

The Servant Nature of True Service

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[0 : 0 0] to Mark chapter 10 and that section that begins at verse 35 where we read of James and John coming to Jesus and saying to him teacher we will want you to do for us whatever we ask Mark 10 35 and he 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're asking and then later in that same section Jesus saying to the disciples verse 43 but whoever would 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 give his life as a ransom for many and you know just as I was thinking the other day there in preparing this sermon really the last three or four weeks the theme has been reappearing again and again the theme of abandoning self the theme of denying self of taking up our cross and following Jesus and for those who will proclaim the name of Jesus who will seek to follow Jesus to be like the Lord Jesus then it's surely for you to have that heart of humility to engage in that work that you've been given to do in that service to have that humbleness that humility and service to honour God and to honour him through obedience in being willing to suffer for him and to walk that narrow road to bear the marks of Jesus being willing to live for him and being willing to die each day for the one who gave himself for you in his dying on the cross and so as again we come to see the love of Jesus for sinners sinners such as me such as you well we come to this point in Mark's narrative where we well as we've read there from verse 32 you can see there that Jesus again is reminding his disciples of what's about to happen to him as he tells them as we read there in verse 32 Jesus telling them they're going to Jerusalem and going there for a purpose and as the disciples are again told for the third time in a very short space of time Jesus is going to be as he says they're delivered up to the chief priests the scribes who are going to condemn him they're going to put him to death they're going to deliver him over to the Gentiles to the Romans who'll mock him and spit on him flog him kill him and as Jesus says after three days rise again and you know each time Jesus has informed his disciples as to what's about to happen to him well you know you see there's more and more detail being given and what we might say then is this that as Jesus is nearing the cross as he's nearing our Jerusalem then we might say the intensity increases increases as Jesus tells them about what's to happen to him and at that point Mark here tells us an incident and Matthew tells us as well Mark records an incident that happens as Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem an incident that contrasts the humble servant nature of Jesus with the self-seeking mindset you see there portrayed in these disciples who want something as it were out of their following Jesus and well what is that incident well as Mark tells us here James and John they want prominent places in Jesus' kingdom and when we read of Jesus' response to these disciples we see that what Jesus is giving us is we might say a key marker something to look to hold onto for our understanding of what Jesus would entail for himself and what Jesus' suffering would entail for all for whom

Jesus died so what we're seeing in this in this very extract this very episode is all to do with service all to do with service as we see the servant Christ who gave his life for others in contrast to the self sense of self seeking mindset that was you know denying service for self glory and I trust that as we look at this incident again that we see the more the greatness of Jesus the greatness of Jesus in his being that servant the suffering servant Jesus who went all the way to Jerusalem all the way to the cross who went there willingly for us for you for me and when you see the greatness of Jesus well as I say we'll see that even more in profile in seeing the weakness of the disciples these disciples who wanted a glory for themselves that was so at odds with the nature of true humility in the service that Jesus requires of his people so it's a lesson for each one of us because we do need to be constantly reminded of the work that God has given his people to do it's service it's not self it's

sacrifice it's not self glory it's seeking first the glory of God it's not seeking in any shape or form any glory for ourselves and if you know if I if you would just learn this all important truth regarding your following

[6 : 29] Jesus in my life your life would be transformed like if the church would be transformed when we take on board this also true principle of following Jesus in denying self and giving him the glory and you know when I say that we'd be transformed then surely that giving of self and service for the Lord Jesus you'll have a deeper love for the Savior and you'll have a stronger relationship one with another that seeks not the best in me but the best in others and above all that seeks to elevate the Lord Jesus in that great gospel principle he must increase and I must decrease that's the goal surely of every Christian believer whether it's in the congregation here or whether elsewhere to be like Jesus to be like the one who as we read there came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many so let's consider three things that we see in this in this passage in verse 32 to 34 the suffering of Christ's service and then verse 35 to 41 the selfish request that denies service and then lastly 42 to 45 the servant nature of true service so verse 32 to 34 the suffering of Christ's service so they're on the road from

