

# Kingdom Greatness

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Date: 22 October 2023

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[0:00] and if you want to open up your pew Bible to page 1006 and 1007, I'm going to read Mark 10, 35-45.

Jesus has now purposefully made His way. He's on His way to Jerusalem. So hear God's Word. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus and said to Him, Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You. And Jesus said to them, What do You want Me to do for You?

And they said to Him, Grant us to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your glory.

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 will drink.

[1:06] And with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. But to sit at My right hand or at My left is not Mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.

And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to Him and said to them, You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them.

And their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you.

But whoever will be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Amen. May God bless the hearing of His Word. Now, there are two types of people who populate. There are Packers fans and then there's everybody else. I thought that was going to...

[2:21] I thought that was going to be a little more powerful than that. Okay, let's go a little high class now. There are Grey Poupon fans and everyone else.

It's a kind of mustard. Today, what you're going to see is Jesus makes a similar kind of statement. There are two kinds of people populating the globe. There are the self-serving takers and the self-sacrificial givers.

Two ways to live. There are two ways to relate to others. There are two ways that are in sharp contrast to one another. There's the way of the world and then there's the way of the kingdom. Two ways spouses can relate to each other. Two ways parents can relate to their children. Two ways friends can relate with each other. Two ways in which leaders relate with those that they lead.

[3:28] Two ways in which employees relate to fellow employees in the workplace. Two ways in which brothers and sisters in the church relate to one another. Self-serving takers follow the way of the world.

Self-sacrificial givers. They're the ransomed of Jesus. And they follow the way of the Son of Man. The difference between the two, of course, is Jesus. So, this morning we're going to look at two sections of this passage. In verses 35-40, we see two self-serving takers.

They happen to be disciples. In verses 41-45, we see one self-sacrificing giver. Behold your king, the Son of Man.

What kind of spouse are you? What kind of friend are you? What kind of employee are you? What kind of elder are you? What kind of deacon are you?

[4:35] Are you a typical taker or a Christ-like giver? Let's look at verses 35-40. In these verses, we see a very interesting dialogue between

Jesus and two of His disciples, James and John.

Now, just to remind you of who James and John are, they are part of the inner three of Jesus' disciples. It was James and John and Peter that Jesus said, come with me, we're going to Jairus' house.

And they watched Jesus raise Jairus' daughter from the dead. Not all twelve, just those three, Jairus' wife in the room.

These two were also with Peter in Jesus on the mountaintop in Mark 9 when they watched Jesus transfigured in their midst. These two disciples were part of Jesus' inner circle.

And so this dialogue, what we're about to see is all the more audacious. But let me give you a little bit more background too in terms of the context of chapter 10 of what precedes the dialogue.

[5:57] Starting in verse 17, Jesus has this interaction with a rich young man. He eventually tells this rich young man, hey, if you want to follow me, you've got to give up everything you've got.

This rich young man goes away sad and doesn't follow Jesus. That's where Jesus says, hey, it's more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

It's like, it's more difficult than a camel going through the eye of a needle. Do you remember that statement? His disciples are like, well, then who can be saved? And to the good news to our ears, Jesus says, well, what is impossible for man is possible for God.

And then Peter says, we've left everything to follow you. And then check out what he says in verses 29 through 31 in chapter 10. Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions.

and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last and last first. So Jesus, Jesus has been clear.

[7:19] If you're going to follow him, it's going to be hard to follow him. But there's another piece that is before the dialogue that I want you to see. They're on their way to Jerusalem, verse 32.

Some of the disciples are amazed. Others are afraid. And Jesus says this is his third prophecy of his coming suffering, death, and resurrection.

And he says this. He says, See, we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes. And they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles and they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him and after three days he will rise.

And so, this is the tone that Jesus has been speaking to his disciples immediately before this dialogue before Jesus, James, and John.

And it helps you to understand how absolutely audacious it is. Suffering awaits. But apparently, that is far from the minds of James and John.

[8:30] So let's look at this dialogue. In verse 35, James and John, Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.

