

A Ransom for Many

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[0 : 0 0] This is the AM service on November the 16th 1997 The preacher is Hilary Roth The sermon is entitled A Ransom for Many And is from Matthew chapter 20 verses 17 to 28 In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen We read today a third time Jesus foretells his death and resurrection Verse 17 While Jesus was going up to Jerusalem He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves And said to them on the way See we are going up to Jerusalem And the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes

And they will condemn him to death Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified And on the third day he will be raised Once more Matthew talks about the way or the journey of Jesus from Caesarea Philippi up to Jerusalem On the way Jesus speaks to his disciples of his own sufferings and about Deir's tomb The journey of Jesus to his death in Jerusalem Is a symbol A symbol of both his way As well as the way in which his disciples must walk in the future The first two announcements of his death and resurrection In those two first announcements Jesus had told them what would happen

But now he tells them where it will happen His suffering was to take place in the holy city of Jerusalem And in this third announcement He also included the path that the Gentiles would play In his trial and death And this is the fourth time that he promises that he would rise again In fact there are seven steps outlined here The betrayal The sentence of the Sanhedrin The handing him over to the Roman authorities The mockery The flogging The crucifixion And the resurrection Jesus tells his disciples clearly What was going to happen

And where it was going to happen But they were unable to understand it The message did not seem to penetrate their hearts And that insensitivity of the disciples to Jesus' impending death And their blindness to his teaching about sacrifice Is hard for us to comprehend Because the next few verses we read That hot on the heels of Jesus' announcement Of his suffering and death We have this amazing request An amazing request From James and John and their mother In verse 20 and 21 Jesus had spoken of the cross And now here

They were interested Only in the crown They wanted to reserve seats On special thrones There is a theory that the mother of James and John Was Salome The sister of Mary Who was the mother of Jesus And she was therefore the aunt of Jesus And James and John his cousins And this can be seen If we look at three of the gospels Matthew 27 verse 56 Mark 15 verse 40 And John 19 verse 25 But how is it possible That in spite of all Jesus' teaching about humility About all his teaching About service and sacrifice Teaching that would be constantly enforced By the presence of Jesus himself

[5 : 1 1] How is it that this mother of these two disciples Comes to Jesus with her two sons And asks him to give them The two highest positions in the kingdom But before we criticise what they did Let's find something positive Some positive points about this event For one thing Salome Her request is evidence of her faith It was a remarkable faith And it may well have come From what Jesus said in chapter 19 verse 28 And he said there Truly I tell you At the renewal of all things When the Son of Man is seated At the throne of his glory You who have followed me Will also sit on twelve thrones

Judging the twelve tribes of Israel And so here he promises That one day He would be seated Seated at the throne of glory And Salome believes That this is actually going to happen She is convinced of this In spite of the fact That Jesus had just told them That he was going to die Salome and her two sons Were claiming the promise That Jesus had given So it would be unfair To this mother If we failed to grant That in some respects Her request Was to her credit And as you can imagine She was a typical mother She wanted only the best For her boys As all mothers do The kingdom of David

Was coming again A new nation Was soon to rise And her James And her John Would be cabinet ministers At the very least If only They would push themselves And you can imagine Imagine her saying You won't get anywhere If you don't ask Look at Simon He's always talking big He already thinks He's boss Don't wait until Everything's settled Tell Jesus what you want After all You're his own cousins Call him today Go to him today Tomorrow at the latest And if you don't I'll go myself And I think James And John And John knew Where their thunder Came from And some of the lightning Too So they did As their mother Had told them The Bible tells

The story In two ways Here in Matthew's Account The mother Of Zebedee's sons Makes the first move And she speaks To Jesus Herself And then in Mark's Version The two men Come to Jesus On their own Without their mother But however much The request was made We can guess That their mother Had a lot to do With it Salome says To Jesus Declare That these two Sons of mine Will sit One at your Right hand And one on your Left In your kingdom You do not Know What you are Asking Replies Jesus You do not Know What you are Asking No she did Not know

Salome did Not at that Moment Understand The implications Of her request Nor did Her sons Jesus Was on his Way to be King And that's True And he'd Come to put A new law In people's Hearts But his law Was love And his way To the throne Was To be the path Of painful Humiliation Of suffering Of self Sacrifice To follow Him And to sit At his Side Would bring No gold No glory In the sight Of the world But a Casting out A bitter Rejection And

[10:22] Eventually Perhaps A martyr's Death These were Not the Rewards That Salome Sought For her Son She did Not know What she Was asking She did Not really Understand What Jesus Meant When he Said Whoever Wishes To be Great Among you Must be Your servant And Whoever Wishes To be First Among you Must be Your slave Just as The son Of man Came Not to Be served But to Serve And to Give His life As a Ransom For many Greatness In the Kingdom Of Jesus Means Service It means Humility It means A contrite

