

Matthew 20:17-34

“The Kingdom and Sacrifice, Service and Sigh” Pastor Justin Bell

When we contemplate Jesus’ sacrifice for us, His example to us, and restoration of us, it is only reasonable that we will want to sacrificially serve God. Join us as we consider three more reasons to serve God.

Study Guide Qs

1. How does Jesus’ sacrifice and example motivate you to sacrificially serve God?
2. How has Jesus restored your life (consider spiritual, emotional, and/or physical restoration)?
3. How are you seeking to serve Christ in this season of your life?
4. Jesus asked, “What do you wish?” [21]; and “What do you want me to do for you?” [32]. What an interesting idea to consider. How would you respond?

Intro

Subject: Three reasons to serve God

Object: Sacrificially serve God

Context: Parable of Vineyard Workers: eternal life and rewards motivate service

A. Jesus’ Sacrifice [17-19]: Jesus’ death and resurrection predicted

¹⁷ Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ¹⁸ “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, ¹⁹ and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”

Jesus is headed to Jerusalem [17] and again tells the disciples [17] of His death and resurrection [19] [Mt.16:21, 17:12-23]. The Sanhedrin functioned as the Supreme Court and Congress of the Jews and were the chief priests and scribes [18]. The Sanhedrin could issue a death sentence but during the Roman occupation only Rome could execute. Thus, Jesus would be delivered to Gentiles who would mock, scourge, and crucify [19]. This was the first time the manner of death is predicted.

1. Jesus' death reveals His sovereignty [Ex. 12, Ps.22, Is. 53]: Jesus' death occurs exactly how and when He predicted as foretold by the prophets. The astronomical odds against this reveal that Jesus is in control of these events.

2. Jesus' death reveals His sacrificial love [Jn.10:18] “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

a. Jesus voluntarily gave His life so man could be redeemed to God.

B. Jesus' example [20-28]: Sacrificial service

1. Jesus serves sacrificially and for God's glory [20-24] Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.

21 And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.”

22 But Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They said to Him, “We are able.” **23** So He said to them, “You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared by My Father.” **24** And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.

The mother of Zebedee's sons (James and John) [20] is likely Jesus' aunt Salome [Mt.27:56]. Mark tells us that James and John sent their mother to Jesus [Mk.10:35]. They were seeking positions of power and authority in Jesus' kingdom. The right hand was the place of honor and authority, and the left was the second position [21]. They are to be commended for their faith that Christ would establish His kingdom. They likely expect an imminent earthly kingdom soon after Jesus arrives in Jerusalem. But, *their selfish ambition is being contrast with Jesus' sacrificial service*. They did not realize the sacrifice involved in what they were asking [22]. Jesus' reference to His baptism [22] and His cup [23] referred to His suffering. Despite their assent about their willingness to sacrifice for Him [22] they did not understand. Jesus foretold that they would suffer [23]. James was the first of the twelve to be martyred [Ac.12:2], and John lived a martyr's life being exiled to Patmos [Rev.1:9]. Jesus affirms that the Father is the one who determines positions of authority [23] [Ps. 75:6-7]. The other disciples were greatly displeased [24].

a. We are to serve sacrificially for God's glory (not self-glory). There is no crown without the cross. Carnal ambition causes division and is an obstacle to unity.

2. Jesus came to serve not to be served [25-28]

25 But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. **26** Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. **27** And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave **28** just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Unbelievers in positions of authority in the world generally abuse authority and seek to be served [25]. In Christ's kingdom, greatness flows from serving others rather than being served [26-27]. Those who desire to lead in the kingdom will be servants to those they influence [27].

Slaves had no personal agenda, did not serve for accolades, but simply pursue the Master's interests. Jesus, who had every right to be served, came to serve not to be served, and to give His life to pay the penalty for our sin.

Gal. 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Note: God's glory is demonstrated by Jesus at the cross, and by us in sacrificial service to God and others [Phil. 2:5-11].

C. Jesus' restoration [29-34]: Two blind men receive sight

29 Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. 30 And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"

31 Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" 32 So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 33 They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." 34 So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

1. Those who have been restored by Jesus want to follow Him

Jericho was a desert oasis about fifteen miles away on the main road to Jerusalem. A bush grew there that was believed to help blindness. Many blind people made their way to Jericho [29] and survived as beggars [Lu.18:35]. Matthew records two blind men [30] while Mark and Luke focus on one - Bartimaeus. The Greek term translated "cried out" was used to describe a woman's cries in labor. They were desperate, and cried for mercy to relieve their condition [30]. They refer to Jesus as, "Lord, Son of David" a Messianic title [30-31]. They had no eyesight but they had insight! They believed that Jesus could heal and restore their lives. They seek mercy. There is no sense of entitlement. Despite the crowd's effort to quiet them they continue to cry out to Jesus [30-31]. They refuse to let the opinion of the crowd keep them from Jesus.

Jesus stops and asks them, "What do you want Me to do for you? They wanted to receive their sight [33]. Jesus showed compassion and touched their eyes, and miraculously they immediately received their sight [34].

2. Those who see Jesus want to follow Him And they followed Him [34].

When we "see" Jesus of the Bible: the Christ, and His glory, majesty, perfection, justice, holiness, love, grace, mercy, compassion, and understand His gospel it is only reasonable for us to want to follow Him.

Conclusion/Communion: Why should you sacrificially serve God? When you understand His sacrifice, His example, and experience His restoration then you want to serve God with an attitude of gratitude for all that Christ has done for you.