It's incredibly presumptuous. It's not even a request. We want you to do whatever we want you to do, Jesus. It's kind of like this.

Let's say I find out that you have an outstanding credit score and you've got a credit card limit that is through the roof. I come up to you and I said, hey, would you give me your card so I can use it for whatever I want?

You'd be like, that's ridiculous. It's incredibly presumptuous. It's so arrogant that you would presume upon me to make that kind of request.

They haven't asked Jesus what they want. What they're doing here is they're asking Jesus for a blank check before they do the actual kind of request, if you want to call it that.

[9:41] What we have here are two self-serving takers. Two disciples who don't have the things of God on their mind. They have the things of man. Jesus says in verse 36, what do you want me to do for you?

I would love to know what's going on in Jesus' mind at that moment. Is he thinking like, oh, this is going to be interesting. Let's just play this handout. We know where Jesus is going.

Jesus is going to teach them something. As a matter of fact, Jesus asks this same identical question in verse 51 of chapter 10.

What do you want me to do for you? But that time, it's with a blind man, Bartimaeus. And then Jesus grants him what he requests. They're in contrast.

In verse 37, we get to the actual kind of nature, the heart of the request.

[10:49] Grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory. Again, do you see a question mark? There's no question mark. This is a demand.

Give us the places of honor when you ascend your throne. They have a very particular thing in mind.

They're still thinking that Jesus is going to kind of push out the Romans, set up his rule in Jerusalem, and reign over the Jewish people. That's what they're thinking. They're thinking very worldly.

They're thinking as every other person who doesn't follow Jesus would think. They're tone deaf to what Jesus has been repeatedly saying all along here.

That there's going to be suffering, rejection, death, resurrection, with persecutions. It appears as though James and John are seeing Jesus as a means of political fame and fortune.

[12:04] Do you remember last week I was preaching out of Mark 8? Jesus rebukes Peter, get behind me, Satan, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man.

That's what's going on here. James and John are not setting their minds on the things of God in a suffering Messiah. Messiah. They are setting their mind on the things of man.

They want to be highly thought of. And don't miss this. They think they deserve these two places of honors.

They've assessed themselves as worthy. They are putting themselves first. And did you notice the ten aren't there?

The other ten disciples? James and John are being sneaky. They're jockeying. Sober, isn't it?

[13:11] When you see two of Jesus' own disciples disciples who are kind of in the inner room, the inner group, well, they're seeking to use Jesus for their own fame and fortune.

They've got ulterior motives here. And what God's Word is doing us for this morning is God's Word is like this spotlight of kingdom holiness that is shining upon the hearts of not just James and John but into our hearts as well.

God's Word because it's not just James and John who have a tendency of being selfish. Of seeing opportunity and taking what we can get.

We all can use Jesus for our own fame and fortune. You know, the greatest, most grotesque distortion of that going on right now are those preachers of the health and wealth gospel that are proclaiming Jesus in order to line their own pockets and to build their own empires.

It is wrong. But let's be honest, we all can make Christianity less about Jesus and more about us.

[14:38] We can see church service as serving in different capacities as a way of being recognized and being honored. And we forget the way of Jesus which is marked by suffering and service.

we have this tendency of setting our minds on the things of man and not on the things of God.

And in verse 38 Jesus won't have it. He says you do not know what you're asking. they're being presumptuous very arrogant.

And he goes on to say you know do you not realize are you able to drink the cup I'm going to drink are you are you able to be baptized with the baptism I will be baptized with.

What he's talking about is coming suffering. And in verse 39 they're like sure we're able yeah sign us up.

[16:02] Having no idea of what Jesus is talking about. But Jesus does. In verse 39 he says to them the cup that I drink you will drink and with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized.

Do you notice the wills? It's future tense it's going to happen. James will be beheaded. John will be exiled to Patmos.

Both will suffer deeply for Jesus. It's going to happen. They don't realize what they're asking. Jesus knows what lies ahead. But in verse 40 Jesus returns back to their quote unquote request. request. And he says but to sit at my right hand or my left is not mine to grant. They don't get to determine where they sit let alone him.

