

## **Follow Christ in Sacrificial Service**

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The Gospel of Mark: Mighty and Mild / Mark 10:32-45/ March 10, 2024

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### **Introduction:**

Let's start with a pulse check on how we are responding to what we have been covering in the gospel of Mark lately. This section of Mark's Gospel, which we started at the end of January, has focused on two main themes, Christ's glory in suffering and the true call of discipleship. Mark sets our attention on these things through three predictions by Jesus of His pending death and resurrection, each followed by a failure of the disciples to understand what it means to follow Him. Church, this section of Mark's Gospel is not for the faint of heart. From the moment Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ in Mark 8:27-30, we have been walking down the road of discovering what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We've heard Christ's call to follow Him by denying ourselves and taking up our cross. We have been called to fight against pride and sin with vigilance. We learned how we should prioritize God's good design in marriage and strive to keep our sin from separate the one-flesh union He has created. And we saw the necessity of entering the kingdom with childlike abandonment, being willing to give anything up for the sake of Christ and the gospel. The demands of discipleship are not for the faint of heart. Our response to these demands could be to pretend they don't exist or downplay them to make them more palatable. We could also become discouraged and wonder how it can ever be possible to follow Jesus. Or we can trust Christ to provide the grace we need as we faithfully press in to follow Him. Wherever you are today in your response, I want to invite you to lean into our passage, in Mark 10:32-45, as we look at the final passion prediction of Christ and continued lofty call of true discipleship. This final passion prediction and subsequent failure by the apostles reveals two truths about Jesus and the apostles before drawing our attention a final truth about true discipleship. The first truth is about Christ, in verses 32-34, revealing how,

### **Christ Purposefully Moved towards His Death with Full Understanding**

The third prediction is the most detailed and, from the very beginning, Mark seeks to instill awe in our hearts. Look at how this scene begins in verse 32, "And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid." Pause there. Up to this moment, we have been made aware that Jesus is moving towards something, as Mark has connected each scene through details that describe Jesus leaving from one place and heading to another. Each passion prediction has hinted that was Jerusalem, but we haven't been told that explicitly yet. In verse 32, we see they are on the road to Jerusalem, where the reader knows Jesus has died, and Jesus is actually leading the way. Like the servant of the Lord spoken of in Isaiah 50:7, Jesus has set His "face like a flint" to go to Jerusalem. Mark, then, details the reaction of two groups to this. The apostles, who "were amazed," and others, who "were afraid." The apostles' amazement is likely due to Jesus' resolve to go toward Jerusalem but it's hard to determine what causes the fear in those who followed, since the apostles were the only ones to receive each passion predictions. Perhaps they have relayed them to the others. Mark's vivid descriptions of these reactions relay the awe and wonder of everyone watching Jesus lead the way towards Jerusalem to draw us into what Jesus is about to teach in the final prediction. Pick back up in verse 32 and read through 34 with me, "And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.'" Jesus describes in detail what will take place in Jerusalem. James Edwards helpfully connects each prediction to its fulfillment in Mark 14-16. In Mark 14:41-53, Jesus is betrayed by Judas and handed over to the chief priests and scribes. In 14:64 they condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles in 15:1. Jesus is mocked in Mark 15:29-30, spit on in 15:19 & 65, flogged in 15:15, killed in 15:37, and resurrected in 16:1-2. (James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 319).

Every aspect of Jesus' pending sacrifice is relayed by Jesus before He even steps foot in Jerusalem. Now, some are tempted to think Mark is placing these words in Jesus' mouth, but each aspect is alluded to in the Old Testament when God speaks of His suffering servant in Psalm 22:7, Isaiah 50:6, and Isaiah 53:3-12. Jesus fully understands what will take place in Jerusalem because God proclaimed it would through His prophets. Yet, Jesus is the one leading the way. Family, let this truth sink into your heart. Jesus wasn't taken by surprise with anything that happened in His betrayal, the trials, or His death. He knew it was coming and set His face toward Jerusalem to accomplish all that was needed for us to find mercy. "Hallelujah to the Son of Suffering" (Son of Suffering, CCLI#7179241). Before we move on, note how Jesus begins His teaching. He says, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem." In connecting the apostles to the road ahead, Jesus subtly beckons them to consider how their lives are intertwined with His fate. Yet, in verses 35-41, Mark reveals an uncomfortable truth about the apostles, how,

