

The Way of Jesus

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Date: 17 February 2013

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[0 : 01] Welcome. If you're new here this evening visiting, friends and family of Joanne, it's lovely to have you. Thanks for coming. My name's Aaron. I'm the minister here, and I'm glad you're here. It's a wonderful passage we're looking at. We're in the sort of last third of the book of Mark, the gospel of Mark, the story of Christ. And our passage begins again this week with a reminder of where Jesus is headed. It says he's headed to Jerusalem, we see in verse 32, which is not just kind of geographically interesting. It means he's headed to the cross. Christ is on his way to the cross, well onto the cross now. And if there's any doubt about what's going to happen in Jerusalem, Christ gives a very detailed prediction of that. Verse 33, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and 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. And after three days, he will rise. Now this is the third time Jesus has predicted his death. The third time. The first time, immediately afterwards, Peter said, Jesus, there's no way. There's totally no way that's going to happen. The second time Jesus predicted his death, the disciples started arguing about who would be the greatest amongst them. So at this point, they're batting 0 for two. So this is the third time, right? This is the big one, the third time. And after this prediction, what happens? Let me remind you. Teacher, this is John and James. Teacher, we want you to do for us something that we ask you. And Christ said, what do you want me to do for you? Remember that line. What do you want me to do for you? And they said, grant us to sit one at your right hand, at one on your left hand in glory. I remember going on a road trip with a couple of friends of mine. This is about 20 years ago. But I remember this 10 minute period in that trip very, very vividly. So a friend of mine, his name's Dave.

I mean, there's no point in hiding his name. Right? So Dave, right? So Dave has broken up with his girlfriend. We are overseas on this road trip. We'd gone from New Zealand to America with a group of guys, right? We're on a trip. So Dave is talking about breaking up with his girl, like internationally, like it was kind of a, that kind of breakup, right? Terrible.

She's a great girl, great guy. Broke his heart. So for 10 minutes, we're driving, we're in Arizona or something. And he's, I've never heard him talk like this. He's just pouring his heart out.

I'm just so broken. I really loved her, et cetera, for 10 solid minutes. At the end of that 10 minute period, Larry, this other friend of mine, Larry, said, I think I like strawberry yogurt. It's a true story. I think I like strawberry yogurt. It would seem the whole time Dave was talking, Larry was thinking about yogurt and felt like that was the time to declare his yogurt preference. And it would be difficult, I think, to come up with a more ludicrous response to what Dave was talking about, right? Now on a much grander scale and a more ludicrous scale, the timing and request of these disciples is obviously horrendous. And the great irony of this is they call him teacher, teacher, right? Teacher, teacher, you know, let us, you know, do something for us. Teacher, who we have clearly not been listening to. Teacher, you know. So you have these two hearts, you know, you have the heart of Jesus and the hearts of these two men. And these hearts are so acutely divergent that it's clearly setting up a contrast for us. And it's asking us, how will we live? Will we live a life of sacrifice like Christ? Will we live the life of the self-seeking disciples? Self-seeking at this point in their journey? Let's have a kind of a closer look at it.

[4 : 10] So grant us to sit, they say, one at your right hand or one at your left, in your glory. So what is it they want? They just want to sit? They just want a place to sit? A cushion, a stool, a beanbag, maybe?

No, of course, in their mind, what are they thinking about? They're thinking of thrones, aren't they? They want to be on thrones. They want power. Now hearing that Jesus was going to die and ascended to heaven, I guess they figured that there'd be a bit of a power struggle and they're kind of like calling shotgun on the best seats in the house, right? This desire for power and this just acute self-interest, I think, lies behind probably most of the misery in the world, I think. Now Christ's response, though, is really interesting. He doesn't say, you guys are so stupid. What's wrong with you? Stupid faces? He doesn't say that. He says something very interesting. He says in such a gracious way, he goes, you don't know what you're asking. And Christ says to them, you know, if you don't know what you're asking, are you able to drink the cup or be baptized with the baptism that I'm going to experience?

Now that's talking about the cup. In the Old Testament, the cup was the cup of wrath. It was like God's judgment, right? And so what Christ is saying is that on the cross, all God's anger towards all of the problems in the world, there's great terrible things in the world, right? God's angry about that. All of the anger that God has, instead of directing it on us, he's going to pour it on Jesus. That's what that cup, that's what that cup means. And the baptism is, the word baptism in its most general sense means immersion, fully immersed. Are you, said Christ is saying, are you saying that, you know, you don't know what you're saying. Do you want to be fully immersed in the wrath of God, like what I'm going to be doing? Because that's what I'm going to do. Is that what you want? And in verse 39, the disciples respond with, we are able to do that. But I think it was more one of those high pitched kind of, yeah, it's kind of like, yeah, I think so. Who knows? It's conjecture. But what's really interesting here, just is such a wonderful passage, right?

Christ doesn't say, no, you don't, dummies. You're so stupid again with your stupidity. He says this, actually, you're right. You know what? You guys are actually going to experience some of what I do, which we know from the Bible is true. James was the first disciple that was martyred in the beginning of Acts, a very just short sentence. And James was killed by the sword of Herod. And John, we know, was banished, exiled, exiled to life on an island.