Galilee to Jerusalem it's a road that of course many would be on as they're traveling to Jerusalem at Passover time countless numbers of pilgrims going to Jerusalem but this going and notice going up to Jerusalem Jerusalem set on a hill so even though they're traveling north to south they are going up to Jerusalem and but this going up to Jerusalem for Jesus and his disciples of course has very special significance because yes they're going to celebrate the Passover but of course Jesus is going there as the Passover lamb he's going there to be that once for all sacrifice for sins he's going to be that sacrificial lamb he's going to offer himself up for sinners and notice as we read there in the passage his face is set on going to Jerusalem his face set firmly going to Jerusalem there he is leading his disciples and others following Jesus on that road but notice there's something different about this particular journey and something that his followers are very aware of they're walking behind Jesus but even there they notice there's something different in Jesus' manner something about his walk that's different and Mark tells us and no doubt he would have heard from Peter who was there of course at the time Mark tells us the disciples are astonished they're amazed and the others who are following on the road they're afraid because there was something about Jesus that his disciples and others were very aware of and I think we can suggest that you know what happens what Jesus already told them about his imminent suffering and death you know Jesus is very preoccupied with his imminent death and all that's going to happen next all that's going to happen after speaking with the disciples there's something in Jesus' manner something in his walk a determination that he must go to Jerusalem no doubt even that walk that part of the walk in silence and yet that determined manner that Jesus was walking to Jerusalem with that great purpose to fulfil you know there's times when people have that sort of determination there's something different when a person has a something of a great purpose in mind you might even see a steely determination and whether it's a voice or even particularly in silence you know that there's something happening something about to happen something at the forefront of that person's mind something that's going to make a difference well how much more the Lord

Jesus how much more the Son of God and his determination to go to the cross and there to suffer for our sakes well I'm no doubt that much of that journey was in silence silence but then we notice that Jesus breaks the silence and he's now with the twelve disciples they're now separated from the rest of his followers and Jesus as we said tells them for the third time what's about to happen there in Jerusalem and there's Jesus prophet priest and king in just that short space of time as the great prophet is proclaiming what's about to happen to him and he's going to tell them that he's going to be that great high priest he's going to offer himself up for those for whom he came to die for those who will know him as king and as we said in more detail than the previous two occasions he's telling them what's going to happen to him suffering death race to life

Jesus is telling his disciples what Isaiah the prophet foretold of the Messiah the one to come who'd be that suffering servant who'd give his life as that ransom for many so there's Jesus we're seeing his greatness greatness of servant he's proclaiming for he's prepared to do what's been prophesied of him what he's going to fulfill for others the greatest act of service ever ever done on earth is going to be carried out by the man from heaven Jesus and to give himself in death for you for me the suffering of Christ's service is going to involve Jesus as the servant of God he's willing to give

himself for others he's willing to go to that cross that awaited him there in Jerusalem now you know the disciples were amazed at what they saw surely for you and me to be amazed and astonished that Jesus should be so determined to remain on that road to

[13 : 19] Jerusalem he knows he's about to suffer he knows that the author of life is going to face death and at the hands of wicked men but he's not going to turn back he's going to go up to Jerusalem he's going to go up where he's going to give his life for his own yes it's going to involve the most intense suffering humanly speaking I mean you know verse 34 indicates he's going to endure physical suffering the most intense horrible kind but of course as Jesus indicates there in verse 45 the greatest suffering of all is when Jesus will pay that ultimate price for your salvation because of the service for you now is that how you see Jesus the suffering fervent it was a fortnight ago remember we were there as it were through the word we were on the mount of transfiguration and we glimpsed the glory of Jesus well what we're reading here of Jesus about to suffer for our sake see this is the same glorious

Jesus this is the one who's full of grace and truth full of majesty and power he's going to be the one who's going to be rejected by men the suffering servant this is the Lord Jesus surely then when we realise who this Jesus is in all his glory as the suffering servant thanks for you and for me to bow before him in adoration in thanksgiving and yes in confession of our sins and that we seek to know him more and to follow him more and to walk with him more yes as he leads us on that narrow road even into heaven itself and even in the quiet of your heart worship him glorify him glorify the one who was willing in that resolute determination to go on his way up to Jerusalem to do what to suffer and yes to show his greatness as servant so that you might know his greatness so that you might know that salvation that's found in no one else only in the Lord

Jesus and yet you know and yet how slow we are as the disciples were slow to see that following Jesus involves our service our being servants of the Lord you're being a servant one to another you're denying yourself rather than denying service you know we fail so often as we see here with the disciples when Jesus tells them you know what's involved in service for him as you see there James and John making that request that selfish request that denies service verse 35 to 41 now remember who these two disciples are they're the same disciples of course Peter as well but the same disciples who'd been with Jesus on that mountaintop just a short time before that time when Jesus was transfigured there James John Peter remember were Jesus his three closest disciples and more than one occasion