That's the father's prerogative. It is the father God who is in control. It is he who will reward kingdom greatness of which James and John do not understand.

[17:18] So here we have this dialogue between Jesus and his kind of two disciples from his inner network of guys and what we're seeing is they're self serving takers not setting their mind on the things of God but on the things of man.

And the question that we need to be asking ourselves is does that kind of presumption reside in us? Is it in me? Am I putting myself first before others in my marriage in my parenting in my friendships in the workplace here at the church?

But Jesus isn't done yet. He's got more to say. And so we move from these two self serving takers this dialogue now to the one self sacrificing giver and what Jesus is going to do in verses 41 through 45 is he's going to bring this clear contrast between the way of the world and the way of his kingdom.

Look at verse 41. Oh no! And when the ten heard it the other ten find out. We don't know how but they found out that James and John have approached Jesus in order to say hey can we have the two seats of honor in your glory?

[18:50] They're indignant with James and John. We've got a conflict on Jesus ministry team. What is he going to do? But before we see what he does let me let just ask the ten some questions.

Hey ten disciples why are you so mad? I'm guessing Peter representing the ten would say it's totally uncool for James and John to sneak around our backs and make their so-called request totally uncool.

But then we'd ask another question. Guys are you so upset because James and John obviously don't have the things of God in mind but the things of man?

Or are you upset because they beat you to it? They made the claim that you were wanting to make. They approached Jesus and talked about the thing that you actually want.

Do you know how we know the answer to that question? Because Jesus rebukes them all. You see the anger of the ten was not a godly anger but an anger from setting their minds on the things of man.

[20:23] So in verse 42 what we see is Jesus calls them to him and when he calls them he's calling James and John and the ten. He's like a good coach.

He's like okay time out. Okay team let's huddle up and let's work out this fight that we have among ourselves and let me help you process it through.

Let's all get on the same page. And what Jesus does is starting in verse 42 is he sets up this contrast. He says to them you know and what he's about to do is point to something that everybody is aware of.

It's an observation. It's something that they would all say yeah that's true. He says you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them.

When he's talking about the rulers of the Gentiles he's talking about the political leaders of the time that don't fear God they're outside of Israel and they lord it over the people which means it's heavy handed leadership it is manipulative it is leadership by threat it is very much self-serving you go after you take power you keep power in order to advantage yourself lord it over and then when Jesus talks about the great ones he's like hey it's we all know how the world talks about great telling people what to do how many people do your bidding how many people follow you both of those the rulers of the gentiles and those great ones who exercise authority it has that closes with that phrase over them top down what Jesus is doing is pointing to the current leaders of his day and saying that there are models of self serving take what you can get way of life now we could do the same thing today we could point to the political system of the

[22:52] United States and say both Republican and Democrat we've got some poster children for this way of being take take what you can get you get

power you keep power and then you domineer to keep it one of the things I'm grateful for being a citizen of the United States in our system of government is that we have a system of checks and balances that are intentionally designed to hedge against tyranny so Jesus is pointing to something in their day that they could all see and experience and say yeah we know that lorded over stuff we see it we experience it for us it's in the news we know it but it's verse 43 in which comes the rebuke but it shall not be among you this take what you can get this self serving taking but this shall not be among you the it is that lord it over domineering kind of kind of influence by force might is right kind of approach and Jesus saying that's the way of the world it's not the way of my kingdom it's setting your mind not on the things of god but on the things of man it's adopting godless ways of being to try to get what you want and Jesus is not simply speaking to James and John here he's speaking to all twelve because all twelve had set their minds on the things of this world as a way of trying to get what they want adopting worldly practices to get the things that they desire and they're fighting over it on the way to Jerusalem where Jesus is just days out from being crucified

