

“FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN”

Mark 10:32-45

Key Verse: 10:45

“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.”

Mark 10:45 is the key verse of Mark’s Gospel. It teaches us about the character of Jesus’ life and mission as the Messiah. It also teaches us the secret of how we can be truly great in God’s eyes and, at the same time, be a source of blessing to others. May God help us to learn from the servanthship of our Lord Jesus!

I. JESUS AGAIN PREDICTS HIS DEATH (32-34)

Look at verse 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.* Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem where his suffering and crucifixion awaited. Jesus was leading the way. Jesus was painfully aware of what was ahead of him, but he was determined to obey the will of God to suffer and die for the sins of the world. The disciples were astonished and others who followed were afraid. They sensed the anguish in Jesus’ heart. In fact, they felt uncomfortable whenever Jesus talked about his death and resurrection. Yet, Jesus predicted his death once again. Look at verses 32b-34. *Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. “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, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”* This was the third time Jesus taught them about his upcoming death and resurrection. The first time was right after Peter’s confession of Christ (8:29-32). The second time was after his transfiguration on the mount (9:31-32). This time, Jesus gave them a detailed prediction about how he would be betrayed and condemned. He told them that the Gentiles, the Roman soldiers, would mock him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. Why did Jesus continue to talk about his death and resurrection, even though his disciples did not want to hear it?

First, it was to prepare them in advance. Before long, Jesus was going to die on the cross. But the disciples still did not know the true meaning of the cross and resurrection. By teaching them his death and resurrection, Jesus helped them to open their spiritual eyes and see God’s will for world salvation through his cross. Jesus told them about his upcoming crucifixion and resurrection so that they would not go astray (Jn 16:1,4).

Second, it was to plant the gospel faith in them. The essence of the gospel is the cross and resurrection of Jesus. The disciples had confessed Jesus as their Christ of God, but they still did not understand the secret of the gospel. They were still full of worldly ambitions. Worldly glory and desire were on their minds. So they became afraid whenever Jesus talked about the cross. They loved honor and glory, but they did not like the cross. They were like some students who love to get an A for a class but don’t want to

study hard. But Jesus taught them that his glorious resurrection would happen only **after** his suffering and death on the cross. This is the truth that every Christian must learn.

We learn from Jesus how we can help others in God. We usually try to show our kindness to our friends. We teach them the Bible with a shepherd's heart and much prayer. We serve them with food and drinks whenever we can. And we taste joy when we see them grow in faith. This is important. But we must also teach them the way of cross. No one likes the way of suffering and cross. It is not in our human nature. Everyone wants to enjoy glory without suffering. But a person who does not accept the way of cross cannot come to know Jesus personally. It is because the way of cross is the way of Jesus. Therefore, we must teach the way of cross even when our friends do not want to hear about it. We have to talk about Jesus' cross and resurrection over and over until they accept the way of cross in their hearts, because it is the true way of loving them. That is what Jesus did to his disciples.

II. THE REQUEST OF JAMES AND JOHN (35-41)

How did the disciples respond to the prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection? Look at verse 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."* James and John sounded as if Jesus owed them something big. They demanded Jesus, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask." They obviously did not accept even single word of Jesus. But Jesus wasn't upset with them. He asked them, *"What do you want me to do for you?"* They replied, *"Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."* Wow! Jesus was talking about his upcoming suffering and death and these disciples were lobbying for cabinet positions! This was certainly an awkward time to ask such request. Why were they so compelled to say such thing at this point of time? We can summarize their problem with a few words--the Peter factor.

There is no doubt that James and John were men of ambitions. They had a strong sense of honor. They wanted to be honored more than others. Most of all they wanted to be higher than Peter. The Zebedee brothers were two of the top three disciples of Jesus. Jesus had taken them to many important events such as the transfiguration (9:2) and raising of the dead girl (5:37), in order to help them to grow in faith. But James and John always felt that they were under the shadow of Peter. Peter would beat them every time with his big mouth. So they felt intense jealousy. When Peter beat them with his famous confession of Christ, they felt deep pain. Now they sensed urgency as they approached Jerusalem and as Jesus seemed to talk about something very momentous. They didn't want to be beaten again by Peter's initiative. So they tried to beat him to asking for the positions of the vice president and the secretary of state in the kingdom of Israel which they thought Jesus would restore (Ac 1:6).