Heart And love That turns The other Cheek And goes The second Mile But Salome Did not Understand She did Not Understand This Until She Stood Beneath The cross It is It is There That it All Would Have Become Clear To her At last Watching And Waiting Her Heart Breaking For Mary And Here She Did Not See Two Thrones On Either Side Of Her Lord She Only Saw Two Thieves On Two Crosses And She Heard The Words Father Forgive And

She Saw The Saviour's Total Sacrifice And The Truth That Amazing Paradox Of The Christian Life Opened Up To Her To Be Alive To God You Must Die To Self And The Glory Of The Christian Life Is In The Love That It Gives Away The Glory Of The Christian Life Is In The Love That It Gives Away You Do Not Know What You Are Asking Little Did Salome Realize That The Path To The Throne Would Be Such A Difficult One James Was The First

Of The Disciples To Be Martyred And John Had To Endure Hard Days Banished To The Isle Of Patmos James And John's Push For Status Provokes An Indignant Reaction Among The Remaining Disciples So We Can Imagine The Undignified Dispute Which Probably Erupted Amongst The Disciples At That Time So Jesus Called Them Together Ambition Had Divided Them But Unity Was Restored As They Focused Again On Jesus Jesus Now Used The Situations As An Opportunity For Giving His Disciples That Much Needed Teaching On What Makes For True Greatness

Those Who Rule The Gentiles He Said Lorded Over Them And Their Great Ones Are Tyrants Over Them And And Then Jesus Warned Them That This Was Not To Be So In His Kingdom Whoever Wishes To Be Great Among You Must Be Your Servant And Whoever Wishes To Be First Among You Must Be Your Slave Jesus Is Saying That In The Kingdom Over Which He Reigns Greatness Comes By Putting Into Action That Which Is The Exact Opposite Of That What Happens In The Unbelieving World Greatness In Jesus Kingdom Consists Of Self Giving Pouring Out Of Self In Service For Others For The Glory

[15:25] Of God To Be Great Means To Love To Be Great Means To Love And This Is What Jesus Stresses In Verse 28 Just As The Son Of Man Came Not To Be Soothed But To Soothe And To Give His Life As A Ransom For Many And This Has Always Been Thought Of One Of The Most Precious Sayings Of Christ On Three Occasions Jesus Had Told His Disciples Of His Impending Death Without Giving Them An Explanation Of Why He Must Die And Now He Gives Them The Reason His

Death Will Be For Many Jesus The Son Of Man Came To Give His Life As A Ransom For Many The Background Of These Words Comes From Isaiah's Poem Of The Suffering Servant We Find

That In Isaiah 52 Verse 13 To 53 Verse 12 Where That Word Many Comes Up On A Number Of Occasions One Translation Puts It My Righteous Servant Will Justify Many And He Will Bear Their Iniquities For He Bore The Sin Of Many And Made Intercession For Their Transgressions Jesus The Son Of Man Faithfully Fulfils This Prophecy

He Comes Not To Be Served But To Serve And To Give His Life As A Ransom For Many That Greek Word And The Greek Word For Ransom Comes From A Verb Meaning To Loose So The Essential Idea Of Ransom Is Release And It Was Used It's Used Now And Then To Refer To What Is Paid To Secure The Release In the First Century The Most Common Use Of The Word Was For Redemption Money Paid To Free A Slave ■■■■ And Jesus Is Telling The Copies And Jesus Is Telling Us That He Gave HIMSELF As The Ransom Price He Gave

HIMSELF As The Ransom Price To Free Us From The Slavery Of Sin But There's Another Theological Point here. That ransom was for many, for many, which immediately implies the benefits are given to many. The Son of Man rescues many from the greatest possible curse, the curse of God upon sin, and he bestows upon many the greatest possible gift, the blessings of God, the forgiveness of God, the gift of abundant life throughout all eternity.

So who are the many that Jesus has died in place of and for whose benefit he came to give his life as a ransom? They called in Isaiah 53, my people. In Matthew 1, his people.

[19:54] In John 10, the sheep. In Ephesians 5, the church. In Acts 20, the church of God. And in Romans 8, God's elect. They are male and female, rich and poor, old and young, Jew and Gentile, slave and free. His church is gathered from all over the earth. Jesus truly is the Saviour of the world. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Here in Matthew 20, verse 28, Jesus is teaching that his own willingness to humble himself to the point of giving his life as a ransom for many is now to be reflected in the disciples.

They are to understand this as do all his followers. And in verse 27, but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant. And whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave.

Christ's own sacrifice is unique and it alone has atoning value and it cannot be duplicated.

But in our own small degree, in our own small way, every follower of Christ must, by God's grace, show that same kind of sacrificial love.

Whoever believes in John 3.16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life. Whoever believes in John 3.16 must not forget to practice 1 John 3.16b, and we ought, we ought to lay down our lives for one another.

[22:43] Amen.

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