

What Love Is This?

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[0 : 0 0] what is a christian we all have our own ideas of what a christian is and what a christian is not is a christian someone who obeys a set of out-of-date commandments is a christian someone who engages in strange religious rituals or are all christians judgmental hypocrites who need to get with the times as a church we're not always very good at explaining clearly what it means to be a christian that to be a christian means that we do something believe something or are something it may surprise you to know that not all of us who are here today were always christians i wasn't we may have been brought up in a christian country maybe even in a christian home with christian parents but we weren't always christians i wasn't those who are now christians became a took a life-changing decision to become christians those who are now christians made a life-changing decision to become christians but why did we do that so what does it mean to be a christian let me answer the second part of that question first what does it mean to be a christian simple a christian is a follower or disciple of jesus christ a christian is a follower or disciple of jesus christ christian is a follower or disciple of jesus christ a christian is a follower or disciple of jesus christ because we became fascinated with who jesus christ is and what jesus christ has done for us what became of first importance to us wasn't the money in our bank accounts or the number of likes we got on our instagram posts but getting to know and following jesus christ for ourselves we learned how much jesus loved us and how he demonstrated his love by dying on a roman cross to take away all our sins and give us eternal life we listened to his call on the bible to believe and trust in him with our lives we became christians our our verse today in mark chapter 10 verse 45 it comes from the mouth of jesus himself it tells us who he is why he came and what he calls us to do for him as his followers and disciples he says even the son of man came not to be served but to but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many perhaps today as we all think through what jesus said here you too will decide for yourself to become a christian a disciple a follower of jesus christ this verse tells us two things there should be a slide up there trace the service of jesus and trust the service of jesus trace the service of jesus and trust the service of jesus to put it in one sentence follow jesus by having faith in jesus be like jesus by believing in jesus this is a challenge to all of us to go back to the foundations of our faith and remember why it was we became christians in the first place

first of all tracing the service of jesus tracing the service of jesus this verse comes at the end of a passage we read together which begins with james and john two of jesus disciples asking grant us to sit one at your right hand one at your left in your glory one of the reasons that we love the bible is because it shows the mistakes even its heroes make and this request from james and john was a mistake they thought that to follow jesus was a pathway to honor status and glory because they saw how earthly power works as jesus says in verse 42 you know that those who are considered rulers of the gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them so for james and john greatness was all about power rule and so they thought that for us to be great in the kingdom of god must mean to sit on a throne and to be served by everyone else that's the way it is in the world is it not that the greatest in our society are the masters they have rule they have power they have influence they have authority even if they don't keep them themselves they make rules for the rest of us human societies all follow a top down pattern where the greatest are those at the very top and the least are those at the very bottom the greatest sit on thrones of social media political power or sporting brilliance and they expect everyone else to serve them by contrast jesus says in verse 43 it shall not be so among you whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever be first among you must become the slave of all in the kingdom of god true greatness means not to be served by anyone but to serve everyone to be a servant and a slave you know that nearly a third of everyone who lived in the roman empire at the time jesus was speaking these words was a slave she wasn't her own she belonged to a master she wasn't free to do what

she wished she had to live to serve the wishes of her master many of the earliest christians were slaves but great in the eyes of this world or small in the eyes of this world if a person wants to be a christian it involves stepping down from rule and authority into service and slavery true greatness in the kingdom of god follows a bottom up pattern the exact opposite of true greatness in human society the greatest in the kingdom of god and the church are the servants of all they are the least of all who are the greatest in the kingdom of god those who sit on thrones of gold or those who suffer on crosses those who wear a crown of gold or those who wear a crown of thorns consider jesus in verse 45 he calls himself the son of man

