

A Mixed-Up people

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we can turn back to our reading in Mark's Gospel, chapter 10, and we'll look at these verses that we've read together from verse 32 down to verse 45.

! A few weeks ago, just before the October holidays on the Lord's Day morning, we were looking at the previous section to this from verse 13 down to verse 31.

And we saw there how in verse 13 there was the children that were being brought to Jesus, and the disciples were rebuking them and telling them not to bother the Master with them.

But Jesus says, let the children come to me, for to them belongs the kingdom of God. And then we went on from there into verse 17 down to verse 31, where we see Jesus meeting with the rich young ruler, as he's known, the one who had great wealth, but yet lacked one thing.

One thing missing in his life. He wasn't willing to give it all up and to come and follow Jesus. And the people who heard this and saw this, the disciples and those who were with Jesus, they were astonished.

[1 : 1 1] In verse 26, it says, they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, then who can be saved? If this young man, who's seemingly kept all of the law in his own eyes, a good man in many ways, how, if he can't be saved, how can anyone be saved?

Well, Jesus reminded them that with man it's impossible, but with God, all things are possible, it says in verse 27. And so that's where we're continuing from as we come into verse 32.

And who is Jesus speaking to in this passage? As you read from verse 32 down to verse 45, when you see everything that's taking place, when you see the kind of words that are used, you think of that word, verse 26, that people were exceedingly astonished.

There was this astonishment in their midst. There was amazement. There was fear. There was demands being made. There was dismay. There was all kinds of thoughts going on among the people.

So you might think that Jesus here is speaking to people who are opposed to him or know nothing about him. And he's teaching them his ways. But who is he actually speaking to?

[2 : 2 6] Well, he's speaking to the disciples and to his closest followers. And we see in their experience so much of what our experience can be like as well.

We have all these times that we go through different experiences in life, different emotions, that sense of astonishment, amazement, fear. All can be our experience too in life when it comes to following Jesus.

And so what we see here as we look at this passage is all of these mixed up feelings, mixed up questions that they have, mixed up reactions to the situation that they find themselves.

And it shows us the reality of the world in which we live, that we have so many challenges that we have to face up to. Here are those who are closest to Jesus.

This is coming towards the end of his ministry. He's been three years with them. And still you could say they don't fully understand who they have before them.

[3 : 35] And it's a great reminder to us as Christians or as those who are maybe seeking to know more about the Christian faith, to know more about the Lord, that in our own understanding, our own emotions, we can, as they would say, we can go through the ringer.

We can go through all of these different challenges. And we feel one moment that we're close to the Lord, just like the disciples were, and the followers on many occasions. And at other times we can feel like we're so far away from the Lord and almost going in the opposite direction to him.

But our faith is not dependent on our feelings. Our faith is not dependent on what's going on around us. And when we look at this situation and the way the people respond and the way the people act, it's almost an encouragement to us.

It's an encouragement to us that, well, we're not alone. When we feel like we're going through these experiences of astonishment, amazement, doubt, and fear, and all of these things, we're not alone.

We're not the first. We won't be the last. And there are many others going through these experiences as well. Even those who were the closest to Jesus, his own disciples, found themselves almost again and again asking that question that they asked in Mark chapter 4 with the storm that they were with Jesus in.

[5 : 06] Who is this? They were astonished again and again. They react in different ways again and again throughout the Gospels as we see.

But where does it always come back to? It needs to come back to the reality of the truth that Jesus speaks, the word that Jesus speaks to them and to us as well.

They're brought back to see the teaching of Jesus. And that's what Jesus is giving to them in the verses that we are looking at this evening.

And there is a wealth of teaching again. Chapter 10 just seems to be full of teaching after teaching after teaching of who Jesus is and how they need to trust him.

And you see it's in the situation, the setting again of Jesus foretelling his death, reminding them this is the purpose that he has come, that he has a mission to fulfill, and that his mission is for the salvation of souls.

[6 : 16] And so he's telling them for the third time that he is going to die for them, and yet they don't understand. And don't we too have so much to learn?

You don't know everything. I don't know everything. We don't have all the answers. Being a minister doesn't mean all the answers are contained in my mind.

It's impossible. Being a church member doesn't mean you've made it. You've arrived and that's it. Coming to church doesn't make you better than others around us.

And so it's important for us that we see that we are all a work in progress. That's what this passage reminds us about.