Jesus has taken these three disciples to a particular circumstance a particular event when only these three disciples were there with Jesus now maybe maybe James and John had you know been thinking about what Peter had just said a few moments before about the disciples having left everything to follow Jesus and Jesus having spoken of rewards for those who follow him but when you read what James and John are asking it really is a staggering failure to see that greatness isn't power greatness has nothing to do with self glory but greatness has to do with service the kingdom that Jesus came to establish in the hearts of his people isn't a kingdom that's characterized by self seeking power but it's characterized by humble service in the name of the Lord

Jesus so let's just focus in on James and John then look at the request I mean they're obviously reckoning that Jesus kingdom is about to come it's very near you know all that's been happening up to this point you know to them indicating Jesus is about to reign you know Jesus has spoken even of his rising and you know you can just almost enter their minds as it were you know what better time than for them to stake a claim of high position in Jesus kingdom they're so utterly mistaken in their demands yes Jesus kingdom is near but it's not a kingdom of earthly power and earthly rule it's a kingdom of grace it's a kingdom of God's love it's a kingdom where Christ reigns yes and reigns in the hearts of his people it's a kingdom where righteousness reigns through the righteousness of Christ it's got nothing to do with status it's got nothing to do with self seeking power or any kind of personal gain the disciples don't see that they want blessings they feel they deserve something they've left all they've followed

[19 : 15] Jesus they want rewards they want to be seated on either side of Jesus when Jesus is on his throne of power we're the closest disciples there's Peter as well but you know they've left their father's fishing business they've gone to follow Jesus Jesus kingdom is coming soon and who better to appoint in these great positions of authority than James and John isn't that kind of response familiar don't you don't I at times make demands on God you know demands that have got nothing to do with you know seeking his glory but you know demands that seek self seeking

some kind of promotion for following Jesus you know somehow thinking well I deserve better I deserve to be given much because I've become a Christian I've left all to follow Jesus if that's in your mind if that's in my heart then that's not true discipleship now yes we know

Jesus said asking it will be given to you but not asking for any kind of self glory but rather asking to do his will and humble service of his name you see James and John like ourselves they've missed the whole point about following Jesus it wasn't to get something out of it for themselves following Jesus means serving him denying self following Jesus following him by faith notice Jesus look at his response you know Jesus is so patient with weak naive individuals like the disciples like ourselves and he tells them he tells them what greatness in his kingdom will involve can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I'm baptized with Jesus is using that imagery from the old testament that imagery that speaks of suffering

Jesus is asking his disciples then can you share in the sufferings that I'm about to endure and I'm going to endure for you can you drink that cup of suffering I'm drinking now and will drink to the full can you share in the baptism of suffering I'm even now enduring I'm going to endure to the end can you follow me where I believe this is Jesus because that's true greatness that's true honour in my kingdom now James and John they don't know what they're saying now they're saying they can they don't really understand what they're saying but as we said Jesus here is the great prophet and in that prophetic greatness he tells them there's going to be a time when they will understand what greatness in the kingdom of God is about there's going to be a time when James learned what it means to follow Jesus through service and through the service of suffering Jesus says there as we read there in verse 39 the cup that I drink you will drink with the baptism with which I'm baptized you will be baptized and of course we know from God's word itself after Jesus resurrection James and John did learn suffering and service read in Acts 12 verses 1 and 2 of James being martyred at the hands of King Herod and you read of John of course his brother the apostle John who was exiled sometime later to the island of Patmos they drank from the cup of suffering they were baptized with the baptism of suffering for the sake of the Lord and Saviour they knew what it meant to they did understand eventually what it meant to serve the Lord and Saviour now of course none of us here are asked to bear the sins of many as Jesus was asked to do that following Jesus by your actions won't atone for any sins of anyone even self and the ultimate cost of discipleship is not given to all in suffering for

Jesus but if you follow Jesus you're united to Christ and if you have that solidarity with Jesus and that's going to involve drinking from the cup of hardship that's going to involve a degree of suffering and pain and yes being persecuted for following Jesus being mocked for being a Christian abuse and yes there will be some who will face that ultimate suffering as a martyr for Christ but if you're to identify with Jesus if you're to show your unity in Christ the man of sorrows you must share in that suffering of Jesus and yes as we've been reminded so often as we said in the last few weeks you follow where he's gone before you take up your cross daily follow Jesus and none of us none of us can even expect to be spared the insults of men when our saviour was despised and rejected when he was that man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief

