**JESUS CAME TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE**

***Mark 10:32-52***

***“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.” (45)***

When we last left off in Mark’s gospel, we learned about how to inherit eternal life. In 10:17-31, the author Mark contrasts a rich young ruler with Jesus’ disciples. In the case of the rich young ruler, he was given a choice, eternal life or worldly wealth. Unfortunately, he chose the wealth of the world. On the other hand, Jesus’ disciples left everything to follow Jesus. The renouncement of the love of the world is a core requirement to be a disciple of Jesus. In this passage, Mark talks about true greatness. True greatness lies in serving others. I believe everyone wants to be great. But to be great, one has to be a servant and be a slave to all. Do you want to be great? Are you then willing to be a servant to all? Let’s learn from our Lord Jesus, who came to serve and to give his life. May the Spirit speak to you personally to be a great servant leader for campus mission.

1. **Jesus predicts his death (vs. 32-34).**

We open this passage with Jesus leading his disciples and some followers to Jerusalem. As the disciples witnessed Jesus’ determination and raw courage to enter enemy territory, they were astonished. And those following Jesus were frightened. The atmosphere was tense. While the disciples were astonished and the crowd afraid, Jesus had a different attitude. In Luke 9:51, he writes, *“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”* Jesus had an unyielding determination to go to Jerusalem, in which he would not be dissuaded. Though he was going into danger, he still was determined to fulfill his mission.

Knowing what was going to happen, Jesus took the Twelve aside and began to teach them the gospel message. Look at verses 33-34. ***“‘We are going up to Jerusalem,’ he said, ‘and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the 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 is the third time Jesus has made this special announcement to his disciples in which he informs them, in increasing detail, of what the cross will involve. And each time when he spoke about this, he includes the promise of the resurrection, which they never really seem to hear.

Based on his message and the proceeding teaching in this chapter, he is going to Jerusalem to become the Suffering Servant. As the Suffering Servant, Jesus would be condemned to death though he was innocent. He would be handed over to the Gentiles. They would treat Jesus like a worst criminal. They would mock Jesus as they wished. They would spit on Jesus. They would flog Jesus mercilessly. The crowd would shout, “Crucify him, crucify him.” They would whip Jesus until blood would flow like a river from his bruised body. Finally, they would nail him on the cross.

Jesus’ suffering and death are related to our sin problem. Jesus died to bear our shame and the burden of sin. Jesus died on the cross to pardon our sins and sanctify us to become children of God. Jesus’ death on the cross was the emblem of God’s love for all sinners. 1 Peter 2:24 says, *“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”* Jesus’ death was to heal our wounds inflicted by our sins. Jesus, the Suffering Servant, bore our sins through his suffering and death on the cross.

What is the purpose of Jesus retelling this prediction a third time? Jesus repeated this teaching because Jesus wanted to prepare their minds for what was to come and to help them accept the gospel from their hearts. It was essential that they accept his suffering, death and resurrection for their own salvation; this would be the focal point of their faith and the content of their message to proclaim to the world. So Jesus repeated it again and again, even when they were too afraid to ask him about it. Here we learn an important lesson. In raising disciples of Jesus, including our children, and even ourselves, we must repeatedly teach the gospel, although it scares people and makes them very uncomfortable. Like Jesus, we need to share full gospel message, both grace and truth, the cross and resurrection, and suffering and glory.

1. **True greatness (vs. 35-52)**

 How did the disciples respond to the prediction of his death? Look at verse 35 and 37, ***“Teacher…we want you to do for us whatever we ask…Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”*** What a tremendous imposition! Contrary to Jesus’ teaching, the disciples revealed their human desire. John and James, the top disciples exposed their political aspiration. They were asking for the two most important positions next to Jesus. They wanted to become Jesus' right and left hand men. Let’s try to understand James and John for a moment. As they approached Jerusalem, they were anxious. They tried not to think of Jesus’ suffering and death. They expected him to soon establish his kingdom, appointing his cabinet members. They wanted to become the top leaders, because of their ambition. But Peter was always ahead of them. Realizing that they would not obtain the top position based on their performance, they colluded with each other for the purpose of defeating Peter. James and John’s example shows us that men and women have a real desire to be great. And based on Jesus’ reply, there is nothing wrong with that desire to be great because God created us to be great. But the problem lies within our concept of greatness. Does our concept of greatness come from God or from the world? That is what we need to examine.

Now let’s look at Jesus’ response to his disciples’ request. Notice, Jesus did not rebuke them for their request because they revealed their noble desire to be great. Yet he was still patient with them and had hope for them. And, he was ready to serve them patiently. But, Jesus wanted them to realize that there was a cost to having such a position. Look at verse 38, ***“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?”*** Jesus is telling them that they don’t understand what is involved in what they are asking. They are ignorant of the cost and price that a position like that would demand. Here, "the cup" means the cup of sorrow and suffering (Mt 26:39); and "the baptism," the baptism of his death on the cross. (Ro.6:4) Jesus, himself, was on the same path as they desired to follow. And now, Jesus was willing to share his glory with them if they would also participate in his suffering.