We are all a work in progress. And in the midst of all the mixed up emotions that we can have in life, that we can depend on the word of God.

[7 : 13] And so the first thing we see with the people here is their mixed up feelings. Jesus here is continuing, as it says in verse 32, they were on the road going up to Jerusalem.

So he's been on this journey. You see it in verse 17 as well. Just before he met the rich young man, he says he was setting out on his journey.

What was his journey? Well, it was his journey that he was on going up to Jerusalem. And he outlines for them in verse 32 to verse 34 the purpose for which he was going up to Jerusalem.

And perhaps this is what leaves the disciples and the followers with so many mixed up feelings of amazement and fear all mixed up together.

Because when you look at what this journey entails, he says to them in verse 33, See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And he outlines the purpose.

[8 : 21] 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 so it goes on.

This is the purpose for which Jesus has come. And since Jesus began his earthly ministry, he has been teaching the disciples who he called to follow and all who are in his hearing, he was teaching them of the purpose of his coming.

He was revealing it to them again and again. He has called them to follow him. And he has been telling them who he is.

And they believed so much about Jesus. They believed he was a great teacher. They believed he was a great prophet. But yet they were still missing out on so much.

Again, you go back to that event in chapter 4 when he was with them in the boat and they were astonished and they said, Who is this? When they had seen Jesus by his word, calm the wind and the waves to be a peaceful, calm sea.

[9 : 33] They were amazed. Who is this? And it's almost like they still have this question in the back of their mind, even at this point as they're just about arriving in Jerusalem.

Who is this? They believed that the rabbi, their teacher as he was, Jesus, that he was going to deliver his people from the domination of Rome.

They believed that Jesus was going to restore God's people. They believed that he would be the king of Israel. And all of these things they were right with.

But where they were going wrong was just how this was going to happen and when this was going to happen. They expected it to be done in a way that they could understand.

And because it wasn't going the way they expected, their feelings were all over the place. And so as Jesus tells them for the third time here that they are going up to Jerusalem for this very purpose, they're still not understanding.

[10 : 47] The disciples believed that everything was going to be right in their own lifetime. They believed that Jesus was on the verge of his kingdom coming in power and that he was going to rule.

But they didn't see that what God was doing was beyond anything that they could imagine. that it went beyond their situation, that it went beyond their setting and their time.

It went down to generation after generation that God was building his kingdom and his kingdom was going to come in an even greater way than they could ever imagine.

That God was restoring his people through Jesus giving himself, as we see in this passage, as a ransom for many.

When Jesus predicted his death three times in the Gospel of Mark, you find that each time that he tells his people what is to take place, there is a sense of confusion.

[11 : 52] There is a sense of misunderstanding. If he has really come to put the world in order, how is his death going to accomplish this? It just seemed absurd.

But Jesus has his purpose. He is going to Jerusalem and they are afraid and astonished.

But Jesus is here reminding them of the question that he had in chapter 8, verse 29, where he says, Who do you say that I am? It keeps coming back to this.

It's not about your feelings. It's not about what you think should happen or how it should happen, but who do you say that I am? And that's the same for ourselves today as well.

When life isn't going maybe the way that we expected or the church isn't going the way that we would want it, all of these things, we come back to see, well, what is the foundation of our church?

[12 : 54] What is the foundation of our faith? It is the one who asks of us, Who do you say that I am? Do we see that it is the Christ and that his word is our security?

Not our feelings, but our faith in him. Martin Luther once famously said, Feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving.

My warrant is the word of God. Not else is worth believing. I'll trust in God's unchanging word till soul and body sever.

For though all things shall pass away, his word shall stand forever. Feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving.

But we can say the same. My warrant is the word of God. Not else is worth believing. And that's what Jesus is teaching them here.

[14 : 02] In their mixed up feelings, it is to see that the word that he is speaking, it will stand forever. And that is our hope today as well.

Faith is not on feelings. Faith is on the word of God and the promises given through Jesus in that word.

And the question comes to us, do we believe? Who do we say that this man is? Is he the Christ who has come into the world?

Well, we have these mixed up feelings, but we also see, secondly here, mixed up questions. You can almost ask yourself, have the disciples learned anything in all their experience with Jesus, given that this is the third time that he's told them that his death is going to come as they make their way up to Jerusalem?

