

# Look Out!

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[0:00] Over the years, I've had two secretaries that were pastors' wives.! One of them loved ministry, and she's all in.

She understood it. She got it. She's great at it. The other, oh me. Her husband was a pastor. Her dad had been a pastor.

And those years of ministry had hardened her. And she told me one day, she said, if you don't watch out for yourself, no one else is going to watch out for you in the church.

I never forgot that statement. It told me a lot. Let's look at Mark 9, verse 30.

It says, they went on from there, speaking of Jesus and his apostles. And they passed through Galilee, and Jesus did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him.

[1:15] And when he's killed, after three days he'll rise. But they didn't understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him.

And they came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house, he asked them, what were you discussing on the way? But they kept silent.

For on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve, and he said to them, if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.

And he took a child and put him in the midst of them. And taking him in his arms, he said to them, whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives not me, but him who sent me.

After the Mount of Transfiguration, the ministry of Jesus began changing. After he had spent much of his ministry in the Galilean region and the surrounding area, he did go up through the Decapolis, and he did go up north to Tyre and Sidon.

[2:36] But after that, he now began, in this passage, he begins heading toward Jerusalem. And he needs time with his disciples.

He needs to prepare them for what's to come and for what they need to do after he is physically gone from their presence. And what he tells them in verse 31 is to prepare them when he says the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him.

And when he's killed after three days, he will rise. Now, he's already told them that before the Transfiguration. He will tell them that again in a little while.

But he reemphasizes it here. And notice what it says. They didn't get it. Verse 32 says, We need to learn some things from this passage.

One is, look out for yourself. My former secretary had it right. You do need to look out for yourself, whether anyone else is or not.

[4:06] But she meant it the wrong way. I think you need to watch out for yourself. Even more so, you need to watch out for self. Because that can easily get in the way.

Jesus is telling them for the second time that he's going to surrender their life. And he's going to surrender his life. And their conversation, however, is about securing their rightful place.

He's teaching them about how to count the cost of discipleship and faithfulness. But they're looking to the advantages of following him. The setting almost has to play into this.

Think about this now. James, John, and Peter have just come off the Mount of Transfiguration and have experienced something that is absolutely unimaginable.

While they were doing that, the nine other disciples were in the valley trying to cast out a demon unsuccessfully. And that spurred a conversation about which of them would be the greatest.

[5:08] And so Jesus asked them, what were you discussing on your way? He didn't really ask that to get information.

God never asks us questions because he does not know the answer. He asks us questions so that we'll hear the question.

So that we'll answer the question. I don't know if Christ heard what they were discussing or not, but I do know that he knew what they were concerned about. And the reality is they were concerned about the wrong thing.

There are questions that we need to ask ourselves. For one, what is it that you love to talk about? What is it that you're most concerned about?

What are you focused in on? You're not comparing yourself to other people, are you? You're not asking what's in it for me, are you?

[6:27] You're not asking what can I get from it, are you? I mean, any time we sense those questions down deep within, if it's God, he's not asking us because he wants the answer.

He already knows the answer. We need to know the answer. And we need to deal with that. And Jesus asked the apostles, and they were silent. They got caught.

They were silent in their shame. I agree with my former secretary. We better look out for ourselves, but I think we need to make sure that we're not thinking first of ourselves.

That we're not ignoring the message of Christ, the gospel. The fact that he died, rose again, and is coming back, to be honest, ought to dictate our lives and our conversations.

So let's look out for ourselves. And one of the best ways to look out for ourselves is first to look back to the cross. It's what Christ's conversation was about.

[7:31] It says in verse 31 that he was teaching. That does not mean that he just brought this up three times, as Mark specifically tells us.

Teaching there is an imperfect tense, which means that this was not a one-time deal, that it was an ongoing deal. He was consistently sharing with them, this is what's going to happen.

It was his concentration. It needs to be our concentration. It needed to be theirs. It needs to be ours as well. And the best way for us to look out and to get ourselves out of the way and to look out for ourselves is to look back to the cross of Christ.

He was pointing them forward to the cross, but since his death we now look back to the cross. And I know I'm picking on her a lot, but I heard the comment over 25 years ago, and I've never forgot it. If I don't look out for myself, no one else will. There's a Greek word for that. Baloney. I can look back to the cross and see one that's looking out for me.

[8:41] We can look back to the cross and see one that's looking out for us because when we have Christ, we're secure in Christ. Our identity is found in Christ. Our worthiness is found in Christ.

Our role of importance is found in Christ. We do need to look out for number one, but we need to make sure that he is number one and he has our backs. And he has often shown me that through God's people without me ever having to look out for myself.

If we keep the cross, the focus, it'll work out, but we just got to look back to the cross and keep looking back to the cross. However, we also need to look around for others.

Notice what he goes on to say in verse 35. It says, And he sat down and called the twelve and he said to them, If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.