They completely misunderstood Jesus when they said, ***“We can.”*** They felt ready to do anything to get what they really wanted. Surprisingly, Jesus accepted their answer, saying, ***“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.” (39-40).*** As Jesus predicted, they both participated in his suffering. James became the first martyr among the Twelve (Ac 12:2). And, John suffered much and was exiled on the island of Patmos for Christ (Rev 1:9). As far as the positions are concerned, Jesus kindly told them that the Father in heaven is the Giver of the right and left position of the throne of the eternal King. This means that our position will be given to us in the kingdom of God according to God’s sovereign plan. We don’t have to worry about where we will sit because God knows where we will sit.

***“When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.” (41)*** Until now, the other disciples were friendly with James and John because they appeared to be quiet and to have no interest in positions. But through this event they revealed that they were also very politically ambitious. They were angry and upset with them because they got to Jesus first. Competition is not always bad; it can stimulate us to produce the best result, if we desire to please God. But if competition is driven by selfish ambition, it has serious consequences: jealousy, strife, division, hatred, bitterness and dissension. It dishonors God and destroys Christian communities. Then Christ’s name is blasphemed among unbelievers. So, Paul said, *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit” (Php 2:3)*. Let’s take this warning to heart.

What did Jesus say to them? Look at verse 42, ***“…You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.”*** Notice that Jesus sets aside all this business of politicking and maneuvering and asking for favors and special privileges. Jesus explained to them the worldly view of greatness. Worldly view of greatness depends on the power of money and human authority. It is based on how many people we can command or control. It is based on how many servants they own. The kings lorded over his people and the officials exercised their authority at will. They treated their slaves like their own property. The disciples thought about greatness in terms of exercising their authority. But this is the world’s concept of greatness. Lording over is not the way of true greatness.

God’s people must have a different concept of greatness. 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.”*** Jesus told the disciples that they should not think as the world thinks or values. This meant that their mindset, value system and lifestyle needed to be different from Gentile rulers. Jesus introduced a totally different concept of greatness in the Christian community. The word “whoever” means a general principle which applies universally. It indicates that anyone willing to practice his teaching can become great. It is not limited to a few people. Anyone and everyone can be great. The problem is how. How can we be great?

Jesus said, ***“must be your servant”*** and ***“must be slave of all.”*** ***“Servant”***? ***“Slave of all*”**? Here Jesus urges us to learn the attitude of a servant or a slave to become great. This was revolutionary. In Plato’s “Republic,” written about 400 years before Christ, Socrates’ ideal civilization was characterized by four virtues: wisdom, courage, moderation and justice. Under Plato’s influence, those who wanted to be leaders tried to cultivate these virtues. But servantship was not regarded as a virtue. At that time, servants and slaves were hardly regarded as human beings; they were living tools. It was unthinkable for one with the attitude of a servant or slave to be a leader. Servantship was burdensome duty. However, Jesus introduced servantship as the most important virtue to become great.

But for the disciples, this was still difficult to hear, and even more harder to practice. They needed an example. Jesus set the example. Let’s 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.”*** The word **“even”** is significant. As the title Son of Man indicates, Jesus is the Messiah and glorious King of the universe (Da 7:13-14). He is in very nature God, who is worthy of all honor and praise and service from all human beings. He could be the exception to this teaching. But even Jesus became a servant. Therefore, there is no exception; anyone and everyone who wants to be great must learn servantship. Jesus’ servant leadership began with himself. Though he is in very nature God, he did not think he should be equal with God. Rather, he gave up his rights and privileges as God, in an act of renunciation. Jesus set aside his power and glory and took on the weaknesses of human flesh. Even among human beings, Jesus became a servant, not a ruler and gave his life as a ransom for many.

What, then, does it mean to serve? Servantship has many aspects. Let’s think three characteristics. **First, we must imitate Christ by denying oneself.** What I mean here to deny oneself is to deny the desire to be served. Jesus denied his desire to be served. Everyone wants to be valued by others and to feel important. It is a deeply rooted human desire. Though Jesus was worthy of all honor, glory and praise from all human beings (Rev 5:12), he relinquished this desire. Rather, he served others. Serving is not just doing acts of service for others, like fixing cars or cleaning houses. Serving has a much deeper meaning; it is to imitate Christ. To imitate Christ, we need to be changed on the inside. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse our sins and purify our hearts. Only Jesus living within us can enable us to serve as he did. Therefore, to serve others, we must imitate Jesus and take care of others before ourselves by denying our love of self.