Have they learned anything from their experience with him? And when you look at chapter 8, 9, and 10, in each of these chapters, Jesus tells them his purpose in coming into the world is that he is going to give his life.

[15 : 16] In chapter 8, verse 31, he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days, rise again.

In chapter 9, verse 31, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and when he is killed, after three days, he will rise.

And then we have it again in chapter 10 here, in verse 33, as we've read, to verse 34. See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and so on.

Three times he has told them. And you would think by now they're going to understand, they're going to get it, that this is why Jesus has come.

Surely, at least by this third time. The first time you see Jesus telling them, well, he has to tell Peter to get behind me, Satan. If we do not know what you are talking about, the things of God, your mind is not on the things of God, but on the things of man, in verse 33 of chapter 8.

[16 : 30] So there was a misunderstanding. They didn't get it. The same is true in chapter 9, after he's told them. What do they start speaking about? They start speaking about, in verse 33, who is the greatest?

Who is the greatest? Their minds go to something completely different. So surely this time they're going to get it. But no. What do they have?

After they've been told this, you'd think they'd have questions. But even their questions are mixed up. They almost don't know what to ask. So as in verse 35 it says, James and John, the sons of Sebedee, came to him and said to him, Teacher, you would maybe expect, help us understand.

Teach us what this actually means. Teach us what it will mean for us. But what do they say in verse 35? Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.

And you might think, well okay, what do they want? And that's exactly what Jesus says to them. What do you want me to do for you? And look at the reply. Grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory.

[17 : 50] Grant us to sit one at your right, one at your left in your glory. There's almost no thought of what Jesus is going to do for them.

How glory is going to come to them. They think it's going to be easy. They want all this glory. They want the crown.

But they don't want the cross. They don't want that suffering. They don't want any of that. And there's the problem. And perhaps in the back of their mind is the account of the rich young ruler and the cost of following Jesus.

That's at the end of that section in verse 29 of this chapter to verse 31. You know, there's the cost. Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother, so on.

There's a cost. And it's almost like as we come into verse 35, that's maybe in the back of their minds. They're wanting something out of this. They're wanting glory. But they don't grasp what the cost is that Jesus is going to pay.

[19 : 04] If only they truly knew who was before them. If only they could truly understand what he was about to do. What his death actually meant.

The price that was being paid. Why did he have to tell them so often what had to happen? Why did he leave a remembrance before the crucifixion, that he gave this remembrance, the Lord's Supper, to do this in remembrance of me?

Because we forget. Because we are a forgetful people where we want all the glory, glory, but none of the dirty work. Jesus came to give his life.

But the problem with the disciples is just like us, pride so often takes over. We want glory. When you think about what they're asking for here, grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory.

You wonder what they thought as Jesus was crucified with a thief, one on the right and one on the left. And one of these thieves actually crying out, remember me when you're in paradise.

[20 : 27] The humility that was seen there on the cross of Jesus giving himself. They would understand eventually. And that's what Jesus makes clear here.

You don't understand at this point, are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with a baptism which I am baptized? He's saying at this point, you don't understand.

But then he says in the end of verse 39, the cup that I drink, you will drink. And the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. So they will receive this.

And as you see with the disciples as they go on, after the crucifixion, many of them suffered greatly. But at this point, they just don't understand.

And that's the danger for us to allow pride to come in. The Bible teaches us again and again about pride. Proverbs 16, verse 18, pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

[21 : 30] 1 Corinthians 10, verse 12, therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Pride is so dangerous. And so as Jesus is teaching them here in their mixed up questions, again he is pointing them back towards himself and taking their minds off their pride and their glory and all of these things and to come and see as we see thirdly a need for a servant's heart.

The disciples here asked that question. We want you to do whatever we ask. And Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you? They wanted glory.

But if you read on to the end of the chapter, you see another man, Bartimaeus, with the same opportunity where Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you? In verse 51.

And look at the difference in the response. The blind man, Bartimaeus, came to him and said, little rabbi, let me recover my sight. What would you ask of Jesus tonight?

For glory or for gain in the sense of seeing Jesus? We can have mixed up questions, but what we need to do is humble ourselves before God.

[22 : 56] It's so easy for us to forget what the Lord has done and why. And so again, we don't go on feelings. We come to the word of God and stand on what the word of God says.

That he has come to give his life. That we might be called the children of God. So we see mixed up questions.

