

MARK 10:32-45

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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 betrayed to the chief priests and 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. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,
40. 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."
41. When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.
42. 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.
43. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,
44. and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.
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."

Follow me

“Not so with you”

(Being Disciples 12)

Last Sunday, we have examined two significant conversations between Jesus and a rich Jewish teach and between Jesus and his disciples about what they should do in order to be the true disciple of Jesus, qualified to inherit the kingdom of God, enjoying eternal life with the Father God. The lesson that we learned in these conversations is that we should love God above all things, and with love towards God, we should love God's people, particularly those in needs, as we love ourselves, and that in order to practice this love, we should be willing to give up everything we like to have, such as pennies, power, privileges and popularity in the world. But as we remember, the response of the disciples of Jesus is not favourable to the challenging words of Jesus. Rather, they were astonished, wondering who then can be saved. To these perplexed disciples, Jesus responds by emphasizing that with man, it is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. Here, it is clear to us that to be saved or not to be saved is none of our business but God's business.

And at the end of these conversations, Peter cut in and said to Jesus as if he represented all the other disciples. What did he say? He said, "We have left everything to follow you!" And after hearing this, Jesus encouraged his disciples by mentioning the rewards that they will receive for following him as disciples. He said, "No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life." Considering the

following stories in today's passage, Mark 10:35-45, Jesus seems to use both carrots and stick in order to teach his disciples.

After making a rewarding promise that those who follow Jesus leaving everyone behind for Jesus will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life, now on the way of Jerusalem, Jesus gathers his twelve disciples separately and tells them about what is going to happen to him, how he is going to be arrested, mocked and flogged and finally killed in details. At this time, the Bible tells us about how the disciples were reacting to the words of Jesus. Verse 32 says that the twelve disciples of Jesus were astonished and the others who followed Jesus were afraid. Why were they astonished and afraid? Because they could not understand the words of Jesus at all.

So even after the two conversations that Jesus had with the rich Jewish teacher and his disciples, two of the three leading disciples of Jesus, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come to Jesus and ask something that they even do not know what they are asking. In verses 35-37, James and John approach Jesus and say, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." How dare they ask Jesus to do whatever they ask? What a nonsense! And the response of Jesus is quite surprising. Jesus says, "What do you want me to do for you?" I think Jesus already knows what they are going to ask. Jesus knows them. They make a bold request that they want to sit at His right and left hand in His glory. It means that they are seeking the highest positions in the kingdom that will guarantee them what they want; pennies, power, privileges and popularity in the world.

With no doubt, they are not listening to all words of Jesus, but apparently to some words of Jesus that they want to hear. I think that they only focus on the rewards that Jesus promises to his disciples that "they will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. Surely, they fix their ears on that part of his promise that they will receive a hundred times as much in this present, a hundred times of homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields. But they don't want to think about "persecutions" that Jesus mentions immediately after all these worldly rewards. They might have consider persecutions as something like battles that they have to win over their enemies in Jerusalem. Jesus' disciples, including James and John, even Peter, do not fully understand the words of Jesus, because they do not know the nature of the kingdom of God that Jesus preaches.

Then, what is the response of Jesus to the brothers, James and John? Jesus responds in verses 38-40 by asking if they are able to drink the cup He drinks or be baptized with the baptism He is baptized with. This is a metaphor for sharing in His suffering and sacrifice. James and John confidently say they can, but Jesus tells them that those places of honor are not His to grant; they are prepared for those whom God has chosen. Here again, we can learn that it is God's business, not ours who is going to be seated in the right or left hand of the Lord in heaven, just as it is God's business who is to be saved or not. It is God who will reward us for what we labor in the world for the kingdom of God. We are not qualified to ask the Lord to do whatever we ask, like James and John do. Then, what should we do as the disciples of Jesus and the children of God the Father in heaven?

In verses 41-45, Jesus gives us an answer to this question. After hearing the bold request of James and John, the other disciples, probably including Peter, become angry with them. Why? I think it is because they first asked Jesus to do what all of them too want Jesus to do for them. At this point of time, all of them desire positions of power, glory and honour in the new kingdom. So, Jesus then gathers them all and teaches a crucial lesson. "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your

servant, and whoever wants to be first must 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.”

Here, let us meditate on the clause in the teaching of Jesus to his disciples: “Not so with you.” In the world, In the world, rulers and high officials, Ceos and bosses, principals and teachers, fathers and mothers lord it over their people, employees, students and children, and exercise authority over them. But not so with you. In the world of politics, politicians seek for power to rule over others, but not so with you. In the world of business, Ceos seek for pennies to rule over others with money, but not so with you. In the world of social media, celebrities seek for popularity among people to influence over them, but not so with you. In the world of family, parents seek for authority, sometimes unreasonable to make children obey to their words, but not so with you. Why? Because our Lord Jesus says, “Instead, whoever wants to be great must be a servant, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all.” And our Lord, Jesus himself becomes our example to follow, by saying and acting. “Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Application

1. Understand True Greatness: Redefine their understanding of greatness. In God's kingdom, greatness is not about power or status, but about serving others with humility and love.
2. Embrace Sacrifice: Be determined to make sacrifices for the sake of others, just as Jesus did. This might mean giving up their time, resources, or comfort to help someone in need. Tue discipleship involves following Jesus' example of sacrificial love.
3. Lead by Serving: Become leaders who serve. Whether in their companies, schools, families, or communities, they can lead by example through acts of kindness, compassion, and service.