[24 : 52] I can't expect to be free from suffering as a Christian my saviour endured the cross the path of glory is a narrow road it's a narrow path Jesus walked that road towards Jerusalem for you he knew he would die for the sake of your salvation so who am I who are you to leave your cross as it were at the side of the road and expect that journey to heaven that somehow you want a carefree walk and not bear the marks of Jesus and not be a servant thinking that you can just find your way to heaven on a feather bed as somebody once said see Jesus here again is stressing this whole point of what it means to follow him greatness lies in servants and you know Jesus isn't just aware of

James and John at this point he's aware of the other disciples and their ambition for power as you see there from verse 41 I mean as you read there when they hear of James and John trying to win places of honour in Jesus kingdom these other disciples are angry with James and John because they want obviously they want their place of honour you know they've left everything to follow Jesus but Jesus again as you see in his grace he brings these disciples together to show them the great servant nature of true service verse 42 to 45 see how Jesus contrasts the greatness that's seen in the world with the greatness of the kingdom of God you know as Jesus says in the world the rulers of the gentiles the rulers of the nations in other words these rulers of authority they want status some kind of status they want to lord over others that's their mark of power and success and

greatness but Jesus says there in verse 43 but it shall not be so among you it's not for Christ's people to follow the principles of the world it's not for Christ's people to follow these the principle that so blinded Adam and Eve there in the garden of Eden when they were tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit why because they were tempted by the great tempter to achieve some kind of parity with God they wanted glory for self but that's not for those who follow

Jesus who follow the suffering servant of glory greatness in the kingdom of God is measured by the lowest status the powerless the servant the slave the one the person who serves and of course the embodiment of that service that servant nature is the Lord Jesus himself he says there verse 45 the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many that is true greatness that's the greatness that the world doesn't recognize because we live in a status driven world that just doesn't understand that greatness lies in humility even the humility that we see in the Lord Jesus he came to serve he didn't come to be served and to take he came to serve he came to be the ransom price that price that was the only price necessary to free you from your slavery of sin to give you that freedom in Christ now we've all got to learn from this passage here we've all got to learn what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and you who know

Jesus remember you serve that risen saviour you serve the one who gave his life for you you serve the one who paid the ultimate price for your salvation and if that's the case and it is the case then who am I who are any of you to seek self glory when the glory all the glory must be given to the Lord Jesus so where do you stand in terms of your service your service and all humility ask yourself in the honesty of your heart is there any aspect of my life you know where I'm looking for approval of others you know for even the work I do for the church and the kingdom is there an aspect of my life where you know I'm actually seeking the approval of even the approval of God as well as the approval of others are there times in my life when you know I'm actually demanding honour from God and all the honour has to go to him and you might say well how do

I assess service for the Lord well look at this the supreme test of service ask yourself this for whom am I doing what I do in the work of the kingdom for whom am I doing what the Lord has given me to do you know if you've been given a particular work for the Lord Jesus are you concerned about human reward human recognition because that's not the way of service in the kingdom he's given you yes he's given each one of his children at work to do well yes but give him the glory whatever we're doing here in the congregation all the various activities even the planning the running we'll go through all the details but you know all the various things that are happening from day to day week to week in the congregation ask yourself am I doing these things for the

[30 : 58] Lord for the kingdom of God or simply for myself we pray then that we'll have that spirit that Christ like spirit of service that Christ like attitude of humility and yes to seek forgiveness for the many times when self has wanted to be first rather than last when self has sought glory rather than the Lord of glory so as a congregation as individuals for each one of us to seek to serve our Lord and Saviour who came to serve who came to give his life as that ransom for many you come before him in that honesty of heart in that humility of heart and you serve with all your heart even in giving of yourself in the kingdom amen let us pray Lord we thank you for your word we thank you even

Lord for your word of chastisement and we pray Lord even if there is that inkling of glory for self that that will be removed and erased and that you will have the glory in all our words in all our actions as we seek to honour you above all else hear us Lord as we continue in worship before you now we pray these things in Jesus name amen well let's close in psalm 18 in psalms page 21 and we'll sing from verse 27 down to verse 32 the tune is duke street you save the humble and the meek but bring the proud down from their height you Lord will keep my lamp aflame God turns my darkness into light 27 to 32 psalm 18 to God's praise