I'd like to try to bring this home a little bit right now there's a little repeated phrase in verses 43 and 44 it's the phrase among you but it shall not be so among you but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all Jesus is not talking about those outside of his kingdom Jesus is referring to those inside of his kingdom specifically to the twelve disciples but he's addressing us this morning we're the among you those who have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into his kingdom the kingdom of the beloved son all by his grace all by his mercy and so what Jesus is saying to us is this shall not be so among you Christ the King church it shall not be among your marriages it shall not be among your parenting it shall not be among your friendships among your work relationships it should not be among your church if this isn't to be among us what is to be among us if self-serving take what you can get mindset of the world isn't to be governing our relationships what mindset must be governing our relationships

Jesus doesn't leave his disciples hanging and he doesn't leave us hanging he says so in verses 43 and 44 instead of this over the top domineering approach whoever would be great among you he's riffing off that word great whoever would be great among you must be your servant whoever would be first among you must be slave of all Jesus turns the world's idea of greatness completely upside down his kingdom is an upside down kingdom the kingdom mindset that governs our relationships is not what can you get it's what can you give it's not how many people are serving you it's who are you serving those words servant and slave those two words are referring to the uttered nobodies of that culture at that time servants and slaves they did the most menial work they they had to orient their lives around serving others was anybody like shocked by by

James and John and their request like that is ridiculous totally audacious what Jesus is saying here is flabbergasting kingdom kingdom greatness is not measured in what you can get it's measured in what you can give it's not measured in how many people are following you it's in service to others when you set your mind on the things of man you end up serving yourself but when you set your mind on the things of God you die to yourself to serve others for their greatest good and in verse 45 behold your king he puts himself forward as the ultimate example of a slave of all he himself became a servant he himself was humiliated in verse 45 he says for even the son of man came all along we've been talking about when you hear that title son of man think of

Daniel chapter 7 verses 13 and 14 the ancient of days God the father gives to the son of man a dominion a kingdom that will be everlasting and indestructible and this dominion and kingdom is made up of people from all the different nations and one might think reading Daniel chapter 7 that this is going to be a political figure who sets up shop in the middle of Jerusalem and starts claiming rights and flexing his muscles but what Jesus is saying here is no the son of man did not come to serve to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many let me read to you Philippians chapter 2 do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves there's the kingdom ethic let each of you look not only to his own interest

but also to the interest of others have this mind among yourselves which is yours in [31:32] Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of man and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even to death on a cross of all the human beings that have ever walked the face of the earth Jesus Christ could have lorded it over everyone but he chose not to what he chose to do is willingly give his life as the ultimate self sacrificial gift to a sinful humanity he became a ransom for many that word ransom just means it means a payment for someone who is in captivity a prisoner or a slave to set them free ransom for that word that preposition for it actually means in the place of as a substitute he ransomed himself for many and the many are all those sinners who would one day recognize him as their one true king

God's grace incarnate and respond by denying themselves taking up their crosses and follow him ransom for many revelation chapter seven we have this multitude of people from every tribe tongue and nation gathered around the throne and they are saying salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb the many Jesus makes it very clear here that his kingdom operates according to a different set of rules than the world and he is no exception in fact he is the greatest example he rebukes his disciples for their worldly thinking and he corrects their thinking with kingdom thinking putting himself forward as the ultimate example behold your king brothers and sisters that's our king that's the tone so what would you say is the point of this passage well Jesus is presenting us two ways to live two ways of relating to others there's the way of the world of self serving take what you can get and there's the way of the kingdom self sacrificial giving what you got and the difference between the two is the son of man is Jesus he's the great change agent behold your king He's he's the that lord bet his death enslaved the reason did sons acum the morality ■■■ this nation it's it's it's it's you were ransomed by the blood of Jesus so that you would no longer live for yourself in this world, but live for Jesus and His kingdom in this world. Which means we walk in His way. The way of self-sacrificial giving of ourselves for the good of others. That's what we're seeing here. It's not only the disciples who need a correction. We all do. And unlike the great ones of our day, our King is humble at heart.

[35:52] Do I have an amen? So, have you become a follower of Jesus yet? Have you declared Him as your King?

Have you come to see this Jesus as the Son of Man who is totally God and totally man, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, who is humble at heart and who gave Himself for you?

The way to respond to God's love and Jesus to you, God's grace to you, is to go all in. To deny yourself, to take up your cross, and to follow Him.