**Second, we must love others.** Jesus showed his love by serving others, even those that were opposed to him. He also served those who were unlovable—like prostitutes, money launderers, and the demon-possessed. He also loved those who had become out casted because of society—like the widows, the lame, the sick, the blind, and the paralyzed. Jesus said that the true mark of discipleship is love, John 13:34-35 says, *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* Jesus served his disciples, caring and loving them one by one, bearing all their weaknesses, and even washing their dirty feet (Jn 13:5). When we remember how much Jesus has served and loved each of us to the point of death, we can love others and become servants of them.

**Third, we must be humble.** Servantship is grounded in humility. Humility is not just a means to attain a goal. Humility is a mindset before God and the imitation of Christ on the most foundational level. So, Apostle Paul urges believers: *“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:” Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very natureof a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Php 2:5-8)* Humility serves. Humility gets down low and lifts others up. Humility looks to the needs of others and gives time and effort to help with those needs. Jesus took the form of a servant and humbled himself, even to the point of death. ***“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”*** Humility measures everything it does by whether it serves the good of other people.

Jesus’ servantship has had a huge impact on the world. So many people have followed Jesus’ example and lived a truly great life. Take, for example, Abraham Lincoln. When he began his career as a lawyer, Edward Stanton opposed him in many ways. Once Stanton said, “We don’t need to go to Africa to see a gorilla. If we go to Springfield, Illinois we meet Gorilla Lincoln.” Stanton continued to attack Lincoln after the election, saying it was a “national disaster.” Everyone noticed that he was Lincoln’s enemy. Yet when Lincoln formed his Cabinet, he appointed Stanton as Secretary of War, the most important position at the time. Lincoln’s aides strongly opposed this. Lincoln responded, “I don’t care if he despises me 100 times. I cannot find such a qualified person as him to overcome this crisis.” His aides responded, “Still, he is an enemy. We must get rid of him.” Lincoln said with a smile, “I also think so. We should get rid of our enemies from our hearts. When we practice Jesus’ words, ‘Love your enemy,’ we can make our enemies our friends. Then our enemy will be gone and we will earn a friend. We can kill two birds with one stone.” Lincoln truly imitate Christ by denying his self-love, loving his enemy, and humbling himself as a servant. Stanton became Lincoln’s friend and coworker. He overcame many hardships during the Civil War and helped unite America. Later, when Lincoln was killed, Stanton was more sorrowful than others and said at his funeral, “Here the greatest man has been laid.”

Now look at verses 46-52. Jesus not only serve his disciples, but also a blind man named Bartimaeus. As Jesus passed through Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, a blind man, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging. Too many, he was a nobody. When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing through, he began to shout, ***“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*** He must have heard that Jesus healed many incurable diseases, including blindness. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah. So, he cried out for mercy. Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet. But he was not discouraged, nor did he fall into self-pity. He accepted this as his only opportunity to draw Jesus’ attention. So, he shouted all the more, ***“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*** His cry came from a mixture of desperation, hope and faith. This cry reached Jesus’ ear. Jesus could have been overwhelmed by the thought of his impending suffering and death. But, not only did Jesus hear this man’s cry, but he stopped and called him. After the urging of the crowed, he threw his cloak aside, jumped to his feet and came to Jesus (50). Jesus asked, ***“What do you want me to do for you?”*** (51a) This is the servant’s motto. He said, ***“Rabbi, I want to see”*** (51b). He could have asked for a big donation so he would not have to beg anymore. But he asked to see. Jesus blessed him, saying, ***“Go, your faith has healed you.”*** Immediately he received his sight and could see Jesus and followed him. One who serves a needy person with Christ’s mindset is truly great. Thank God for so many among us who serve the needy with Christ’s mindset, even though they are not recognized by people. Let’s learn Jesus’ servantship until we grow to be like him.

I have often thought about my position as a human resources coordinator in my work place. I have often struggled with my position because I don’t have authority to make too many decisions. I don’t have enough control. But the one thing my position is most like is a servant. I help customers. I help my fellow co-workers, I help the store managers. I help the department managers. And I help John Menard, indirectly. I often complain about my situation just serving others rather than being served, but I learned through this message that God blessed me to be more and more trained to serve others out of self-denial, love and humility. I thank my Lord Jesus, who has served me and taken care of me by giving his life for me I pray that I will continue to grow in self-less and unconditional love and humility to serve others as my Lord, Master Jesus Christ has served and loved me.

Through this passage, Jesus taught that he is the Suffering Servant who came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many through his suffering and death on the cross. Through his impending example, Jesus taught that serving others is true greatness. May the Spirit guide us to grow in true greatness through the example of Jesus.