

FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN...
Mark 10:32-45

One of the most renowned scholars of ancient writings in recent days was the Dr. E. V. Rieu, a British poet and publisher and translator. He is primarily known for his translative work of Homer's Odyssey for the Penguin Classics, a collection of classic writings. According to his son, "his vision was to make available to the ordinary reader, in good modern English, the great classics of every language." Certainly, Odyssey is in that category. But what else would be considered the classics? How about the Gospels? At about age sixty, after being an agnostic his whole life, Rieu was approached and ask to translate the four Gospels. And when Rieu's son heard this he said, "It will be interesting to see what father will make of the four Gospels. It will be even more interesting to see what the four Gospels make of father." Apparently, he didn't have to wonder for very long because within a year into the project, he became a committed Christian!¹ That's the power of God's Word and the power of studying the life of Jesus Christ in the gospels!

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that by beholding Christ's glory, we are transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory. The more you study Christ, the more He wears off on you. The more you become like Him. The Gospels are powerful. They change us. When we get done studying this Gospel, we should not be the same people as when we started! But that begs the question that we asked when we first started the study of Mark: ***"How is Mark trying to transform us into the image of Christ? How is he (and the Spirit of God who inspired his writing) trying to change us? What aspects of Christ's image is he trying to develop in us and in our lives?"*** Because this isn't just a book of random events from Christ's life. Every book has a purpose, a theme. Mark is writing with a purpose. And the purpose we've seen is that it teaches us to be Servants, like the Savior. Servants, disciples, followers, sufferers, surrendered.

Who here remembers the key verse? It's 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." Well, today we come to that key verse and this key passage that in some commentaries, wasn't even exposted where it should be. It was the first passage that you'd find in their commentary because it is so influential to Mark's purpose in writing.

And remember, when Mark says follow Christ and be a servant and be willing to suffer great things for His name and the gospel's sake, he isn't writing with arrogance, but from humble confidence. Because he too, was known for having a shaky start as a follower of Christ, having deserted Paul in his missionary travels. Paul even refused to take him along on missionary travels again for a while. But after proving himself faithful and useful, Paul brought him with him again. Mark knows the difficulties of following Christ and he also knows the sometimes difficult truth that our souls need to hear and be strengthened by.

Mark 10:32-45,

"They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am being baptized?" They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those whom it has been prepared."

Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. 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."

What a great passage we have the opportunity to exposit this morning! As always, we want to start out with some context and what is going on in the bigger picture, especially for those just joining us.

I. THE CONTEXT: JESUS' FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. (V. 32)

Jesus and the disciples and some more people beyond them are following Jesus on this road going up to Jerusalem. Even though they are walking primarily south or southwest at this point, it still says they are **going up**, which we would in our normal frame of thinking, think is north. But it's important to point out that this is not a reference to direction but to elevation. No matter which direction you come from to go to Jerusalem, you go up. Jerusalem is 2,500 feet above sea level and from the Jordan Valley where He is near Jericho, it's even further. Jericho is about 800 feet below sea level. So it is quite the climb to go up from the Jordan Valley and Jericho to Jerusalem.

But the fact that Jesus is going to Jerusalem is paramount for us at this point because we know there is a cross is waiting for Him and as we see in our first few verses. And He knows it full well. But notice that He is not forced to go and He is not being drug along against His own will. He is going willingly. I think that's what Mark is telling us by pointing out the fact that "Jesus was walking ahead of them." It's a very subtle way of pointing out that **Jesus would walk the path of suffering ahead of the disciples who would one day suffer like Him, as is the potential for any of His disciples in this world (1 Peter 2:21).**

Some of the disciples, you'll notice, are amazed and some are fearful. There's strange tension in the air.

- **Why amazed?**

Well, for one, because of Jesus' determination to go to Jerusalem. Isaiah 50:7 and Luke 9:51 says He has His face set like flint, walking ahead of them. He's fulfilling prophecy just in the way He walks! They're amazed He would go to a place where the Jewish and Roman leaders were after Him and seeking a chance to kill Him. As far back as chapter 3:6, the Pharisees had already started conspiring with the Herodians as to how they might destroy Him – literally assassinate Him.

Secondly, they were amazed because a misunderstanding of what He came to do in His first coming. They were thinking He was going to establish the Millennial Kingdom and be King right then and there. So did many others, as we'll see at the Palm-Sunday triumphal entry next time. And this is why they were fearful as well.

