

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 30

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Passage: Mark 10:32-45

Big idea: Christ came to serve and we should too.



We are continuing on in our series on the book of Mark, looking at Mark 10:32-45.

³² They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ³³“We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷ They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

³⁸ “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

³⁹ “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:32-45

BIG IDEA

Christ came **to serve** and we should too.



Mark 10:32, “They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him.”

The journey continues and they are on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus is leading them, knowing what is about to happen. He was going to go to the cross and he was going to suffer greatly. The disciples were still confused about what was going to happen, but they still followed along trusting Him.

This is a reminder to us that the cost of discipleship is following Jesus wherever He leads us, even on the road to suffering. We need to count the cost, and the cost is high, but the journey is life to the fullest as John 10:10 states. This life of being a disciple of Christ is difficult and challenging, but full of eternal blessings.

This journey to Jerusalem is an upward journey as they are actually climbing up to get there.

It is important to note that Jesus was leading the way. He was not lagging behind with His head hanging low like a prisoner being dragged off to his sentencing. He is leading the way, he is out in front, and leading by example of how to be a servant. By doing this he is setting a great example to us of humbly willing to suffer.

What an amazing reminder that is for us, as Christ followers, that even when we are going through a difficult time in our lives, we can still keep going, serving, loving, and leading with God’s strength at work in us.

It is interesting here that it says they were “astonished and afraid”.

Why would they be astonished and afraid?

It is not explained but this is a normal reaction from these men. Perhaps it is due to Jesus’ determination to go to Jerusalem and reach his goal. Perhaps they understood the seriousness of the situation and they knew something was up. Jesus was so adamant and focused on getting to Jerusalem that the disciples were blown away by his sharp focus on the task at hand.

Again, Jesus separates the 12 from the rest of the crowd in order to give them further instructions and training on the seriousness of what is about to happen.

Mark 10:33-34, “‘We are going up to Jerusalem,’ he said, ‘and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.’”

This is the third time Jesus talks about what is going to happen to him. The first one in Mark 8:31, and the other in Mark 9:31.

Here, the prediction is more detailed and precise than the others. It covers six details:

1. Jesus will be betrayed.
2. Jesus will be sentenced to death.
3. Jesus will be handed over to the Gentiles.
4. Jesus will be mocked, spit on, and flogged.
5. Jesus will be executed.
6. Jesus will be resurrected.

Although Mark does not record all the disciples response to Jesus, Luke 18:34 says “the disciples did not understand any of this.”

Mark 10:35-37, “Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘we want you to do for us whatever we ask.’ ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ he asked. They replied, ‘Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.’”

Again, the disciples jockey for position. The request of James and John is a blatant example of human self-centeredness in contrast to Jesus’ humility and self sacrifice.

These verses parallel Luke 9:30-37:

- Both passages include them talking about true greatness.
- Both passages show that the disciples just don't get it.

They still think that Jesus is a king who is going to conquer Jerusalem. It was crazy that they asked Jesus to do whatever they wanted him to do. They basically ask Jesus to sign a blank cheque and give them whatever they want. To want to sit at the right and left was a desire to be powerful and respected, and lord it over others. This is so elitist and arrogant and disrespectful to Jesus and the other disciples.

I love doing stuff for my kids and I love serving my kids. I enjoy doing nice things for them and helping them out. I like making nice chunks of meat on the smoker. I like taking them to do stuff. I find fulfillment in providing for them financially and looking after them. I enjoy being kind, and considerate, and make them a huge priority in my life.

When they ask me to do something for them as a father, I want to do everything in my power to give that to them if I think it is in their best interest. But if my kids ever told me to do something for them rather than asked nicely, it would not go so well. Don't worry that has never happened before.

There is a difference between asking in humility and demanding authority. We need to be careful when we approach Jesus to not to be too greedy and self-centered. Understand that this whole entire Christian life that Christ has given us is truly a GIFT. The gift of salvation.

We do not deserve it, we cannot afford it on our own, and Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for us to have it. When we come to God in prayer, our hearts must never approach Him with arrogance and demands, but with humility and reverence and thankfulness.

The disciples did not get it. They demanded something from Jesus. And Jesus in with great patience asks them what they want. They ask for the highest honour in the Kingdom.

- They wanted to be the top dogs!
- They wanted to run the show.
- They wanted to be the poster boys.
- They want to be the Michael Jordan of basketball (notice how I didn't say LeBron James).
- They want to be the funniest of comedians like WestPark's very own Bill Dakin.
- They want the best seats in the house with the best view.
- They want to be held in high regard by all the people.
- They want to be noticed, respected, doted on, popular, they want attention and prestige.

Again, they just don't get it. They were thinking of this new Kingdom that Jesus was going to set up and they thought that the rules were the same as the world and culture that they were living in. They must have been thinking that Jesus was the Messiah and that he was going to take his rightful place on the throne in Jerusalem.

Mark 10:38, "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

And of course, Jesus' response cuts through the façade of the sinful human heart and penetrates deep into their soul. The two disciples did not realize what they were asking. They did not grasp the magnitude of what they were asking. And Jesus responds in grace and humility to their request that is obviously not in their best interest.

This is another example of Jesus not answering every prayer that is prayed when it is not right. We are thankful that He responded to the disciples in this way, and we need to trust Him when He does not answer some of our self-centered prayers. In this new kingdom the way to such a privileged position is not by grabbing for power, but by giving the power up.

