

This morning, we are in the thirteenth week of a sermon series I am calling “Savior and Lord,” looking at what it means to relate to Jesus as both Savior – the one who died for our sins to give us eternal life – and Lord – the one who we follow and emulate. We are working our way through Mark’s gospel in this series. Mark was Peter’s traveling companion, and the Gospel of Mark is mainly Peter’s eyewitness testimony of Jesus (Peter was first known as Simon before Jesus changed his name). Papias, who was the Bishop of Hierapolis and lived from about 60-135 AD, knew John, one of Jesus’ disciples, and wrote this about Mark:

*Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, he followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord’s oracles, so single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.*

The first half of Mark’s gospel is focused on addressing the question, “Who is Jesus?” and it culminates in Peter’s confession “You are the Christ” in Mark 8:29. The second half of the gospel addresses the question, “What did He come to do?” and we receive Jesus’ summary statement in this section, the final section before Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last week of his life and where we see the question answered in real life. Let’s begin reading in Mark 10:32.

**Mark 10:32-52** - *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.<sup>33</sup> "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles,<sup>34</sup> who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."*

Jesus tells them for a third time that he is going to die and rise again. He calls himself The Son of Man, which is a reference to Daniel 7:13-14:

**Daniel 7:13-14** - *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.<sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.*

*His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

The Son of Man is a divine figure who is given authority by God the Father and will be worshiped by the world and reign over the world forever. It is one of the many way in which Jesus refers to His divinity. This section is the third time in the last few chapters where Jesus has explained to them what is going to happen. But they are still blind or deaf to what He is saying, as you are about to see:

<sup>35</sup> *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."* <sup>36</sup> *"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.* <sup>37</sup> *They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."* <sup>38</sup> *"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?"* <sup>39</sup> *"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,* <sup>40</sup> *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."* <sup>41</sup> *When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.* <sup>42</sup> *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.* <sup>43</sup> *Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,* <sup>44</sup> *and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.* <sup>45</sup> *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."* <sup>46</sup> *Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging.* <sup>47</sup> *When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* <sup>48</sup> *Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* <sup>49</sup> *Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."* <sup>50</sup> *Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.* <sup>51</sup> *"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."* <sup>52</sup> *"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.*

So, James and John, two of Jesus' inner circle of disciples, come to Jesus and ask if they can sit at his right and left in glory. They evidently still believe that Jesus is going to be the king, reigning over Israel, and they want to be in the two positions of honor next to him. Many commentators believe that the reason this whole section, from Mark 8 to Mark 10, is bookended by the accounts of Jesus healing

blind men is to illustrate the blindness of his disciples, that they just don't see what Jesus has come to do, even with him telling them. James and John's request seems pretty tone deaf, given what Jesus has just shared. They apparently only heard the parts they wanted to hear. And they forgot a very similar exchange that happened not too long ago:

*Mark 9:33-35 - They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you **arguing** about on the road?" <sup>34</sup> But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."*

The reality is, however, that as bad as this looks, I don't think James and John are that different than you and me. They want to be great. They want to be honored. They want to be appreciated. They want to be recognized. And they are just bold enough – or rude enough, depending upon how you look at it – to ask for it. Let's take a moment and consider if this attitude is true about us as well.

I believe that like James and John, we want to be honored and adored. We also want the applause of man. I know I see this in myself. **I remember in college**, I regularly ate meals with people who did not believe in Jesus in the UConn cafeteria, and I would have daydreams I had about challenging the smart atheists to consider the reality of Jesus Christ. In my daydream, I would clearly and cleverly outline the truth of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and skillfully answer every argument thrown my way. Soon, it became clear that the whole cafeteria was listening intently to our conversation. And so, in my daydream, I would stand up and tell all who were listening about the gospel of Jesus Christ. And as the crowd responded in affirmation, I would leave the cafeteria, leading the hungry-for-God crowd up the hill to where our Christian fellowship met. And as person after person committed their life to Jesus, the prettiest girl in the Christian fellowship would come up to me and say admiringly, "you're my hero, Eric Stillman."

I know that within me, even in my most holy moments, there lives a desire to be worshiped and adored, to be honored and applauded by men. I don't think I am alone in that. I think that most of us want to be honored for what we are good at, looked up to, applauded. We want to be liked. In this social media age, people check obsessively to see how many likes, shares, retweets, etc. that they get. We want someone to say, "You look amazing" or "You are such a good mom" or "your kid is amazing" or "mmm, that food looks delicious!" I think there is a desire in most of us for the applause of man. We want to be honored, to be

worshiped even. I remember one young man in a group I led once saying “Jesus is number one. But I like to be right behind him.”

**Why are we like this?** I think it’s because many of us we feel inadequate. We feel like impostors. We are afraid that we are failures. We don’t know if we measure up. And so we need the reassurance of others that we matter, that we are something. We crave the honor and applause of man. We are not much different than James & John.

So, I think there is a desire in most of us, if not all of us, to be honored, to be worshiped, to receive the applause of men. **But it think there is also a desire in us to be appreciated, to be noticed, to be thanked.** I bet that if I asked you if you feel unappreciated, most of you would say yes. I bet most of you feel like you are not properly appreciated by your spouse, that they do not truly understand or express gratitude for all you do. I know most of you feel unappreciated by your children. Maybe you also feel unappreciated by your parents, or by your boss, by your coworkers, even by your pastor or elders. I would bet that most of you feel unappreciated, like nobody really gives you the thanks you deserve for the work you do.

