

Understanding Servant Leadership

Mark 10:32 – 45

...transformed by the message and miracles of the Son of God...

Proposition: Jesus was on His way to glory through the path of suffering. We must share in His cup of suffering if we wish to share in His greatness.

Application:

- Accept the cup of suffering
 - Be surrendered in your service
 - Call on the Lord Jesus and be saved
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A Polish man moved to the U.S. and married an American girl. Although his English was not perfect, they got along very well. One day he rushed to a lawyer's office and asked if he could arrange a divorce. The lawyer said that getting a divorce would depend on the circumstances and asked him a few questions. Have you any grounds? *Yes, an acre and half and nice little home.* No, I mean what is the foundation of this case? *It made of concrete.* I don't think you understand. Does either of you have a real grudge? *No, we have carport and not need one.* I mean what are your relations like? *All my relations still in Poland.* Is there any infidelity in your marriage? *We have hi-fidelity stereo and good DVD player.* Does your wife beat you up? *No, I always up before her.* Why do you want this divorce? *She going to kill me.* What makes you think that? *I got proof.* What kind of proof? *She going to poison me. She buy a bottle at drugstore and put on shelf in bathroom. I can read, and it say: ~~~Polish Remover~~~*

Hearing without understanding. That was the problem the twelve disciples faced. Three times Jesus explained His mission was to die on a cross and they still did not grasp the meaning.

I. Rejection and Suffering (10:32 – 34)

His Mission (10:32): It was one week before the cross. Jesus and His followers were on their way to Jerusalem. Grief preoccupied our Lord; greatness preoccupied His disciples. There was a sense of doom, a feeling of looming danger. Jesus was determined to enter the danger zone of Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). Jesus had a mission to fulfill to fully and finally deal with our sin problem. His mission was to once for all satisfy the just demands of a holy God. He had a mission to give His life as a ransom for you and me. The text tells us that His followers looked on, amazed and afraid. *Amazed* because Jesus had the courage to enter a hostile city. *Afraid* because they too might face the same conflict Jesus was soon to face.

This is the third time He spoke to them about His suffering. Even after three warnings, the 12 still did not grasp what Jesus meant (Luke 18:34). Only after the resurrection would they

understand. In Jewish thought the Messiah was supposed to rule and reign as a king, not suffer and die as a criminal.

Gentile involvement (10:33, 34): Two times Jesus explained the role of the religious leaders in condemning Him. Now for the first time Jesus described the role of the Gentiles in crucifying Him. It was Gentiles who mocked Him, spat on Him, flogged Him and killed Him. The Jewish leaders condemned Jesus to death. The Gentile rulers crucified Him to death. For centuries, the Jewish people have been labelled "Christ-killers" - the notion that all Jews, in every age, and in all places, share the collective responsibility for the death of Jesus. This accusation has plagued the Jewish people for nearly 2000 years and has been the source of much hatred toward the Jewish people. In this passage Jesus highlights that it was the Jewish leaders who condemned Him to death, and it was the Gentile rulers who crucified Him to death. The whole human race is guilty of killing Jesus. In fact, if we want to be more precise, many were involved in the death of Jesus. Let's begin with God (Isa 53:10a). Jesus was also involved in His own death (John 10:17, 18). Of course, satan and Judas played a major role (John 13:2). Lastly, the Jewish leaders and Roman rulers. It is wrong to single out one people group as the only ones guilty of Jesus' death. One of the last words Lord Jesus uttered as He was dying was: "*Lord, forgive them for they do not know what they do.*" He asked God the Father to forgive both Jew and Gentile. He asked God the Father to forgive the ones who condemned Him and the ones who crucified Him. Let's reverse the tragic events of church history regarding the verdict that the Jewish people are Christ killers. We are all responsible. In fact, the crucifixion was foretold by the prophets (Luke 18:31 – 33; Ps 22 and Isa 53).

Cup of Suffering (10:38): The cup is a symbol of an experience of joy or sorrow. Jesus referred to the cup of sorrow. The cup of mockery and ridicule; the cup of spitting and flogging; the cup of sorrow He had to endure. The cup of suffering does not always end in death, but it will involve unjust suffering. To drink the cup means to accept the suffering God allows us to go through (Ps 23:5b; Ezek 23:31 – 34).

Baptism of Death: Baptism is a symbol of total immersion. It speaks of an overwhelming experience which totally consumes the one immersed. In symbol we are baptised into His death as we are immersed in the waters of baptism. The cup is a symbol of His suffering and baptism is a symbol of His death (Luke 12:50).

As they were heading up to Jerusalem, sorrow preoccupied the Lord, status preoccupied the disciples. Jesus focussed on the cross, James and John focussed on a crown.

