

Sermon – Our Saviors Lutheran Church- September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Text- Mark 9:38-50. Theme- Mission Sunday

### The “In” and the “Other” Groups

Grace and peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. What an exciting time for our young people. I give thanks for them and for the comments they shared this morning. They described a trip to Houston, to be with 30,000 other young people experiencing their oneness in Christ. An example of being one in Christ. No distinctions. Also, we heard the comments from those who engaged in a mission trip to Milwaukee. Here also, the feeling that we are one in Christ. Distinctions fade away. There is no “In” group and “Other” group. We are one.

Unfortunately, those distinctions abound in our society. We identify with the “In” group and view others as the “Other” group, usually with a negative connotation. We are the green and gold. The other, the lessor, wears purple and gold. When I watch high school football, I sit in the stands in a sea of red for the University of Kimberly. The others are someplace else. We are ELCA Lutherans, The In Group. Our theology is better, our training more advanced, our music more dignified and our coffee more tasty. We even serve jello with liturgical colors. The Others are the Missouri Synod, The Wisconsin Synod. They are the Other group. They don’t have women Pastors. They don’t practice open communion, etc. We even make the Baptists the Others. Too narrow and legalistic. They don’t drink, smoke, or chew and they don’t date girls that do. Yes we are a funny people. This business about the “In” and the “Other” group.

That’s what is happening in our text this morning. The disciples are feeling like the “In” group. After all, they were learning from Jesus, and their seminary consisted of conversations around a campfire or walking around with the big guy. So when they returned from a mission trip, one of them, John complained. He explained that some “Other” guy was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. And that they tried to stop him because he wasn’t one of us. Wow. We don’t even know what religion this “Other” guy professed. Maybe he was a Southern Baptist, or from a black Pentecostal Church, or an Episcopalian, or from the church of what’s happening now.

Jesus gets indignant. He often got indignant around the disciples. He looks at them and says, "whoever is not against us is for us". Don't judge. We are all in this together. This wonderful things we call the Kingdom of God. Whoever is not against us is for us.

What Jesus was reacting to was this concept of the In and Other Group. We tend to gather with like-minded people, which is natural. We do this in churches, at work, at golf courses and social events. The problem is that we see this In group as the right one. And the positions of the Other group as the wrong one. But what if we could learn a valuable lesson, just like the disciples. That we could see all of us, in this wonderful thing together, the thing we call the Kingdom of God. And in the Kingdom of God there is no place for the "In" and "Other" groups. Whoever is not against us is for us.

Maybe that's what Jesus meant when he said, 'Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.'

Amen- Let it be so.