

Mark 10:35-45

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[0 : 00] And together we read Mark chapter 10. We're going to pick up verse 35.! Jesus said to them, You do not know what you are asking.

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? And they said to him, We are able. And Jesus said to them, The cup that I drink you shall drink and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.

But to sit on my right or on my left, this is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared. Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.

Calling them to himself, Jesus said to them, You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.

But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

[1 : 28] Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for this text, and we thank you for those that are here. We pray that you speak to our hearts and minds, and you help us understand it, Lord, and give us a desire to apply it for your glory.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. I want you to see this morning from our text, a misguided ambition, the misguided ambition that is found even among the followers of Christ. This is of this same chapter that come before it, that there was the rich young ruler who came to Christ asking, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He had a desire in his heart.

He had a longing to inherit eternal life, and he had a longing to find what he must do, how he must behave in order to do so. Jesus answered that, and in answering that, Peter affirmed the reality that all of us have left everything, and Jesus even affirmed their sacrifice for the sake of following the Savior.

And then he declares to them, for the third one is on his way to Jerusalem. If you remember, they are amazed at the manner in which he went forward to Jerusalem, and he is going forward to his day of trial, to his time of suffering and persecution, and he begins to open up even each time that not only will he suffer at the hands of the religious leaders and those of the Jewish sect, but he will be given over to the Gentiles, and they will crucify him.

[2 : 58] But on the third day, he would rise again. All of these matters have been taking place as they are on their way. And now we find even some, those of his own number, who come to Christ with a question.

Matthew records this same event and tells us it is the mother of James and John who walks up and asks the question. Either way, we do know that it is desire of these two, quote unquote, sons of thunder, who have this as their ambition, whether or not they spoke to their mother or they did it themselves.

It is still the same motivating factor. It is the ambition of these two, and not only these two, as we will see from our text, of those following Christ. We are in the midst of, I believe, somewhere between the rich young ruler and those following Christ.

That is, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And the other extreme is, since I have eternal life, what must I do to make sure that I have a good position within it?

And the focus and the danger on both of those is that it is all concerned with who we are. It is concerned of what I can acquire or what I can possess. This is a temptation that is not just reserved for those following Christ here on the road, for it is a temptation that is even found among pastors.

[4 : 15] Fellow pastor and I had this same discussion just a few weeks ago. I was joking a moment ago about COVID, but we were talking about what we learned while going through that season.

How you had to learn contentment in Christ, not contentment in crowds or contentment in popularity, but rather you had to be content with who Christ was. And either you learned it and you grew in that reality as a pastor, or you suffered from it and the bottom got yanked out from underneath you.

Do you know that depression among pastors has more than doubled since 2019? And the falling away from the pastoral ministry has greatly increased.

It used to be that around 75 to 78% of pastors reported being extremely satisfied in ministry.

Today's number is somewhere around 45 to 55% of pastors say they are extremely satisfied.

And it is because maybe their ambition, maybe their desire is not what it should have been or even what it could have been, and we find that we fall flat.

[5 : 25] It is something that each of us have this trouble with, and it is this misguided ambition. The first thing that we notice from our text is there is a search for position. We have this tendency to write John off as being a little infinite, infinite, as being kind of easy, and being one who leaned upon the bosom of the Savior as he did in the Gospel of John.

Really strong and ambitious, but yet we do know that he is referred to as the sons of thunder. We do know that he was a fisherman by trade with his father Zebedee.

We do know that his brother James here is with him as well. And we know that these two come up to Christ as they suffer in Jerusalem with a question that is burning within their hearts.

But I want you to notice the question. Look at what it says. And even the wording of it. The two sons of Zebedee came up to him and saying, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.

That is a dangerous approach. We want whatever we ask from you. Today's world, we would call that name it and claim it theology.

[6 : 44] And too often, those who follow Christ have that same mindset. I will follow him as long as he will do whatever I ask of him to do for me. And not only is it a regard for self, but it is a utter disregard for everyone else.

We know from biblical accounts that not only are the other ten following them, but James and John's mother is there. We know that there are some other women that we will find around the foot of the cross that they are there as well.

There is a crowd or a group of disciples that are following Christ. And yet what we find is they say, we want you to do whatever we ask of you for us.

And it is this concern, this search, and it is a desire for a position. They're longing. By the way, don't miss it, they did not discount the reality that Christ would enter into glory.