And so, I believe this desire that we see in James and John, to sit in the place of honor, is in each of us, even if we would never be so bold, or so rude, as to vocalize it. I believe most of us want to be seen as amazing, or significant. Most of us want to be loved, admired, honored, and appreciated. We don’t just want to be one of the crowd. We want to be told that we matter, that we are significant.

But Jesus sets them straight. He answers them by saying this to his disciples:

*<sup>42</sup> 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. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. **Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> 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."***

He tells them that they’ve got it all wrong. He affirms the desire to be great, but tells them that the path to greatness is not found in receiving the praise of men, but is found in serving, in becoming a slave to all.

**What does it mean to be a slave?** It means doing the unglamorous work. It means doing the jobs that no one else wants to do. It means going unnoticed, unappreciated. It means doing the job because it's your job, not for the glory. It means being willing to put others above yourself and to work for their good.

**How is this true, that greatness comes through serving?**

There are many who are seen as great in the eyes of the world because they are skilled at something, or influential, or rich and powerful. But the real greatness comes when the one who has gained a lot gives it away in service to others. Think of what a world is like where everyone is looking out for number one, everyone wants to be rich, powerful, and successful. You end up with 1% of people making it and 99% struggling. You end up with countries at war with each other. You end up with violence, cheating, stealing, and all manner of harm done to one's neighbor. And think of what happens in a marriage where both people are just looking out for their own interests. Or a family. Or a job. When everyone believes that greatness comes through personal success, influence, and power, it causes societal chaos and harm.

There is a better way. True greatness, according to Jesus, is found in sacrificial love. **In fact, the love that truly changes people and changes the world is sacrificial love. The world is a better place when people look out for the interests of others above themselves.** Think of parents, sacrificing their time and energy and money for their children. Think of people willing to lay down their lives for their country. Fireman and police officers putting their lives on the line for others. Think of friends, willing to give up their own freedom to love another. Think of the sacrificial love for aging parents. Even neighbors, willing to snowplow another's driveway or rake another's yard.

***1 Corinthians 9:19 - Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.***

**So go and be a slave. Really?** That won't work. How do we get the power to actually put others above ourselves and not seek our own glory? If all Jesus is, is an example for us to follow, that's not going to do it for us. We need to see Him as our Savior first.

<sup>42</sup> *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. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. **Instead, whoever wants to become great among you***

*must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.<sup>45</sup> 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 came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Ransom is the Greek word "Lutron," which means to buy the freedom of a slave or prisoner. The ransomer would make a huge sacrificial payment to pay the debt of the slave in order to gain his freedom. Ironically, Jesus says that to be great, we need to be the slave of all. But by saying that he came to give his life as a ransom for many, Jesus is saying that we are already slaves in another sense.

**John 8:34-36** *Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.<sup>35</sup> Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.<sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

**2 Peter 2:19** - *a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.*

We are slaves to sin. We are slaves to the devil, needing someone to set us free, someone to pay the price to rescue us. And the gospel tells us that Jesus bought our freedom with the payment of His life.

**Isaiah 53:5-6** - *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

**Romans 5:6-8** - *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.<sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Out of His great love for us, Jesus ransomed us from slavery to sin and Satan, setting us free by His death on the cross for our sins.

The use of the word ransom calls to mind a ransom story from the Old Testament that illustrates the love of God for His people. The prophet Hosea was a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. In Hosea's time, God's people were guilty of worshiping foreign gods, committing spiritual adultery by

forsaking their God for foreign gods, who are not really gods but only idols. And so God calls Hosea to act out what is going on in a graphic way:

<sup>2</sup> *When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD."*

Hosea marries Gomer, who bears him three children. But she leaves him, and sleeps around with other men, and eventually is hired out as a prostitute. And in chapter 3, we read this:

*Hosea 3:1-5 - The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." <sup>2</sup> So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. <sup>3</sup> Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."*

Despite her adultery and prostitution, there is this scene where Hosea buys her back. It's a public auction. She was for sale – either in slavery or put out by her pimp. She would have been naked, so people could see what they were getting. And he buys her back. Covers her. Brings her home. Come again to live with me. You will be with no other man. And then I will be yours.

And then look at v. 4-5: <sup>4</sup> *For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. <sup>5</sup> Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.*

How can they seek David their king? Isn't he dead? Yes, but there will be a Son of David, Jesus. Look at how this points to Jesus. In our sin, we have become slaves. Naked and ashamed. And Jesus lays down his life, paying the price of his own life to buy us back, covering our sin with His righteousness. Jesus lived perfectly that covenantal love with the Father that we could not lived. And then He died for our sins, to pay the penalty for our sins. He offers a new covenant, one that is not based on how well we keep the law, but is based on trusting in Him as our Savior. It is an eternal covenant. . <sup>19</sup> *I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.*

Jesus loves us and gave his life as a ransom for our sin, to rescue us when we were in slavery.

Where do we find the freedom and power to not just live for our own glory, to not be constantly looking to others for approval and honor? By seeing Jesus dying for us, giving his life to rescue us from slavery. Remember James and John asking to sit at his right and left hand in glory? When Jesus was on the cross, he had someone at his right and left: criminals. He became a slave, dying among criminals, out of love for you, in order to free you. That is how we can begin to live for others and love sacrificially. Because we know He loves us and honors us. **This is my son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.** This is why Paul can say:

***1 Corinthians 4:3-4** I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even **judge myself.** <sup>4</sup> My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.*

The more you understand this, the more you will be freed to love and serve in that way.

***2 Corinthians 9:6-11** - Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a **cheerful** giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." <sup>10</sup> Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

Greatness is found in serving others. And when you truly see how Jesus has given His life for you and will give you all you need, then you can freely serve others and put their needs above your own.