It's only natural for us to look out for ourselves. It's only supernatural for us to look out for others. And this was not a passing thought.

[9:54] It says that he sat down. That means it was a rabbinical teaching. That's the way rabbis taught. They sat him down. Come here, boys. Let's sit down a minute and talk about this.

And what he tells them is backwards to everything in their culture. There was always rank. There was rank at a dining room table.

There was rank in worship. There was rank in social life. People knew where they were to sit. Who was to speak first? They could walk in a room and know who was the most honorable.

And Jesus is turning the tables already, at least on this thought. I want you to hear a parable that he spoke. In Luke 14, verse 8-11, it says this.

When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him. And he who invited, go and sit in the lowest place so that when your host comes, he may say to you, friend, move up higher.

[11:07] Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. The reality for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

This is a parable, but it speaks of much more than a meal. And I always take this seriously. There was a time in my life when I was foolish enough to be the chairman of a school board.

At the same time, I was the chaplain for the football team, and I was the PA announcer for the football team, which I normally do here. And I was invited to the football banquet to give the invocation so they could eat the steak.

And when I got there and was trying to sit down, somebody told me, you need to go up there to the head table and sit down by the podium. So I went up there and sat down.

A few minutes later, another school board member came in, saw me, walked up beside me, said, I guess this is where we're sitting. I didn't say anything.

[12:18] I don't know if I should have or not. He just sat down. Football coaches don't care if you're on the school board. They don't know the difference. They're worried about their opponent next Friday. Administration, they're concerned about the school board.

But football coaches are not. They're concerned about somebody praying so they can eat. That's what they're concerned about. The rest of everybody else at the head table were coaches and their wives.

So there was a lack of seating now because they had not given an extra chair. And he soon found out and he got up and walked away and tried to find a seat in a full room because in the time that he had been there the room had already filled up.

And I thought of this parable. Take the seat that's left. Eat last.

Put others first. Greatness is not about having people serve us. It's about us serving others.

[13:32] When they went in the upper room and there was a basin of water and a towel that was in the upper room I bet the disciples were looking around going who's going to do that? And then Jesus kneeled down in front of their nasty feet and washed them.

He was the most important one in the crowd. So I ask you how are you serving others? A great place to practice is in the church.

How are you serving in the church? I feel sure you've been served today. You were greeted when you came in.

If you were not greeted it's because you avoided them probably because they try to greet you. If you wanted coffee there was coffee made for you and that was made before we got here this morning.

There's homemade treats over there. Each week somebody fixes each and every week so that we can have them. There are servants that are running this screen show.

[14:44] There are servants on the sound board. There are servants perfecting the online worship for those who can't be with us in person. We have security that is watching much more than you think they are that are unseen.

We have people who are working with children. We have people who are working with youth. We have people who shuttle you in the parking lot if you need to be shuttled. We've been blessed by this choir. We've been blessed by this orchestra and I hate giving lists like this because I left somebody out and don't come to me and tell me I left you out because it is not an exhaustive list. because I want to be clear there's a ton of places to serve around here and every one of us has that responsibility to do that.

When God lays upon your life to be a part of a church you need to be a part of that church.

You don't need to run alongside of it. You don't need to stay unaffiliated. I want you to be clear of what God wants you to do but once God tells you to do it do it.

[15:57] Be a part of that church and then find a way to serve in the church. That kind of service to others is not limited to the church though.

We're to serve all. So please don't misunderstand me. There's nothing wrong with properly minded ambition. The problem is what are we ambitious about?

Jesus said you ought to be ambitious about serving others. And the word for serving there comes from the word diakonos in the Greek.

does that ring an air of familiarity to you at all? Because that's where we transliterate the word and make it deacon.

Our deacons serve in a variety of ways. Before you got here this morning there were deacons preparing this plant.

[17 : 09] all during the week in order for things to work correctly and to move right all during the week there are deacons serving.

After we leave here today and this building is almost abandoned there will still be guys working to make sure it gets done. They have a lot of responsibility responsibility and all major decisions of this church are vetted by the deacons before it ever moves to the church.

Just a side note that's why you ought to agree with it when it's presented because it's been properly vetted by men who's prayed over it and who's considered it and sometimes hashed it over many times. They take it seriously.

But their great service is service and there are servant leaders and we ought to follow their lead and we ought to thank them along the way.

One of the best ways to look out for ourselves is by looking around for others. But there's one more way to do it.

[18 : 25] we also need to look forward to the next generation. I want you to see what he says in verse 36 and 37. It says and he took a child and put him in the midst of them and taking him in his arms he said to them whoever receives one such child in my name receives me and whoever receives me receives not me but him who sent me.

Remember Jesus is talking about the place of honor where the attention should go and he picks up a child. A child who has no social standing at all in that environment.

Now I don't want you to misunderstand me their families dearly love them but the world didn't center around that child. It didn't. Still shouldn't quite honestly but it ought to center around Christ and it ought to center around pointing those children to Christ not to participation trophies and not to fulfilling every want that they have and not failing to say no to them along the way but point them to Christ.

