

## “Sacrificial Service” – Mark 10:32-45

The way of the world is fundamentally different from the way of God’s kingdom. The world’s system teaches us take care of ourselves first. It exhorts us to look out for number one. But the Bible exhorts us differently:

*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:4)*

The world is self-centered. The kingdom is God-centered.

*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

So, for those of us who trust Jesus for our salvation, those of us who claim that Jesus is our Lord, we need to learn to get over ourselves. We need to get over our desire for self-promotion, and self-exaltation because it’s not about improving your “brand”. It is about structuring our lifestyle so that we point people to Jesus.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins by asking the question: What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. If you want to be truly satisfied in this life, you need to get over yourself and seek God’s glory. And despite what you might think, it is no sacrifice because as John Piper has famously said: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” Our peace and our joy are not at all in conflict with God’s glory. In fact, we will only feel truly at peace when we conform perfectly to the Lord’s will.

We are going to see a profound contrast in our text this morning. It is the contrast between our Lord’s heart for service, and the way of the world. Unfortunately, the way of the world is going to be illustrated by two of Jesus’ closest disciples. And the rest of them are going to get into the act too. So, let’s go to our text.

*Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. (Mark 10:32a)*

As we saw last week, Jesus led His disciples out on the road, traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. They had been hanging out in Perea, mainly because it wasn’t safe for Jesus anywhere close to Jerusalem. Folks expected this exceptional Rabbi to show up at the feast, and the religious leaders were on the lookout for Him.

*Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him. (John 11:57)*

The reason the disciples were amazed is that the Lord was absolutely determined to walk right into this hostile environment. Notice that Jesus was going before them. He was leading. They were hanging back and they were afraid, for good reason. The danger was real, even before He raised Lazarus from the dead. When He informed the disciples they were going up to Judea,

*The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?" (John 11:8)*

They knew the danger.

*Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." (John 11:16)*

But Jesus was pulling them along by the force of His personality. The Lamb who would take away the sin of the world had to be sacrificed at Passover. Jesus had an appointment to keep. And He knew exactly what was going to happen.

*Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." (Mark 10:32b-34)*

This is the third time Jesus has predicted His crucifixion and resurrection.

*And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31)*

*For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." (Mark 9:31)*

This third prediction is the most detailed of all. Jesus knew every detail. He knew because He understood perfectly what was prophesied in the Old Testament. But more than that, He knew because He is God the Son. As God, He is omniscient.

Just look at the details revealed in this one passage. He would be betrayed, and He was by one of His closest friends. He would be turned over to the chief priests and scribes. The council would condemn Him to death, but because they had no legal right to execute anyone, they would turn Him over to Pilate, a Gentile. He would be mocked. He would be scourged. And He would be killed. In Matthew's parallel account, we learn that Jesus even told them exactly how He would be executed.

*... deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to **crucify**." (Matthew 20:19)*

But, on the third day, He would rise.

Now, there are plenty of scoffers who will say that Jesus' crucifixion was a giant miscalculation, that His plan was to take Jerusalem by storm, to get Himself installed as King of the Jews. No, Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. He was giving Himself as a ransom for many because by His stripes we are healed. It was the only way to reconcile a people to Himself. He had to die for your sins, and my sins, for everyone who would believe. And He would be raised on the third day so that we could have a living relationship with Him, that if we confess Him as our Lord, and believe that God raised Him from the dead, we would be saved from the agonies of Hell. (Romans 10:9) It was the only way! Jesus was willing, and eager to go to the cross as a sacrificial Servant. Oh, He was not looking forward to the agonies He would endure.

*... for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)*

And now we will see the contrast between God's way and the way of the world.

*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." (Mark 10:35-37)*

You can find the same story in Matthew's Gospel and from Matthew, we learn that the guys' mother was the one who made the initial request. But there is no conflict, because all three were involved. All three wanted to see James and John installed in the positions of highest prominence in the kingdom. They were doing what they could to improve their brand.

That's a popular buzzword today, isn't it? It really means nothing more than successful self-promotion. "Look at me; I'm the best! I'm the most powerful. I'm the most successful. Buy my product and you too can be cool!" Well, Jesus answers them with a question:

*But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38)*

What is the cup Jesus would drink? It is filled with ...

*... the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. (Revelation 14:10)*

Jesus, the sinless One, would become sin for us and God was going to pour out His undiluted wrath on His one and only Son; millions of eternities in Hell concentrated on those few awful hours on the cross. Is it any wonder Jesus cried "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" (Mark 15:44) Jesus would become sin on a stick.

So ... are you guys ready for that?

*They said to Him, "We are able." (Mark 10:39)*

Really? Those are bold words. The reality would be a bit different, at least at first. After Jesus was arrested in the Garden,

*Then they all forsook Him and fled. (Mark 14:50)*

All of them! They went into hiding. But after Pentecost, we learn that what is completely impossible for human beings is completely possible with God.

*"You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; (Mark 10:39)*

They would indeed suffer for Christ's sake. James would be martyred for His witness. We read about it in the Book of Acts:

*Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. (Acts 12:1-2)*

Church tradition holds that John would be boiled in oil, but it apparently didn't take. We know that He was persecuted for his witness. He was exiled to the island of Patmos ... which wasn't a vacation. We don't know for certain what happened to the "disciple whom Jesus loved," but in any case, John was more than willing to face torture and death for His witness. And for the past 2,000 years, there have been countless Christian martyrs who faced the most horrific tortures and executions because they would not recant their faith.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, James and John would face severe persecution, but their request for prominence in Jesus' kingdom was denied. Their act of self-promotion was futile.

*... but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." (Mark 10:40)*

This is a curious statement, but it reveals a profound theological truth. Positions of eminence in the kingdom have been predetermined. They have been decreed in the eternal council of God. and not even Jesus can alter these eternal decrees. When it comes to the kingdom of God, self-promotion is foolish.

*But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (Mark 10:31)*

Our duty is never to promote self. Our duty is to promote Christ.

Not only was it foolish for James and John to try to promote themselves, It resulted in some serious friction among the disciples. The rest of the boys were ticked off!

*And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. (Mark 10:41)*

Now really, can you blame them? Maybe you've worked in an organization where one or two apple-polishers always managed to maintain favor with the boss. Those folks are never particularly popular. But listen, that sort of jealousy is not to be practiced in the Kingdom, so Jesus had to set them straight.

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. (Mark 10:42-44)*

Jesus draws a distinct contrast between the way of the world and the way of the kingdom. It should never be about exercising great authority. It should never be about ruling with an iron fist. It should never be about self-promotion. It should be about becoming a servant, not just looking out for your own interests. You need to be looking out for the interests of others.

Being great in the kingdom of God is about setting yourself aside so you can build up other people. Sacrificial service. And we have the greatest example of all in our Lord Jesus Christ.

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)*

Did Jesus give His life for you? Are you one of the many? Do you understand that without Jesus, you are completely without hope? You are a sinner. And the wages of sin is death ... forever death ... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23) He came to serve you, to die for you. And all you have to do is accept the gift of salvation by faith alone. "Yes Jesus, I want you to be my Lord. I believe you died for me and were raised on the third day."

Don't try to get to heaven by promoting yourself. Just accept the gift of salvation.

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)*

Then you can resolve to live a life of sacrificial service.