For they said, when you enter into your glory, they affirmed the reality that Christ was going to enter into glory. They affirmed the reality that Christ was indeed a king and even a lord.

[7 : 52] They didn't understand it. We'll get to in just a moment what it would cost for that kingdom to really come to fruition. But they did acknowledge there would be a day in which he entered into his glory.

And unlike the thief on the cross that said, do not forget me, they said, we want you to appoint us.

We want one to sit on your right and the other to sit on your left. That is, we long for a position of prestige and we long for a position of authority and we long for a position of prominence.

Lord, make us important. And too often, I believe, even in our own hearts and minds as we follow Christ, our longing, and it is something that I have to constantly search myself over, am I doing this because I want to quote unquote be important in the sight of the king in his kingdom or am I doing this because he is important?

And we must look at our search because when we long to bring success and we long to do these matters, even when it comes to looking at what we do as a church and we pray through, Lord, should we do this?

Are we doing this so that everyone hears about who we are or are they doing it so that others hear about who he is? And when the question begins to be self-focused and others ignored, then it begins to be a very dangerous question.

[9 : 15] It is a search for position. We need to find contentment in who we are, but in case we think that James and John are the only ones, it says, and when the other ten heard this, they began to be indignant.

Why? They became enraged. Not because we can't believe you asked that. Really, the reality is they were saying we can't believe you beat us in asking that.

We long for that as well. They all had that misconception of following Christ. Peter's question is, Lord, we've left all. What do we get in return, right? We see here that they began to be a little upset because they too wanted that position.

They wanted to be prominent. They wanted to be people who held a place of authority. This is a temptation for all those who follow Christ, and if we're not careful, it is indeed a temptation for ourselves as well.

Secondly, we notice not only the search for position, but the suffering that was foretold. Jesus asked, you do not know, or he declares, you do not know what you ask.

[10:23] So, I love the fact that Christ even acknowledges our own ignorance. For he does not need anyone to teach him about the heart of man, for he knows what is in the heart of every man.

It tells us in the Gospel of John, the third chapter, Jesus says, you don't even know what you're asking for you really do not have a full conception of what the kingdom is about. They were seeking a position of political authority.

They were seeking a position of reign upon the earth in which there will indeed be a king and a throne upon the earth when Christ comes to sit upon the throne of David eternally, but the kingdom he was ushering in that they were speaking of, they had no idea.

They didn't know the suffering that would take place. They didn't know though he had told them three times, they were still ignorant to the reality of what was about to transpire. He says, you don't even know what you're asking, but can you drink of the cup which I am about to drink and be baptized with the baptism that I am about to be baptized with?

And they said, yes. Be careful what we acknowledge that we could do. But these two indeed do. Jesus says, you will indeed suffer. And we know historically speaking and biblically speaking, we get to the book of Acts that James is the first of the apostles to be beheaded for his faith.

[11:42] He suffered greatly for the sake of the kingdom as a professing believer. John suffers a tremendous amount until he is finally exiled to the island of Patmos for the sake of the gospel.

Jesus did not shy away from telling them that it would cost great suffering and that it would be at great expense even though they did not ask, did not even know what they were asking and why they were asking.

But he never once said that their suffering would bring the fulfillment of their desire. He never once said, because you are going to drink the cup and because you are going to undergo the same baptism, then I will indeed give you that position.

He just acknowledged that they were going to suffer. He never promises anything. It's much like we have seen from this text before that Jesus is absolutely honest and absolutely accurate in his wording to his followers.

But this brings us to this reality of the third thing, something that is so easily overlooked in the passage before us, that when he declares their suffering, it is almost as if he is asking, but if you would drink the cup and undergo the baptism, then you could have this position.

[12:56] But he does not because the third thing that we notice here is the sovereignty of God that is acknowledged. Don't overlook the sovereignty of God. It says in this passage, but to sit at my right hand or on my left, this is not mine to give.

Now, we need to understand that is not an implication of Christ being less than the Father, but rather it's just an acknowledgement of the order that exists within the Trinity.

Now, we're not going to try to define all that at this moment. We're just going to acknowledge it, that there is a proper order, and even then, he is saying in his humanity, it is not his privilege to give it to someone in his humanity, for in his deity it had already been sovereignly given.

So look at what the text says. It says, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared. God's love. It is just a subtle acknowledgement that though man may strive and though man may appeal and though man may have a desire for something greater, it is the sovereign purpose of God that ultimately brings about the position of each one.

