



ALL SAINTS
PRESBYTERIAN

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOR ALL SAINTS SMALL GROUPS

“The Only Task” | Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt | November 10, 2019

Mark 10:32-39

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.

Background:

Tim begins his sermon with a story about a husband who is hiding an affair from his wife in the show True Detective. She asks him what about the space between them. He answers by saying that he feels like Wiley Coyote in the cartoons. Always running. That if he doesn’t look down and keeps running that he’ll be fine. But he admits that he is all messed up. Tim wants us to try and see if we can relate to the coyote. What happens when the coyote realizes he has eventually run off a cliff, he falls and crashes down. Can we connect to that image? This sermon series is based off the book entitled Seculosity which is aimed at those who feel like they are running off a cliff. Tim ends the intro with a question that he would like us to consider: if Christianity is true and not the tenets of Seculosity, then what is our only task as human beings. Tim answers this question with 3 points:

1. Seculosity’s Decree:

The decree is essentially what James and John tell Jesus in our Gospel reading. That is, “we can do it!” But do what? They don’t even really know. Jesus tells them he is going to go as low as humanly possible – suffering and death - and they respond that they want to go as high as possible – that being – sit at his right and left hand. Jesus’s response is shock. He tells them they don’t know what they are doing. Do they really think they can do for themselves what he came to do for the world? And they say “yes!” In the sermon last week, Jordan discussed how the author of Seculosity (Zhal) uses the word “enough” for righteous as a synonym. To be righteous in the bible or enough is to be enough for God, yourself and others. Tim segues into a scene from Saving Private Ryan where Private Ryan asks if he has been a good man. Seculosity’s command is that we have to earn enough. The difference between Seculosity and Christianity is that the latter has God as the authority and the former has myriad of authorities. All those former authorities ask of you the same thing: to earn it. Prove yourself to us that you are enough to earn us. See application question below.

2. Secularity's Kids :

Are you enough as a parent? Yes, we live in an increasingly secular world. But we aren't less religious. The object of our worship has just shifted. It is no longer God but Zahl's table of contents: chapter 1 – busyness, 2 romance, 3 parenting, 4 – technology, 5 – work, 6 – leisure, 7 – food, 8 – politics. See question below.

Spend some time discussing the OT passage about Jacob and his mom. Genesis 27:5-17.

Tim uses the cartoon story of a father and mother waiting with their 8 year old to interview for a school. A mother and father sit with their elementary-aged son in a waiting room. The closed door next to their couch reads "Admissions." The mother looks actively concerned, her eyebrows raised in attention, her face unsmiling. Meanwhile, the father leans over and says to the boy, Now, remember, be the yourself that we talked about. Zahl's point: **the parents are on trial just as much as the boy**. Tim also mentions the admissions scandal as examples as well. Our secular age shouts at us: "You can be enough if your kid is... (fill in the blank) enough..." Who's really on trial when your 8-yr-old bats? Or you second-grade daughter dances? Who really feels on trial when you post homecoming pictures of your kid on Instagram? Or the SAT results come? It's self-salvation through parenting! We've made our relationship with them a religious undertaking and they're being crushed under our salvific demands of them!

3. Christianity's Alternative:

It begins with admitting the obvious – which is we aren't able... self-righteousness is a myth and lie. In the Gospel passage, Jesus asks 3 guys to do 1 simple thing: STAY AWAKE while I pray. And they couldn't even do that. Why did he keep these 3 with him you might ask? To show that they couldn't. They "are not able", they're not only not able to atone for their own sins, they're not even able to stay awake while Jesus does...

Conclusion:

Friends, stop running, stop spinning, stop flying off cliffs, hoping you'll catch something that will make you into your own Savior. You can't ever be enough on your own, in and of yourself... and you were never created to be. We weren't created to stand alone before God or anyone else... our kids weren't created or given to us to stand in front of us before God or anyone else... they are not our (as Psalm 3 says): our shield, our glory, or the lifter of our heads...Jesus is. That's what Romans 3 – our NT reading – is all about: if we attempt to stand alone or with something else – our work, our kids, our politician, our lover, our wealth –

whatever – if we attempt to stand alone in this world in the trial that we know and feel is always happening, we’ll fall short... Jesus came to live the life we failed to live, die the death we couldn’t endure, and rise from that death to stand with us before God and all others as our “shield, our glory, and the lifter of our head.

Tim finishes with a story about how we should love our kids. A mom who lost her son to a rare disease: “I have abandoned the future, and with it any visions of Ronan scoring a perfect SAT or sprinting across a stage with a Harvard diploma in his hand. We’re not waiting for Ronan to make us proud. We don’t expect future returns on our investment. We’ve chucked the graphs of development milestones... Ronan has given us a terrible freedom from expectations, a magical world where there are no goals, no prizes to win, no outcomes to monitor, discuss, or compare.” She goes on to call herself, not a Tiger Mom nor a Helicopter Parent, but a Dragon Parent – “fierce and loyal and loving as hell.” For her the only task with Ronan is to love.

So too is that the only task for Christians with everyone, our kids included – if Christianity is true then the only task left for us is to love – Paul, after Romans 3, writes: “Let love be genuine (not utilitarian or mercenary or manipulative or contingent) – genuine... Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor... Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer... Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” That’s good parenting advice... Stand with your kids because Jesus stands with you; stand with your kids like Jesus stands with you.

Discussion:

1. What are your Secular authorities? If you feel so inclined, spend some time being real and vulnerable with one another. There are surely some authorities that you all answer to...so discuss those as a group. And then see if there are any that are specific to you. See Zahl’s table of contents above. Any one of those hit close to home.
2. As a parent, can you relate to Jacob’s mom? How? In what ways? Is this story about Jacob or about Rebekah? Discuss.
3. Whose “enough-ness”, friends, do we really think hangs in the balance before the secular authorities of our friends, neighbors, community when our kids perform?
4. What would it be like to live and love like Ronan’s mom does?