance and passion. Disciples Keep Your Edge! Same Team, Same Team. Uncover the Spiritual land mines for our self and for others and Maintain your Advantage in the Word!