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Do the words of Jesus in our gospel today sound a little bit extreme to you? **"If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off." "And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off."** That sounds pretty extreme. But actually, Jesus is keeping everything in perspective. He wants us to take extreme measures to get sin out of our lives, because he knows that intentional and unrepentant sin can ruin faith and if we fall from faith, then something much worse will happen to us. Today we are going to see how

Jesus Keeps Everything in Perspective

1. He warns us about stumbling blocks
2. He tells us to build others up in his name.

Jesus says, **"If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to go enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell."** (Mark 9:43, 45) Jesus says, "If your hand causes you to stumble." Stumble means to fall from faith. If you have a sin that you are not sorry about (And it can be any sin. It could be something the world considers a great sin. It could also be a sin that doesn't seem to be so bad like harbor hatred in your heart.), If you have a sin that you are not sorry about, a sin that you don't fight against. A sin that you know is wrong but you don't care and you so you purposely and defiantly do it anyway. If you do that over a period of time without being sorry and without intending to fight against it, then eventually that will drive the Holy Spirit and faith out of your heart and you will fall from the faith.

If you are nursing an unrepentant sin in your life Jesus says you need to do whatever it takes to get rid of it. **"If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off." "And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off."** Jesus does not mean that we should literally cut off our hands. But in a very memorable way he is saying, "You need to get rid of this unrepentant sin because if left unchecked it will kill your faith."

It's kind of like if your foot gets gangrene and the gangrene starts to spread, the doctor might say, to save your life we need to take your foot. Jesus says, "To save your life, I need to tell you to cut that sin out of your life."

The description of hell in this passage is one of the most terrifying in the Bible. It says, **"the fire never goes out."** The people in hell burn for all of eternity. Jesus also says, **"the worms that eat them do not die."** In hell worms eat your body for all of eternity. No matter how fun we think our sin is, it's not worth that. Jesus puts everything in perspective for us.

It is hard to hear Jesus describe hell. But think about this way, "If hell is not that bad, then why did Jesus come and die? Why did he go through all this trouble to save us from it?" But if hell really is as bad as Jesus says it is, then him coming to die for us to save us from hell is the greatest thing that anyone has ever done. If hell is as bad as Jesus says it is then we should be extremely thankful to Jesus for coming to die to save us from it.

Jesus' description of hell is scary, but the good news is that Jesus wants us to enter the kingdom of God. He says, **"It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God maimed."** Jesus wants us to enter heaven! You know how badly Jesus wants you to enter heaven? He wants you to enter the kingdom of God so badly that he was whipped, he was nailed to a cross. He was forsaken by God and suffered the wrath of God in our place, as our substitute. All of that torment you will never have to experience because Jesus experienced it for you on the cross. It was hard for Jesus to be nailed up on that tree, but Jesus kept everything in perspective. He knew that if he let the punishment fall on him, that you would be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. And that's why he did it, to save you from hell and cause you to enter eternal life.

Jesus keeps everything in perspective by warning us against stumbling blocks and also by telling us to build others up in his name.

At the beginning of our gospel John and the other disciples asked Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." "Do not stop him," Jesus replied. From Jesus' reply we can see that this man had good motives in using Jesus' name to drive out the demons. He wasn't trying to gain glory for himself. He was just trying to help people and bring glory to Jesus.

The disciples stopped him because "he was not one of us." The disciples are often too concerned with their own glory. They often argue with each other about who is the greatest. Here they thought that they should be the only ones doing miracles in Jesus' name.

But Jesus again puts everything in perspective. The important thing is not the glory of the disciples, the important thing is building up others in Jesus' name. Jesus says that he will reward even the smallest acts of service done in Jesus' name. **"Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of cold water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward."** (Mark 9:41) Giving someone a cup of cold water is a very small act of service, but Jesus says that he himself will reward it.

The theme of our service today is God's spokespeople. Now calls certain people to be pastors, to preach sermons and teach Bible classes and shepherd the church. Not everyone is a pastor. God has certain qualifications for pastors. It says in the Bible that they need to be able to teach, they need to know doctrine well so that they recognize and refute false doctrine. But even if you are not a pastor, God can certainly use you to build others up in Jesus name. Jesus picks the most simple act of service, giving a cup of cold water, and he says that it will be rewarded. **"Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward."**

Jesus keeps using this phrase "in my name." How do we use Jesus' name? There's actually a whole commandment about using Jesus' name. It's the second commandment and it says "You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain." And Martin Luther explains the commandment by saying that "We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie or deceive or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks." One good way that we can use Jesus' name is to build others up. When someone is feeling guilty about a sin, you can use Jesus name and say, "Jesus forgives you." Or maybe someone is feeling nervous about a surgery, you can use Jesus' name and say, "The Lord is going to take care of you."

At the end of our passage Jesus says, **"Have salt among yourselves and be at peace with each other."** Salt had two big purposes in Bible times. The first is that it gave flavor to food. The second is that it preserved food. That was very important in a time before refrigerators. Jesus says have salt among yourselves. What does he mean by that. Well, salt gives flavor. Have salt among yourselves means have meaning full relationships with one another, not just a bland, "We go to the same church but actual and meaningful relationships with one another." And second salt preserves things. Work to preserve your relationships with one another. You might think, "Oh my relationship with him is done because he did this or that to me." Jesus again keeps everything in perspective for us and tells us to not lose that saltiness. His forgiveness renews our saltiness so that we can have flavorful and lasting relationships with one another.

We have seen how Jesus keeps everything in perspective for us. He warns us about those stumbling blocks that could take away our faith. No matter what the sin is, it is not worth losing eternal life. And instead of seeking our own glory, he tells us to build up others in Jesus' name. When we do that, we will be God's spokespeople for the glory of his name, Amen.