Brother Jamie quoted and read from the book of Romans this morning, those whom God foreknew, he also predestined, and those whom he predestined, he has called, and those whom he has called, he has glorified.

[14:32] It is the sovereign progression of God's purposes, not simply the efforts of man's abilities. Even our position among the saints in glory, I believe, has already been sovereignly set, for we walk in the good works prepared beforehand that God has created for us.

And if he has prepared good works for us in this life, then surely those whom he has called to himself through the salvific knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, he has already sovereignly appointed a place in glory.

Now, you say, well, then pastor, that means we don't have to do anything. No, that means it frees us from the concern of striving for something. I do not have to push and battle for you, and we are not in a competition where we're all following Christ, and you're appealing to him before I get to him, and you're going to get a greater position simply because you asked and I didn't ask, which is what was going on among the disciples.

Some of them are saying, well, they asked before we got there, so they are going to have a greater position. No, what Christ is acknowledging here is your position, not only in this life, but also in eternal life, has already been appointed.

So, my friend, just follow Christ and labor for the sake of the king and the kingdom, not for the sake of position. It is laboring for the reality that God is absolutely in control.

[16:00] Will we suffer reward or suffer loss in our following? Sure. Paul says that there will be a reward for those who have walked faithfully, and some will suffer loss, and their works will be consumed because of the judgment that comes at that last time, but yet we see here it is for those who have been prepared.

The right hand and left hand had already been prepared sovereignly in the past, which brings us to really the last point of the text before us, and that is the standard that is modeled.

The theme of Mark can be found in the 45th verse of this chapter, but the theme of the believer's life ought to be found there as well. For it says that hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John, and calling them to himself, Jesus said to them, you know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.

What Jesus is saying here is this desire, this ambition is natural among men, but yet in the life of the believer, what does he say? But it is not this way among you.

That is, the follower of Christ, their life should look starkly different than the life of the world. Their desires and their ambitions should be different than the world for the sake of the kingdom.

[17:32] But whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servants, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. He begins to declare to them that the desires and the ways of the world are not to be the desires and the ways of the followers of Christ, but rather if we long to be first, then we ought to be servant.

If we long to be great, then we ought to make ourselves a slave of all. And that's really a reproach to many people. You know, it was a challenge in making the decision, and I'm thankful for deacons and elders and the group that helped make that decision, but it's always a challenge and always ways, like what do we do?

I told one lady this morning, I'm not going to call her out because I know she's watching, I don't want to get her in trouble. I said, you know, the way I look at it, I'm wrong either direction, but we're just going to go with it and see what happens. And that's okay.

But I do know that by being here this morning, I was here, Miss Lynn was here, Carrie was here, and Brayden was here, and Miss Lynn told me I needed to come out. She said, you need to get out of the office because there's a guy with his hand on the offering plate.

So I do know I had the opportunity to pray with one man who's not here. And I do know I had the opportunity through our provisions as a church to be able to bless that man to hopefully for his intended purposes of what he told me.

[18:53] That's on his conscience, it's not on mine. I do know I was able to put a hand on a man named Mike today and pray that the Lord would show him himself by being here.

And to me, that's enough. And I do know you're here. And we are content with that, that we can serve however the Lord has called us to serve.

In the smallest capacity and the greatest manner. There has to be contentment with that. Why? Because look at what it says, but even the Son of Man, which is Jesus' favorite title for himself and is referring to the book of Daniel, Daniel chapter 7, when the Son of Man will come in his glory. So don't miss this. Even the Son of Man, the one who's going to come in his glory on the clouds, the one who will go up to the Ancient of Days in the book of Daniel. But even the Son of Man, the one coming in glory, did not come the first time to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

His is the motto that has been exhibited for each and every one of us. He who holds the world in the palm of his hand. He who will come in the glory and splendor that has always been his.

[20 : 14] When he came among us the first time, came not to be served, but to serve. And he has called us to live in such a manner. Though often each one of us have misguided ambitions, we know that the standard that has been modeled for us is to be the servant of those around us and to give ourselves for their benefit.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for those that are here. What a joy to be gathered together. We thank you for your word and even the challenges that it brings us.

So, Father, as we come to this time of closing and we sing this hymn, we pray, Lord, that we would be equipped to be used by you for the remainder of this day, for the days ahead and for your glory and for the sake of the kingdom.

God, may we say, here we are. Do with us as you see fit. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. I'll see you next time.