### **The Apostles Don't Fully Understand What Will Take Place in Jerusalem**

This scene focuses specifically on James and John, but we will discover the other ten apostles are no different, James and John simply beat them to the punch. Look at what follows this final passion prediction in verses 35-37, "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, '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?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'" The irony of this moment is palpable. Contrasted immediately with Jesus' self-sacrifice, James and John walk forward in self-promotion. They come to Jesus asking for Him to do whatever they ask. Take note of Jesus' question back, "What do you want me to do for you?" This will be the same question Jesus will ask a blind man named Bartimaeus in our passage next week, and we will discover his request is vastly different than theirs. Here, James and John seek their own glory, asking for places of prominence when Jesus receives His. The places of highest honor, in Jewish custom were given to those to the right and left of a prominent figure. Their sight is set on the dominion and glory promised to the Son of Man, with a selfish longing to be those held in highest esteem with Him. Family, their longing isn't much different from ours at times, is it? How often do we seek our own glory and miss the call of Jesus? Let this moment challenge your own heart. What is interesting is how, in Matthew's gospel, right before this, Matthew records Jesus telling the disciples in Matthew 19:28 they will sit on twelve thrones when the Son of Man sits on His in the new world. They haven't fully left everything to follow Jesus yet, as their self-interest is still blended with their discipleship. Yet, we should note, as Danny Akin says, "James and John get one thing right but everything else wrong. They are correct that Jesus is headed for glory. But as for how the glory would come, they don't have a clue. They still don't get it" (Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 230). Jesus will continue to teach them His glory comes through suffering, and theirs will as well. Look at His response in verse 38, "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 baptized?'" This is a strange statement because of Jesus' addition of baptism. It is fairly easy to identify what He means by the cup He will drink. While sometimes spoken of as a cup of blessing in the Old Testament, the cup most often a common picture of God's wrath in judgement (see Psalm 75:8, Isaiah 51:17-23, Jeremiah 25:15-17, and Ezekiel 23:28-34). Jesus later makes this cup clear in Mark 14:36, where, in agony over the work He will do on the cross, He says, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me." So, the cup that He drinks is the wrath of God He will receive on our behalf. In the context, His baptism is connected to that. Connected to John's baptism, it is a new metaphor to show how Jesus identifies with sinners on the cross and is immersed fully under the wrath of God poured out for the sins of His people. Family, as Jesus hung on the cross, the greatest suffering He experienced was being drenched in the outpouring of God's wrath towards our sin, bearing the judgement we deserved. James and John have not understood how this suffering connected to His glory, so they don't know what they are asking for. Notice the interaction, then, that follows in verses 39-40, "And they said to him, 'We are able.'"

Pause for a moment to feel their continued ignorance of what Jesus has been telling them. How often do we miss the clear truth Jesus is relaying to our hearts like them? Keep going, “And Jesus said to them, ‘The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.’” Jesus isn’t saying they will experience the exact same thing He does on the cross, but pointing to the reality that they will in fact suffer with Him as they follow Him in discipleship. Yet, He also reminds them of God’s sovereign will in preparing everyone for the positions determined by Him. And, church, the positions they desire are not what they think, because, as we will see, God has prepared for certain people to be at Jesus’ right and left in the moment of His glory. But those people are on crosses, not on thrones. In Jesus’ response, He points their hearts again to the truth of what will take place in Jerusalem they still didn’t fully understand. Have you fully understood everything Jesus experienced on the cross of calvary? Now, look at verse 41, “And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.” At first, we might be tempted to think the rest of the apostles were indignant because the request was so audacious after hearing Jesus’ third passion prediction. However, when we recognize the rebuke that follows addresses them all, we realize their indignation comes from just as selfish and blind hearts. Remember, just a few passages back, they were all jockeying for the highest place of honor in the kingdom. Could the same be said of us? Are we still striving for our own self-interests because we have failed to see the cross clearly? If so, consider Jesus’ disclosure of the final truth about true discipleship in verses 42-45, that,