This is not just James and John's problem. Everyone has this problem. Verse 41 says, *When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.* Even Peter had the Peter problem. Even Bartholomew was indignant when he realized that James and John were lobbying for high cabinet positions. All of them had the same desire as James and John's. We live in a competitive world. People somehow find their

Peters in their work places, among friends, neighbors, in a class, in a family, and even in a Christian fellowship. They compete with their Peters fiercely and when they get behind their competitors, they become jealous. Competing to please God in a good way can help us to grow in him. However, competing for worldly ambitions can make us tired and weary. Satan can prey on us when we despair and become jealous of others.

Jesus must have been disappointed with James and John who seemed to have no idea about his upcoming cross and resurrection. However, Jesus was patient with them. He quietly said to them, *“You don’t know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”* (38) Here, “the cup” means the cup of sorrow and suffering (Mt 26:39) and “the baptism” his death on the cross (Ro 6:4). They answered, “We can.” They were willing to do anything if only they could achieve their personal ambition. Jesus said to them, *“You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 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.”* (39b,40)

Jesus did not rebuke them for their ambitions. Instead, he drew their attention to the reward that God gives. James and John had a value system similar to the Pharisees. But to receive honor and glory in God, they had to struggle to become spiritual leaders. They had to overcome their worldly ambitions and learn the way of Jesus’ cross. Jesus told them that his throne is not a political one, but a heavenly one in the kingdom of God. May God help us to overcome worldly ambitions and seek honor and glory that God has prepared for us!

III. “FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN ...” (42-45)

Jesus understood the disciples’ problems. Jesus also knew that this problem was plaguing not just his disciples but many other people. Some people even envied the power of the Roman soldiers. How did he help his disciples? Look at verse 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. It is a nice feeling to tell people what to do with fingers and to see they follow it. That’s why people want to rise above others by any means. Worldly power is addictive. But Jesus teaches us here that politicians who like to be served by others are not great at all.*

Look at verses 43-44. *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.* The disciples had to learn the truth of God regarding spiritual leadership. What does it mean that whoever wants to be first must be slave of all? It means God exalts those who learn to be humble before him and learn to serve others. Moses was a great leader, not because he was an Egyptian prince, but because he learned to be humble and served the 600,000 whining former slaves in the wilderness. Why do many people consider Dr. Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) a great man in modern history? Is it because he held many Ph.D’s in music, medicine, theology, and philosophy? No. It is because he humbled himself and went to Africa to serve many needy people there.

Let us read verse 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.”* Jesus is the Son of God. But he renounced all his heavenly glory and power to come as a man in this world to serve sinners like us. The Creator God became a mere human being. This is more than a man becoming an earthworm. But Jesus did not come to this world as a political ruler to exercise authority over others. Luke 9:58 says, *Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”* Indeed, Jesus came as a shepherd and servant. He took care of the slow-learning disciples, widows, tax-collectors, prostitutes, the less privileged, and the downtrodden. In this way, Jesus became a humble servant. Finally, he gave his life as a ransom for many. Look at verse 45 again. *“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.”* Jesus’ service did not stop at healing the sick and preaching the kingdom of God. He gave his life as a ransom for many. Our Lord Jesus gave his life for our sins. May God help us to know what it really means that Jesus Christ gave his life for us!

The apostle Paul describes Jesus’ servanthship and God’s exaltation of Jesus in Philippians 2:5-11: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Sometimes we wonder why we have to give up so much to serve young students with the word of God. After all, we don’t owe anything to them, humanly speaking. However, spiritually speaking, we owe them much because of what Jesus has done for us. We must remember that Jesus gave his life for us to save us. And now he wants us to serve young people of our time with the same love.

In this passage, we learn that Jesus the Son of God humbled himself to be a servant of all. He served sinners like us to the end, until he gave his life on the cross as a ransom for our sins. May God help us to know deeply the meaning of Mark 10:45: *“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.”*