That'll make some hard decisions at times. Jesus picked up a dependent that could do nothing to aid them or benefit the apostles and said this is who you need to bend over backwards for.

This is who you need to receive. This is who you need to work to make an impact to bring people to Christ.

[20 : 07] This is who we welcome. This is who we value. This is where we place our care. we learn their names.

We listen to them. We volunteer to lead them. We share the gospel with them. We provide a safe godly enriching environment for them.

We take care of the vulnerable and that does not only apply biblically to children. James tells us not to neglect the widows and the orphans.

He also tells us not to let the one with shabby clothes sit in the bad seats. But instead to honor them.

Jesus said love your neighbor as yourself. That's not just the one that lives right beside you.

Sesame Street taught me who my neighbor was.

[21 : 12] who are the people in your neighborhood? In your neighborhood. In your neighborhood.

Who are the people in your neighborhood? They're the people that you meet when you're walking down the street. They're the people that you meet each day.

They're the people that will serve you in a little while when you leave here. If you go eat. They're the people that when you fly through a gas station or dollar general or grab something real cheap that are standing there serving you.

They're the people that walk these streets. looking for a place to lay their heads. They're the people God placed in front of us to serve.

When I was a kid I heard a phrase that's always stuck out to me. It was the title of an autobiography of Gail Sayers. Gail Sayers was the Kansas Comet.

[22 : 40] He was a fast, elusive running back that played at the University of Kansas, set records, went on to be in the College Football Hall of Fame, was drafted in 1965 by the Chicago Bears and only played for the Chicago Bears and is in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

At the time he was the youngest to be inducted in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He writes about a devastating knee injury that he experienced and his recovery from that knee injury and how he, an African-American, had a white roommate named Brian Piccolo who helped him with his recovery

from his knee injury.

injury. Then the tables turned and Brian was diagnosed with cancer, a very invasive metastasized cancer that took his life at the age of 26 years old.

and Sayers was by his side teaching us valuable lessons about relations during tense days and how to support a friend through a life battle.

And the title of that book is I Am Third. That saying came from Sayers College track coach that said, the Lord is first, my friends are second, and I am third.

[24 : 35] Gail Sayers is one of the greatest football players to ever play, but today he's as known for that book and that motto and that attitude as he was his game. I know that it always stuck out to me and I don't think I've ever seen Gail Sayers play, except maybe on film.

Gail, nor his coach, came up with that. Jesus did.

With a child in his arms. Look out, folks. Mainly, let's watch out for ourselves.

Because we may, in fact, be the greatest hindrance that we have from being everything that God wants us to be. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want to ask you this morning, what is it that you need to give over to God that stands as a hindrance in your life?

It could be that you're here this morning and you've never had a relationship with Christ. There's a relationship with the church, there's an attendance at the church, but there's never been a time in your life when you've surrendered your life to follow Christ.

[26 : 06] To say, Lord, I know I'm a sinner and I know I've done wrong and I want to be right with you and so I ask you to come into my life and to forgive me and to change me from this day forward. And from this day forward, I commit my life to follow you.

If that's never happened to you, I want you to know today's the day to give him your all.

God's grace to God. Or maybe you're here and you've done that privately in your own heart, but you've never acknowledged that publicly. And Jesus, by his commission and by his example, show us that we're to follow that with baptism.

Or maybe God's drawing in, and we're not baptizing this morning, but we will be soon, and so if God's leading you to do that, we will arrange that. You just come and say, Pastor, I've never been baptized as a believer, and I need to be baptized.

Or maybe you're here this morning and God is leading you to Pickens First Baptist Church. I don't think that's a rough decision by any means, and I never, I'm not a high-pressure guy, I don't believe in that kind of stuff.

[27 : 17] But I will say that if God's leading you and you get clarity in that, that it's disobedient not to follow him in that. So I encourage you to follow the Lord's will as he leads, whatever he'd have you to do.

Or maybe you're here this morning and you realize from this passage of Scripture, you just think too much of yourself. You need to lay some things aside.

You need to put some people forward. You need to serve. And I will tell you, when we walk out these doors in a few minutes, moments, and the volume of the world hits us, we'll forget a lot of things that we've been concerned about in this hour.

So the reason why I drill down at the end of our hour together is for us to do commitment business with God before we ever leave this room. Whether that be in your own heart where you stand, or whether it be at an altar praying, or whether the pastor praying with you, however that is, let's just make sure that we do what God's told us to do.

That's the full circle of worship. That's what it's all about. Heavenly Father, I love you, and I thank you for the example that Christ has set for us.

[28 : 41] Help us to live by it. Lord, that begins by coming into a relationship with you and then living wholeheartedly for you.

So God, help us to lay the matters down before us that we prioritize too much and put you in proper place. in Jesus' precious name.

Amen. Stand and