- **Why fearful?**

Think of the backlash it would bring if Jesus were to go and establish His kingdom right then and there. What about Rome? What about the Jewish leaders? They know the response would be nothing but bloody. If He does what they think He's going to do, there's going to be war and bloodshed. To address some of the false tension in the air, He pulls the 12 aside and tries to tell them again what was going to happen to Him – that what they are thinking is not right and that they don't have to wonder and don't have to be anxious because He already knows what will happen and so should they if they'd focus on the prophets. The fear and the anxiety is misguided because they're ignorant of the Suffering Servant OT prophecies like Isaiah 53.

And you know, much of our anxieties and fears would be resolved if we too, studied prophecy. We'd understand God's plan and remove so many questions about the future of our world. You know, before I came to Christ, I was fear-mongered by the climate-change activists and the National Geographic shows talking about how the end of the world could come at any moment by an asteroid or how the world's going to be overpopulated. I hope you realize that's all just creating unnecessary worry because the world isn't going to end that way. The Bible tells us He's coming.

II. JESUS' THIRD FORETELLING OF HUMILIATING EXECUTION. (VV. 32-34)

He reminds them for the 3rd time now of His coming humiliating execution. Tradition calls it **the 3rd "Passion Prediction"**. If you've seen the movie called "The Passion of Christ" you know I mean by this. The movie focused solely on the Passion of Christ: His betrayal, mocking, spitting, scourging, death and resurrection. The show began in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus praying. The final hours of Jesus' life would be considered the Passion of Christ and this is a Markan emphasis: to show Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant!

❖ **Mark's Emphasis: To show Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant.**

Already Jesus has told them in 8:31 and 9:31 that He's going to suffer and die. It's like an echo.

Mark 8:31

"And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again."

Do you remember what happened after Jesus said that? Peter got in His face about it because he didn't get it. He has to rebuke Peter right back.

Mark 9:31

"For He was teaching the disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.' But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him." [emphasis mine]

Now, Mark 10:33-34

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

So, so far this is the clearest, most detailed explanation He has given them of what will happen to Him. He doesn't want them to be distracted by fear and wondering what's going to happen. Like Jesus to the disciples, Mark wants us to know a couple of things:

1. **God is in control: Jesus' suffering is part of the plan and will of God.**

It's not an accident. He's going there step-by-step according to the will of the Father. It was prophesied throughout the OT. Whatever is about to take place is taking place according to whatever His hand and His purposes predestined to occur (Acts 4:27-28). There are no "might be" or "possibly's" here.ⁱⁱ Bible prophecy isn't like that. It's detailed and accurate. If you want to know the future, don't go to a psychic. Go to the Bible.

2. **Christological significance: Jesus is omniscient.**

Mark wants us to know that Jesus is not an ordinary man because He knows the future in great detail. He knew things ordinary men didn't know not only because He knew prophecy, but because He is God. He could read peoples' hearts and minds. We studied that this Christmas. Jesus is omniscient, or all-knowing.

Both of these things Mark wants to relate to those he's writing too because they're going through persecution themselves. It's the church under Nero that is being butchered and burned and will be driven into the catacombs soon. And they need to know that it's nothing strange that is happening to them (1 Pet. 4:12). God is still on His throne and He sees what you're going through. That it's expected for Christ followers. We follow in His steps.

1 Peter 2:21

"For you have been called for this purpose, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you would follow in His steps."

And if you don't want to grow weary and lose heart, Hebrews says consider Him! Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners! If you read Thessalonians, you read Hebrews, you read Peter and more, they make the point that if follow Christ, you should expect to suffer with Him! It's part of our sanctification process, our becoming like Him. That's why many don't want anything to do with Jesus or they don't last. Following Jesus isn't easy. Suffering often precedes glory.

But because Jesus gives them a detailed insight to His suffering, the disciples say, "*Oh okay. We finally get it now! Thank you for speaking so plainly. We won't worry anymore!*" Right? Wrong. How do we know they don't get it? Because they start asking about thrones! Their mind is still on the Millennial Kingdom. It's another one of those embarrassing face-palm moments where the palm hits the forehead. At least for once, it's not Peter that's in the spotlight – it's James and John, the sons of Zebedee, also called the "Sons of Thunder".