### **True Discipleship Means Following Christ in Sacrificial Service**

Verses 42-45 hold a rebuke of Jesus to everyone who will follow Him, grounded in what may be the central verse of this entire gospel. Look at the rebuke in verses 42-44, “And Jesus called them to him and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.’” Jesus starts by pointing to the way the rulers and prominent people of the Gentiles exercise their authority and lord it over others. The term for exercise authority means “to subdue” or “gain power over others.” Lording it over people is the idea of flaunting that kind of authority and position of power. Christ is combating the self-promotion of the apostles and their desires positions of prominence by pointing to the errors of the world around them. Then, He layers two contrasts on top of each other to show the great divide between the way of the world and the way of Christ. First, He gives a strong rebuke that they emphatically should not be like those rulers. Second, He says they should instead be a servant if they want to be great, and a slave of all if they want to be first. A slave would have been the most inferior person in that society. Note the force of these statements, “it shall not be among you” and “whoever would be great... must be your servant,” and “whoever would be first... must be slave of all.” These aren’t encouragements to behave like servants or slaves, but to actually be them. And to show this is the true mark of greatness in the kingdom of God, Jesus grounds them in strong reason to be servants and slaves. Notice the reason in verse 45, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The reason you should be servants and slaves of all is because even the Son of Man came to serve and give His life as a ransom. To feel the full weight of this, we have to understand what it means that Jesus gave His life as a ransom. A ransom was a deliverance that came through payment, typically required to release a person from slavery. What was that payment? What was it for? And to whom was it made? 1 Peter 1:18-19 tells us we “were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” The ransom payment was the imperishable precious blood of the spotless lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The one John tells is in John 1 “was God and was with God.” The one Paul tells us is “the image of the invisible God” in Colossians 1 and the author of Hebrews 1 says is “the exact imprint of God’s nature.” This is one whose precious blood was shed to ransom us. And Peter tells us this was to purchase us from our slavery to the futile ways we once lived.

Galatians 4:4-5 says, “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” This ransom was the redemption necessary for all who were under the law and the way our adoption into God’s family was secured. Isaiah 53:10-11 says, “it was the will of the Lord to crush him [Christ]; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” The ransom of Christ was the Lord’s will to make a guilt offering to God Himself for our sin, to make us accounted as righteous. So, the Son of Man served us by paying the ransom necessary to redeem us from God’s condemnation of our sin, and our slavery to it, to make all who believe in Him the righteous children of God. Family, this is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do you fully understand the truth of the gospel? Have you trusted in Christ’s death on the cross to provide your ransom? If not, see His sacrificial service and trust in its sufficiency for your sin. Cry out to God for mercy and receive His grace today. If do understand the gospel, and have placed your faith in it, consider one practical take away from this passage.

### **Strive for Greatness by Serving Like Christ**

The point Jesus is making is, if the greatest one in the kingdom, the Son of Man, the one to whom belongs dominion, glory, and the kingdom came to serve and give His life, why wouldn’t we who follow Him in that same sacrificial service. As Danny Akin says well, “The greatest and best person who ever lived and walked on this earth was a humble servant. He got down low so that He might lift others up. If He serves, we must serve. If He gives, we must give. If He stoops down, we must stoop down” (Daniel L. Akin, Exalting Jesus in Mark, 233-234). Family, this is the call of true discipleship. This is the demand of Christ’s love toward us. The apostle John would eventually understand this, and later write to us in 1 John 3:16, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”

### **Conclusion:**

If you struggle to lean into this call of discipleship, don’t fall into despair and understand the solution isn’t to simply try harder. The solution, which we will see next week, is to see more clearly. To go deeper in your understanding of all that Christ has done for you. So, as the worship team is coming to lead our time of reflection and response, my encouragement is to think deeply on the ransom Christ paid for your sin. And let those thoughts move your further into true discipleship that follows Christ in sacrificial service. As always, you are welcome to come and kneel before Him as you cry out for His grace. You are also free to sit and reflect or stand and sing as you are led. If you need prayer, we have a team of people worshipping on the front rows or the bottom of the stairs in the back with lanyards on who are available to pray with you or for you. And if you don’t know Christ, I am available if you would like to speak more about the gospel and God’s offer of forgiveness and salvation today. Let’s respond to His Word together. Would you pray with me?