the son of man now this is a title he takes for himself from the old testament where the son of man is described as a glorious majestic figure to whom all earthly authority dominion and power belongs so the jesus who speaks these words is glorious and heavenly high and majestic in other parts of the bible he's called king of kings lord of lords he is greater than all earthly kings and the roman emperor in his golden palace we're told that even the mighty angels of heaven bow down before him and call him holy lord in other parts of the bible we learn that he is god the son through whom the father created the universe and here in mark 10 he's telling us i didn't come to be served i came to serve as we read through the other gospels we learn about a jesus who never lords it over others he serves them he had every right in fact he had the only right to sit on a throne as the king of the universe but he stoops down low to serve the helpless and the weak the vulnerable and the ashamed he became the lowest of the low he said of himself foxes of holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head he became a homeless attendant traveling from place to place no palaces for king jesus no thrones for king jesus no crowns for king jesus he went to sleep with rocks under his head not feather pillows on the night of his betrayal he took off his outer garments his clothes and he wrapped a towel around his waist and he filled a basin with water and he washed his disciples feet he took the lowest place the place of a slave because it was the job of a slave in those days to wash the feet of house guests the jesus who in other places still storms calms waves and hushes hurricanes stands there all but naked and he's washing the dirt and the dust from the feet of his disciples yes these disciples who at the same time were competing with each other to be top dog and the next day having been arrested jesus was treated like the worst of criminals he was whipped he was spat upon he was mocked and he was tortured how the angels of heaven must have watched in horror as their king and lord was then nailed to a cross of wood and left out in the heat of the sun to die the cross was the throne of jesus and all around him the mocking voices of his executioners and then having died jesus was wrapped in borrowed grave clothes and buried in a borrowed tomb there he is the life of the world extinguished in death in light of all this how petty and pathetic the request of james and john for power for rule and for glory in the kingdom of god jesus the king of kings the lord of lords god the son did not come to be served but to serve the true greatness of jesus is seen in his becoming a servant in loving the loveless and suffering for the helpless and dying for the nobody the call of the christian

is to be like jesus in his service to trace the service of jesus and follow in his footsteps not to be served by anyone but to serve everyone the call of the christian is to steer clear of power politics and control freakery to aspire not to be the highest but to walk in the lowest place to serve not to be served if we want to follow in the footsteps of jesus and be his disciples we're going to go looking for dirty feet to wash for hurting hearts to comfort for gaping wounds to heal the christian does not care about the status others afford her but the service she can offer to others that's a christian you know even as children remember how we use tracing paper you don't do this these days kids but when i was a kid we used tracing paper and we would we would trace the pictures beneath so the christian traces the service of christ upon her heart and she practices it in her life every day that's what it means to be a disciple and follower of jesus that just as jesus came to serve so we'll serve others like he did tracing the service of jesus that's the first thing a christian is second trusting in the service of jesus trusting in the service of jesus well perhaps there's nothing so surprising in anything we've heard so far the christians called to be a morally upright person who sees his or her role in society as helping others perhaps we could say it those ways although it means so much more but this is the tip of the iceberg the vast vast vast majority of what it means to be a christian is inside and cannot be seen by other people just like the bulk of an iceberg is always under the water so the vast majority of what makes a person a christian is under the skin it's unseen it's in the mind it's in the heart what's on the inside of a christian that which makes her a christian is her faith and trust in jesus christ as savior and lord it's that faith in jesus which is expressed in following the footsteps of jesus faith comes first then following what motivates her service of christ is that first and foremost

she knows that Jesus has served her that he's done something for her that she could not have done for herself something which frees her from her guilt and lostness her fear and shame let's go back to this verse Mark 10:45 page 975 even the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many let's rearrange these words even the son of man came not to be served but to serve which means or the greatest example of which is that he gave his life as a ransom for many the pinnacle the climax of Jesus' service is that he gave his life as a ransom for many in no greater way does he serve us than by laying down his life for us in the passage immediately preceding ours in Mark 10:32 onwards Jesus talks in this way he says to his disciples we're going up to Jerusalem the son of man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes they'll condemn him to death and deliver him over to the gentiles and they'll mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him Jesus is going to give his life he's going to be betrayed having been tortured he's going to be killed now we know that these things really did happen and that Jesus having been betrayed was tortured and then executed on a Roman cross but why did he give his life was Jesus just the victim of a cruel miscarriage of justice just a tragic figure from the past who tried to do the right thing but was destroyed by the establishment as so many have over the centuries no Jesus gave his life he says as a ransom for many that's why we find him being tortured and crucified he was giving his life as a ransom for many now in the world of the day a ransom was the price paid for the release of a slave it was the price paid for the release of a slave remember nearly a third of the world's population at the time was made up of slaves and these slaves were the property of their owners and the only way in which a slave could be set free was if a ransom price was paid for them to their owner the only path to freedom for most slaves consisted in someone paying their owner money for their release what was called a ransom price over the course of many years it may have been possible for some slaves to have acquired some money for themselves enough perhaps even to pay for their own freedom but in the vast vast vast majority of cases unless someone paid the ransom price for their freedom they remained slaves their whole lives through they were not their own they were an animal they were the possession of another person and in Mark 10:45 [18:25] Jesus is telling us that the reason he gave his life was to pay the ransom price for many to set them free from their life of enforced slavery now in the United Kingdom we pride ourselves on our freedom but are we really free at all well politically maybe financially possibly but emotionally spiritually relationally are we not all slaves to the fear of death are we not all slaves to guilt and shame are we not all slaves to the reality of a meaningless life with no purpose ultimate purpose and a despairing future we are slaves to our sins and our selfish desires and our lusts and Jesus has died on the cross to pay the ransom price for our freedom in no greater way has Jesus served us than by giving his life as a ransom price for us to release us from the slavery of our sin and all that sin brings along with it guilt fear despair condemnation selfishness paranoia loneliness shame hatred to name just a few of our cruel masters remember what Jesus called himself the son of man this gloriously majestic figure described to us in the Old Testament the son of man who was worshipped by the angels and who as