II. Request for Status (10:35 – 41)

Seeking Status (10:35 – 37): James and John were seeking places of honour in the Messianic kingdom. They wanted the number one (right hand) and number two (left hand) positions in the

kingdom. Apart from the King Himself they would be the most trusted men in leadership. Using the US government as an example it would be like asking to be Vice President and Speaker of the House. Why not have James and John fill these positions?

The sons spoke through their mother: It appears James and John put their mother up to it. The wish of the sons is put into the mouth of the mother (Matt 20:20, 21). Mom was trying to “pull strings” for her two boys.

The status was promised by the Messiah: Here is a mother asking for what was already promised (Matt 19:28). Jesus gave this promise not long before the brothers approached Him with their bold request. Likely the promise of sitting on thrones still rang in their ears when Jesus spoke to them about His suffering. Jesus focussed on the cross, James and John focussed on the promised crown. Notice Jesus did not rebuke the two brothers for their request.

Although Jesus promised them a throne, God decides who will occupy each throne. The Lord Jesus will distribute all rewards according to the will of the Father (2 Tim 4:8).

Jesus did not rebuke them because He promised them a great future.

Suffering, the way to attain status (10:38 – 40): He taught that greatness does not come through selfish ambition, but through suffering and sacrifice. How little did James know when he said he was able to drink the cup of suffering and undergo the baptism of death that he would be the first of the disciples to meet his death through martyrdom (Acts 12:2). John was the last of the disciples to die. Although John did suffer the cup of persecution, we are unsure how he died. Some traditions said Nero had him thrown into boiling oil. Others say he was thrown to the lions. Still others believe he died a natural death. We do know that he drank the cup of suffering. He was sent into exile on Patmos for the sake of the Gospel (Rev 1:9).

As followers of the Lord Jesus, sooner or later suffering will knock on our door. Suffering has a way of taking self out of the picture. Suffering acts as the great eraser of self-importance. It re-orientates our priorities. We are promised greatness, but just as Jesus was on His way to glory through the path of suffering so it is with us. If we wish to share in His greatness, then we must also share in His suffering.

Jesus did not condemn their desire for greatness He did correct their pre-occupation for greatness.

III. Right Service (10:42 – 45)

How Gentiles serve (10:42): Those who wish to be recognized as rulers are often pre-occupied with privilege and power. They rule for selfish gain. By the world’s standards leadership is often

measured by how much authority a leader exerts. Such leadership can become oppressive even tyrannical. Christians are not to function according to the values of the world.

How Christians serve (10:43, 44): It is the Lord's will to enlarge our sphere of influence. Christians are to exercise authority not by ruling over people but by serving other people. We exercise authority not for selfish gain; not for recognition; not for reward. We exercise authority to benefit of others. We are to lose our concern for status and recognition; we are to accept the possibility of demotion. The measure of greatness is determined by how we use our God-given authority to bless others. That is how Jesus exercised His authority and influence.

How Christ Served (10:45): Notice His demotion from heaven to earth; from the earth to the grave; then His promotion from the grave to His throne in heaven. He was not forced to become a servant of all, He willingly chose this path even though it involved the cup of suffering and the baptism of death. He had a mission to fulfill – to fully and finally deal with our sin debt to once for all satisfy the just demands of a holy God. He did this by dying in our place as a ransom for you and me. Ransom means to loosen, to release – to release from what? From the power of sin and from the debt of sin. Sin offends God's holiness and there are consequences we must pay for this offence. Two options are available with respect to paying the sin debt we incur:

1. Endure the wrath of God for eternity as the payment price.
2. Accept the payment price that another has paid on our behalf. Jesus fully satisfied the justice of God with His perfect life and His precious blood. Jesus endured the wrath of God on our behalf so we can be released from the power of sin and the debt of sin.

We may not feel right asking the Lord to make us influential. We may view ourselves unworthy of such greatness. It is the Lord's will to enlarge your sphere of influence. As a believer in Christ Jesus your destiny is to have influence. But the path to greatness involves the cup of suffering. Just as Jesus was on His way to glory through the path of suffering so it is with us we share in His greatness by sharing in His suffering. May I speak to those who do not know the Lord in personal relationship. We are all sinners. Our sin offends God's holiness. As a result, we incur a sin debt that must be paid. We pay our sin debt in one of two ways: endure the wrath of God for eternity in hell. Or accept the payment price that Jesus paid on your behalf. Of course, option two is the option you must take. Admit you have sinned against God and incurred a sin debt. Believe that Jesus died for your sin and rose again on the third day. Call on Jesus and be set free from the power of sin and from the debt of sin.