III. THE DISCIPLES JOCKEY FOR POSITION ON GLORIOUS THRONES. (VV. 35-40)

The disciples are reluctant to receive Jesus' message. Their heads are in the clouds. But to their credit, Jesus did just get done talking about them on thrones. One of those rewards for following Christ, and Matthew added this in his gospel (Because He writes with an emphasis of Christ as King) but Mark left out last week but is in the parallel passage of Matthew 19:28, Jesus said to these 12, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The time period known as the regeneration is when Christ returns and reigns from Jerusalem over this world for 1,000 years. Satan is bound and mankind flourishes. The oceans become freshwater and the deserts becoming lush, green landscapes. The literal Dead Sea today will become a place to cast fishing nets. It will be characterized by peace and righteousness and

quietness. No more selfishly ambitious loud-mouth politics, hallelujah (Zech. 14)! But all of that awaits until the 2nd coming!

But since He just mentioned thrones, that's what's on their mind. And there's nothing wrong with desiring heavenly rewards and to please God with the right motives but these guys are just like you and me: they have an earthly sin nature that wants to exalt themselves. They want power. They want significance. They want control. As Jesus told James and John when they tried to cast down fire and brimstone on Samaria, they "don't know what spirit they are of" (Luke 9:55, NASB, 1995)! But neither do we. We're all James and John's. Self-exalting. Self-promoting. Selfishly ambitious. We want the glory, but we don't want the suffering. We jockey for positions. And we come to Jesus with **requests that are the exact opposite of a suffering servant**.

James and John come to Jesus like little kids who try to get you to give a blanket "yes" statement before they ask a question.ⁱⁱⁱ Have you ever had a kid come up to you and say, "Will you do something for me?" They try to get you to say "yes" before they tell you what they're going to ask for because they know it's not likely you'll say yes. "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." Jesus doesn't say, "Yes, whatever you wish." He says, "What do you Me to do for you?" They say, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory."

Now, James and John probably think they are above the rest at this point because, with Peter, they're part of the inner circle of the disciples' circle. These 3 men had private conversations with Jesus that others didn't and witnessed healings that other disciples didn't. Only those three were on the Mount of Transfiguration. We could say were closest to Jesus. But not only this, they're playing a family card because their mother Salome was the sister of Mary, Jesus' mother, and Matthew says she was part of this conversation and did the talking for them! So even though they are close to Jesus, they're just not in the same zip code when it comes to what they're thinking at this point. They're thinking thrones and Jesus, a cross. It's rooted in pride.

Even when Jesus says, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They respond with, "We are able." This is not confidence, it's arrogance. Just like Peter, who said I'll never deny you, but then did. There's a difference between arrogance and humble confidence.

Jesus' **cup** and **baptism** is obviously a reference to His suffering. Sometimes a cup is used as a figure of what life hands to you. The psalmist said, "My cup runneth over" means life has been good. But sometimes life hands you suffering. The baptism is the baptism of being overwhelmed with a flood of suffering. It's like saying He's going to be submerged, overflowing with suffering. He's going to drink the full cup of God's wrath on our behalf. In the Garden of Gethsemane you'll remember He said, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). It was even a lot for Jesus to bear in His flesh. His spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. Kind of like me when my alarm goes off in the morning – the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak!

Jesus responds to them saying, "The cup I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." So for one, He does acknowledge that one day they will follow Him in His death. History and tradition tell us that **James** actually ended up being

the 1st martyred apostle and **John** suffered torture and then exile on the island of Patmos. The rest of the apostles also died for their faith in Christ, but He said, it's up to the Father to determine who sits where. If anything, I'd imagine they'd be seated around the throne in a circular fashion anyway, just like the pattern in heaven (Rev. 4:4) – that's just my personal thought though and please don't take it dogmatically.

I think Jesus' point though is that like Arnold Fruchtenbaum pointed out, "Those closest to the King must reach their position in the same way He did – by means of suffering."^{iv}

❖ **Following Jesus means losing your life figuratively and sometimes literally.**

And you want to know something awesome? There's something better than having your own throne. Revelation 3:21 says that to "the one who overcomes [*the one who will really live by faith in Jesus and depend on Him*], I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne" [*brackets mine*]. Isn't that great? Don't look for your own throne. Look to enjoying Jesus' throne with Him someday. His throne is like a newer tractor that comes with a "buddy seat". It's big enough for two at least. Some of you farmers and ranchers know exactly what I mean. It's every farm kids' favorite spot to fall asleep on your arm.