Christians we believe is God the son this Jesus shed his blood on the cross he gave himself for us as the infinitely valuable sacrifice for our sin to buy us back from our slavery to it every drop of his blood dripping to the ground beneath the cross is of more worth than all the gold in the universe it is more than enough to pay our ransom price Jesus Christ the greatest of the great became for us the lowest of the low the divine son of man tortured and executed treated as a common criminal for this reason alone that he might give his life as a ransom for many and he did it because of his great love for us the overflow of his grace and mercy for helpless slaves outside my home village in the north is a waterfall called the Big Burn stand beside that waterfall and the noise is deafening thousands of liters of water crash over the waterfall every minute cascading into the pool beneath in a spume of spray as we stand beside that cross on which our Lord and Savior died we're standing beneath the waterfall of God's love for us the crashing of the blood of Jesus deafening us deafening us as his love and grace cascade down from heaven to free a guilty world of its sin Jesus has given himself but for whom look at the verse he's given himself as the ransom price for many he did not die for himself he died for others for many Jesus is not restricting the effectiveness of his service by using this word many he's using it as an invitation as if to say I have paid the ransom price for the release of as many as will accept it I have paid the ransom price for the release of as many as will accept it which brings us to the question the final question of how it is that what Jesus did by giving himself as a ransom on the cross can become mine can become ours how can

we possibly benefit from historical event which happened 2000 years ago outside a city 2000 miles away from where we're all seated now now this is where

Christianity comes into its own it is not by our religious efforts it is not by our moral performance it is not by our service for others that what Jesus did becomes ours and we're released from our slavery it's not anything we do it is by faith and trust in Jesus it is nothing on the outside it is everything on the inside it is the entire movement of our minds and our hearts away from ourselves toward Jesus it is admitting that we cannot release ourselves no matter how hard we try we cannot pay the ransom price for our own freedom it is admitting that only Jesus life given upon the cross is enough faith in

Jesus trust in Jesus there is the key distinctive of Christianity but it's a big word faith what is faith think of it this way up in the remote highlands a walker falls and breaks his leg he knows he cannot rescue himself and will be dependent upon someone else he phones mountain rescue who send a helicopter to pick him up lowered from the helicopter are two rescuers and a stretcher the rescuers lay the stretcher beside that injured man and tell him to roll over onto the stretcher so that the helicopter can winch him up to safety this injured man knows that the mountain rescue team is there to save him that they have the ability to save him but he has to roll onto and lie down on that stretcher that's faith that's faith it's admitting that we cannot rescue ourselves it is knowing that [25 : 35] Jesus Christ has laid down his life to free us from our slavery and has paid the price for our freedom but it's so much more than that it is placing our entire weight upon Jesus it is committing ourselves to him and to his cross as the way of salvation our ancestors in the Scottish church used the phrase it's faith is rolling onto Jesus even as that injured man in the Scottish highlands rolls onto that stretcher it is asking Jesus to be our saviour and our Lord asking Jesus to be our ransom knowing that what Jesus did on the cross he did for us nearly 500 years ago in the remote Spanish mountain kingdom of Navarre there lived a Christian queen called Marguerite as a queen she lived in luxury and she wore the most amazing clothes and a crown on her head in an idyllic palace but she wrote these words which I read recently she said

I seem to other people to be happy my father's a king my husband is a king and my son is a king and being descended from scepter bearing ancestors all my ancestors were kings but I judge myself to be happy because the lord of the universe wants me to be his servant I judge myself to be happy not because I'm a crown not because I'm a palace not because I'm a queen but because the lord of the universe wants me to be his servant being a servant of Christ through faith in him as our ransom frees him to follow in his footsteps by serving others like he did so my final question for you this morning is this whether this is your first time in

Crow Road Free Church I can say that now or your thousandth time in whatever we were before are you a Christian are you a servant of Christ if you aren't yet but you want to be put your trust in Jesus today roll on to him if you need help to do that speak to me afterwards but do not leave this place today without knowing for certain that Jesus is your savior your ransom and your lord amen