Don't waste any more of your life for trying to take what you can get. Rather, come give your life together following Jesus with us, an imperfect church, seeking to serve others.

If you're not a Christian, make today the day that you become a follower of Jesus. Now, if you are a Christian, I'm not sure if you guys know this, but usually I write my final version of the sermon on Saturdays.

[37:10] So, yesterday morning, I came bounding down the stairs, and I greeted with Jenny with this question. Jenny's my wife. Jenny, are you a typical taker or are you a Christ-like giver?

She didn't miss a beat. Both. How true, isn't it? If I were to ask you that question, are you a typical taker or a Christ-like giver, I'm thinking you probably say, hmm, yes?

Christian, have you been setting your mind on the things of man and not the things of God? Have you been taking instead of giving? If Jesus were standing here right now, would He say, come follow me, brother.

Come follow me, sister. Come. Time to turn from that. In your marriage, would you ask your self-sacrificial king how you've been insisting on your own way in your marriage?

Are you being heavy-handed, wife? Are you being heavy-handed, husband? Are you domineering? Are you threatening? Are you bowing up to get your way?

[38:34] That's not the way of the kingdom. Confess to your king and to your spouse the error of your ways.

But I would urge you, whether you're a husband or wife, begin to think out of a Christ-like heart of giving, what is one specific and concrete step you can take to be Christ-like to your spouse?

Can I be candid with you in one way I'm trying to do that? I'm trying to cook. Jenny's working. She's a kindergarten teacher. I'm trying to cook, which means I warm up frozen pizzas.

But the idea here is I want to serve my wife. I know what she's going through. Parenting. Are you being overbearing in your parenting?

Are you parenting by force, out of the flesh, harshness, threat, domineering, heavy-handed? It's not the way of the kingdom.

[39:50] Confess what your king shows you with gladness. It's his kindness to you. And ask your children as they are able to forgive you. As they're able to understand.

And I would just encourage you find one or two ways that you can be specific and concrete in being a giver to your children.

Give yourself. Give time. Give your ears. Listen well. The workplace. In your workplace, are you treating people like everybody else in your workplace is treating people?

Are you jockeying for position like everybody else is jockeying for position? Are you being harsh or heavy-handed? Are you being manipulative? Are you trying to get what you can when you can like everybody else?

Well, I would invite you to open yourself to your king. open your work life to your king. Ask him to show you areas where you are not living out the kingdom ethic in your workplace.

[41:06] And you might say, well, that's never going to fly. It doesn't matter. This is your king. And his way is the right way.

The good way. The kingdom way. So confess your sin. Now you're going to need to probably ask the question, what does it look like for me to live out my role at my workplace as a citizen of his kingdom?

That is very fruitful thinking. The question is, do you need to ask anybody at work to forgive you for being harsh?

Finally, my brother elders, pastors, deacons, leaders of Christ the King Church, just hear Jesus' words.

Just hear them in verse 43. This domineering way, it shall not be so among you.

[42:12] that's not the way we roll. We follow our king and we lead out of the same heart as our king. Servants.

Slaves of all. There are two types of people populating the planet today. The ransomed of Jesus and everybody else.

And as the ransomed of Jesus, we value what he says is kingdom greatness. It's not in the taking from others, but it's in the giving to others, just as he gave himself for us.

We can't shed our blood for people and save them. Only he can. But we can take our cues from him and be like him, serving others.

Don't be a typical taker. Be more and more a Christ-like giver. And the difference, of course, is Jesus. Fix your eyes on him who gave himself for you so that we could give ourselves for others.

[43:21] Let's pray. Lord Jesus, help us. Help us. We struggle with harshness and being domineering.

We struggle with insisting on our own way and you died to rescue us daily from that. God, would you use our church?

Would you pour out your grace upon us? And would you make us a kingdom blessing in our city that we would stand out more and more simply in the way we treat others?

God, thank you so much. Lord Jesus, thank you so much that you are a gentle and lowly king. We look forward to your return.

It's your name we pray. Amen.