But think about this: the way to thrones is through servanthood because **only when you are a humble servant can you handle a throne in God's kingdom**. When you don't want to be the leader, sometimes that's when He makes you the leader. Like Moses, who said, "Who am I that I should [lead God's people]?" There was no one more meek than Moses on earth God said. Because Moses was humble, God could entrust him with that position. It was power under control. Only the humble can handle the throne because the higher up you are in any position, the more opportunities you have to serve, and if you aren't a servant, you can't handle it. That's what just about every single political leader in this world doesn't understand. You know what makes a great leader? Someone who doesn't care who gets the credit. Ronald Reagan used to have a plaque on his desk that read this: "*There's no limit to what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit.*" He understood that the higher you are, the less it should be about you.

But most today reach the highest positions through selfish ambition. This world operates in the exact opposite principle. One expositor wrote, "*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 and service.*"^v That's why we have so many problems in the world. Power corrupts people and absolute power corrupts absolutely. James 3:16 says, "Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every evil practice." He actually calls it earthly wisdom that is unspiritual and demonic (3:15). And you see the disorder their request caused by the way the other disciples become indignant with them so Jesus uses it as an opportunity for a discipleship lesson.

IV. JESUS TEACHES THE TWELVE A LESSON ON DISCIPLESHIP. (VV. 41-45)

They're mad at the Sons of Thunder *probably because they didn't think of it first and wanted the positions for themselves*. He calls them to Himself and says, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all." Jesus is just basically saying, "*If you guys are going to be leaders in the Church, you have to lead differently from the world. You are not lords. You are greater servants. You have a different definition of greatness.*"

Jesus refers to the **Gentile rulers** whose worldly leadership style was all about consolidating power to themselves and lording it over the people. And unlike the OT patriarchs and Moses who were good examples of leadership, the Jewish religious elite had become a lot like the Gentiles. They had become like the nations around them. Personal greatness in their day was measured in terms of authority.^{vi} The more power you had and the more people you were over, the greater you were considered to be.

So when Jesus starts talking about servants and slaves here, it had to be absolutely absurd to their mode of thinking. It's like saying that the Dalits, the untouchable street cleaners in India, are the greatest in the caste system. It's revolutionary to their day and societies today! He says the greatest are the servants.

❖ **The greatest in the kingdom are the servants.**

The word for **servant** is where we get our word for “deacon” – diakoneō – which originally meant “to wait tables” or to be a “**waiter**.” But now let's make a connection with the **Son of Man**. What does the title “Son of Man” mean? – It means the ideal and perfect man; the perfect representation of what mankind was supposed to be before the fall into sin. Jesus is the Perfect Man. And sorry ladies, but there are no more perfect men out there!

But Jesus is perfect and what did the perfect Son of Man do when the disciples were still discussing who's the greatest at the last supper? (*No, this is not the last time... sorry*). He got up from the table and girded Himself with a towel and getting down on His knees, He began washing their feet (John 13:3-7). He said, “For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves” (Luke 22:27).

Jesus, **the Son of Man**, the perfect man-type, came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. And so should we. If you want to find your life and find your purpose, you won't find it by constantly and secretly trying exalt yourself and manipulate others to promote you and bless you. You'll find it when you become a suffering servant, like the Savior, who serves God and serves others.

And I want to challenge us here because this is what the Church needs today. I understand how necessary it is, especially for those who are new in the Lord to recline at the table and take in truth. But at the same time we should all be getting up from our reclined position, from being only a consumer, and start to serve, and do what the Lord calls us to do. Preaching from the pulpit is just one facet on ministry and the whole point of it is to equip and encourage you guys, the church, to do what God calls you to do. So I want you to start thinking, “How can I follow Christ by serving in my church and serving my community? How can I get up from the table, and gird myself, and serve others for His name's sake and the gospel's sake?”

But don't think that by your serving that this is what gets you into heaven. Remember we can't ever be good enough to get to heaven. That's why Jesus had to give His life as **ransom**, He said. A ransom was needed to pay the debt for our sins and Jesus paid for that debt in full with His death on the cross. And “**the many**” who are saved from the debt of their sins are those who have come to accept Him as their Savior and invited Him into their life (Rev. 3:20).

ⁱ Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 13.

ⁱⁱ Robert Stein, *The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 480.

ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur, *The Greatness of Being a Slave*, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/41-54/the-greatness-of-being-a-slave>, accessed 1/28/2021.

^{iv} Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective, Volume 3* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2018 2nd edition), 202.

^v James R. Edwards, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 13.

^{vi} Chuck Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights: New Testament Commentary, Volume 2* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2016), 284.