Following this, the gracious responses of Christ, the teaching responses of Christ, Jesus then delivers this amazing line. This is verse sort of 44, 45.

[7 : 16] But whoever would be great among you must be servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. So that's the teaching part. And then he says this, he says this, for even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and here's the great line, and to give his life as a ransom for many. To give his life as a ransom for many.

There is so much to say about this, so I'm just going to talk about it at sort of 10,000 feet. Again, this amazing sort of contrast between the goals of James and John and the goal of Christ, right?

So James and John, what did they want? Power, status, thrones? And Jesus wanted to give that up, to be mocked, to be spat on, to be beaten, to be killed.

And why did he want that? Because the goal of his life wasn't status and privilege and power. The focus of his life was what? It was the glory of God and the welfare of humanity.

Christ came to serve. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

[8 : 32] This is a description of what Jesus does for us. And also, as I said at the start, it's a call.

It's an uncomfortable call. It's a call to us to live differently. So two things. A description of Jesus, what he does, and a call to us.

But first, a description of what Jesus does. This life as a ransom bit, like now, back then, a ransom was a price paid for the release of a hostage.

But also back then, it was the price paid for the release of a slave. And also back then, it was if somebody was up for execution, done a terrible crime, up for execution, a family could pay money, and the execution would be sort of reduced down to life in prison or something.

So Jesus is talking about all of these things. When he says, I give my life as a ransom for many, he's talking about all of these things. Because on the cross, you are no longer a prisoner to your own selfishness, to your own desires, making you your number one thing in your life.

[9 : 51] You're also no longer a slave to sin. You're also not any longer under the death sentence. And Jesus did this for you because he came to serve.

Now, the second part is a call. We see this, you know, right at the start. For even the Son of Man. That kind of like for even part, there's a call and plus into that. Like for even, it means if Jesus is going to do this, then he's sort of saying, you know what?

This is how I expect you to live. I expect you to live the life of sacrifice. There is the selfish life, which we see in James and John, status, power, right?

And there is the selfless life that we see exemplified and what Christ is about to do. So with those two options laid out, it can seem pretty hardcore, right?

And perhaps a little bit hopeless when you think about your heart and what you know your heart is capable of doing, or at least thinking about. That movement from selfishness to selflessness can...

[11 : 07] I'll say it like this. If the message of this passage was, humanity is a little bit stuffed, you should be better, get on with it, you know, that would be a pretty terrible sermon.

Because it's not a biblical sermon. It's not the good news of Jesus. If that was the message, it would be all over. Because humanity has been trying for thousands of years to solve the problem of selfishness.

The problem of making ourselves the most important thing in the universe. But what makes this whole thing very hopeful is that immediately following this is the story of blind Bartimaeus.

Which I'll read to you now. Verses 46 to 52. And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho, it's Jesus, and his disciples, and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside.

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, son of David, have mercy on me.

[12 : 30] And Jesus stopped and said, call him. And they called the blind man, saying to him, take heart, get up, he is calling you. And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

And Jesus said to him, what do you want me to do for you? You've heard that line before, right? What do you want me to do for you? And the blind man said to him, Rabbi, let me recover my sight.

And Jesus said, go your way. Your faith has made you well. And immediately, he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. So heading down the road, a blind man yells out to Jesus.

The crowd tries to shut him down. He's persistent. He wants to talk with Jesus. So he flings away his coat. It's his only possession, probably. It's his blanket for sleeping in. Keeps him warm during the day.

He lays it out in front of him. People put money on it. That's how he earns his income. He springs up to Jesus. Great picture. Blind man. Springing up. No cautious movements.

[13 : 25] Abandonment. Abandonment, right? Springing up to Jesus. And Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you? That's exactly the same line that Jesus said to James and John. And what did James and John want?

They wanted power. They wanted status. And what does this guy want? He wants mercy. He wants wholeness. And he addresses Jesus as rabbi.

It's a different version of the word that's normally used. It's a very, very reverent version of the word rabbi. And Christ heals this man and this man starts to follow Jesus on the way, it says.

So why is this a story of hope and why does it immediately, this random story of healing a blind man, immediately follow this kind of nonsense with James and John? Why?

Because blind Bartimaeus represents what Jesus can do for people who are spiritually blind. I mean, there's no question that James and John were blind, right? Just were a bit clueless at this point.

[14 : 26] It was like when, it's like when Jesus was talking about all these really difficult things, I'm going to be mocked and spat on, I'm going to the cross, I'm going to die, etc. It's like that whole time there's a little tune playing in their head.

You know, like a happy little tune. Tuning out all the bad stuff. Just wanting to hear the stuff about glory and all the positive stuff, right? It's an awful kind of blindness.

And it's this kind of blindness and selfishness that Jesus wants to rescue us from. And so this movement from selfishness to selflessness does not come from willpower.

It does not come from us trying really hard. It comes as Jesus heals our hearts. It comes from us coming to Jesus like Bartimaeus, asking for mercy and forgiveness and wholeness.

That's where the change comes from. So let's be people that do that. Can I get an amen? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.