Mark 10:39-40, “We can,’ they answered. Jesus said to them, ‘You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.’”

With confidence they answer Jesus, “yes we can”. Without taking time to think, they say that they can go through the suffering that Jesus will go through.

This was very naïve. James and John failed to understand all the complexity that was involved in Jesus’ sufferings.

“Cup” represents a sense of God’s wrath on human sin that Jesus must drink.

“Baptism” represents Jesus standing with sinners and his willingness to bear their judgement before God.

This is something that only Jesus can do. Jesus concedes that yes you will drink a cup and undergo a baptism, but it is secondary to what Jesus will go through and experience first.

This “cup” and “baptism” is what Jesus will experience on his way to become the ransom for many as we will see in verse 45.

Essentially this is a renewed call to discipleship that will require sacrifice and suffering. We are reminded in this passage that a part of being a Christ follower is a degree of sacrifice and suffering. But it is nothing compared to what our Saviour went through on the cross.

The position of authority in His Kingdom was not His to give, but He submitted to the authority of His Father. God alone will grant the places at Jesus right and left, and they belong to “those for whom they have been prepared”.

Mark 10:41-44, “When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.’”

The spirit of ambition and jealousy was still very much alive in the disciples. They still did not understand what Jesus was talking about. They want authority and power, and they want to lord it over others.

So, Jesus had to give them another lesson on what true greatness is. This kingdom is upside down and greatness is not achieved by grabbing at power, but by humble service.



“At no place do the ethics of the kingdom of God clash more vigorously with the ethics of the world than in the matters of power in service.”

James Edwards



The Kingdom of God is opposite to this world. As Christ followers we go against the flow of society:

- Like salmon swimming up the stream to reach their destiny.
 - All that the salmon goes through is for a purpose. They swim hard upstream, fighting currents, jumping to avoid predators, all so it can reach the top and lay eggs. They sacrifice and press on to bring life to other fish.
- Like the firefighters on 9-11 going against the flow of the people coming down the stairs to save lives.
 - These firefighters fought against the flow of thousands exiting the burning buildings to save the lives of those stuck on the top floors. It took them an average of 15 minutes to move up a flight of stairs due to the opposing pressure of those fleeing the building. They knew that there were lives that needed to be saved and did not let anything stop them.
- Like Moses leading the people out of Israel.
- Like Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego refusing to bow down to idols when everyone else was.
- Like David standing up against Goliath when everyone else was afraid.
- Like when Noah built the ark even though everyone was making fun of him.

When we fight and resist temptation, and run hard after God, it affects those around us. It brings about change to the people in our lives.

This is what Jesus did. He went against the flow of society, and he ushered in this new upside-down Kingdom. He came to serve and sacrifice His life to be the ransom for many.

This was the only way we could be saved, by Jesus coming here to serve.

In order to be the greatest, you must become the least. In society, a slave was the lowest of the low and the thought of a slave being first in a society where they were the last of the last was absurd. It was just as mind-blowing as a camel going through the eye of a needle like we learned about last week.

Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus then brings it all home with these words.

The kingdom of God is humble service and even the Son of Man is not exempt from it. This is not just a principle of the Kingdom, but it is a pattern of His own life. He came not to be served but to serve.

Every part of this verse is significant:

“Son of Man” - This is the messianic title that Jesus uses for himself.

“Did not come to be served, but to serve” - He was going against society that says you have value if you have servants.

Worldly rulers have something in common, they are elevated above others and that is how the disciples were thinking also. Jesus redefines greatness and teaches them about this upside-down kingdom once again.

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“True greatness is not about how high you can climb as you step on and over as many people as possible. It is about how low you can go in serving as many people as possible.”

Jason Meyer

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“Give his life as a ransom for many” - This word ransom is translated (lytron) which also means ‘the price of release’. This echoes the experience of the Israelites release from the slavery of Egypt. In Jesus day, if you owed a debt that you could not pay, you went into slavery and work to pay it off or someone could pay a ransom to release you. This whole phrase is a reminder that Jesus came to pay the price that we (the slave) could not pay on our own behalf.

We (the many) do not have the capability or ability to pay the penalty for our sin and set ourselves free. We are totally at the mercy of Jesus who has the correct currency as the final sacrifice for our sins through the shedding of His own blood and His death, burial, and resurrection. What should have happened to us, happened to Him instead. This was the greatest act of servanthood where Jesus stood in our place and took all this pain upon himself which should have been on us.

Living this way is not natural. It is not the way of the world. The only way we can do this and live this way is to follow the example of Christ. It is only through His power and His Spirit in us that we are able to rise above the temptation to be selfish and arrogant and elevate ourselves above others, and function in this upside-down Kingdom by serving.

King Jesus comes to give and give everything He can, until He gives the ultimate thing, His life as a ransom for many.

This should be our approach as we think of living this out.

How can we live this way in all areas of our lives?

- Spend your quiet time with God.
- Serve, love, and give to your friends, families, and co-workers.
- Don't look at what you can get from others, but what you can give.
- If you want friends, then show yourself friendly.
- Don't keep a record of what nice things you have done and expect them in return but put others first.
- Check your motives before God and see if there needs to be a change in your heart.
- Take time to serve and give through Church ministries.