Thirdly, we see here mixed up reactions. There's a mixture of reactions here. The reaction of the James and John to hearing for a third time that Jesus will die.

The reaction is to say this question, we want one to sit on the right and one to sit on the left in your glory. And Jesus rebukes James and John.

But the ten are also there as well. And you notice that excuse me, you notice that when he begins to help them to understand.

[24 : 00] When he talks about the cup and all of these things, you know that all of these things are to come. But then he goes on to teach them about what it is to serve, to be a servant.

The other ten were indignant, it says. When they heard in verse 41, when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.

You wonder if that was their first reaction. You wonder if when they heard James and John ask this question, that would come into our heart as well and say, wish I'd asked that first.

Wouldn't it be great if I could sit on the right or on the left of Jesus in glory? You can almost imagine the other ten thinking these thoughts because it's most naturally what we might think ourselves if we heard somebody asking Jesus that.

But the reply after Jesus has rebuked them, when he says to them, you don't know what you are asking, the response of the ten is then this indignant response towards James and John.

[25 : 14] They're almost tut-tutting James and John now, forever daring to think of asking that question. But the thing is that as you see Jesus teaching here, you see that Jesus sees into the hearts of all.

Not just James and John who had asked the question, but the other ten as well. But when you see in verse 42, it says, Jesus called them to him and said to them, this is them all together, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it shall not be so among you.

He is saying this is not to be you. Instead, you are to have a servant's heart, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave, which is the same word, servant of all.

So they are told this is what our hearts are to be like, not looking for glory, but for giving service to the Lord.

the Lord. Why? Well, Jesus gives them the reason why. In verse 45, for even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[26 : 50] There is the reason. Not just why the disciples should have that servant heart, but every one of Jesus' followers should have the servant heart.

Servant, as the word has here. When you look at its meaning in the Greek, it has that servant, slave mindset.

It also has and is used for deacon or minister. It's used in the same way. And behind it all is the same thing, that we are not our own.

As one person put it, both words denote a man who is not at his own disposal, but is his master's purchased property, bought to serve his master's needs, to be at his beg and call every moment the slave's sole business is to do as he is told.

That goes for all who are servants of Christ. We are not our own. We are purchased with a price to serve our master.

[28 : 05] And so we are to live for our saviour because we see what he has done for us. For even the son of man came not to be served, but to serve.

And so if Jesus himself came with his mindset not to be served, the one who if anyone deserved it was him, but no, he came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And so that's what he asks of his people today. Not to seek glory, but to seek service. To see that he has bought us with a price.

To see what he has done for us and that we are fellow servants together. Willing to do whatever he commands.

That's what the love of Christ has done for us. And when you see the example of Jesus that even as he sat around the table with his disciples, he washed his disciples' feet.

[29 : 18] All that he did for his people, all that he gave, we are to be servants, not seekers of glory for ourselves.

David Livingston, famous missionary to Africa in the 1800s, many people praised him for the sacrifice that he made in leaving his home and going to serve the Lord in a foreign land.

But I want to read how David Livingston himself put it. He said this, people talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa.

Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply acknowledging a great debt we owe to our God which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of our glorious destiny?

It is emphatically no sacrifice, rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, danger, foregoing the common convenience of this life, these may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and the soul to sink, but let this only be for a moment.

[30 : 47] All these are nothing compared with the glory which shall later be revealed in and through us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which he made who left his father's throne on high to give himself for us.

Isn't that a great response? Where he didn't see his life as a sacrifice but as a privilege to serve the one who left the father's throne to give himself for us.

The disciples as we see them here, they had their mixed up feelings. They had all these mixed up emotions, the mixed up questions, the mixed up reactions, but all the time they were learning.

And so are we. We are learning what Jesus Christ has done for us. And the more that we see and the more that we believe in him, the more we understand that it's not about our glory but our humbling ourselves before him, the one who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

In a day of remembrance, may we remember the one who gave his life as a ransom for many and remember him by humbly serving him and following him, leaning on his word.

[32 : 36] Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we do thank you for the humble service of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing.

We thank you that in Jesus we see the one who came and could and perhaps we would say should have been served and yet we see him despised and rejected.

We see him even here reminding of the very purpose that he came as he made his way to Jerusalem to give his life but that the hope was as the hope still is of the resurrection and we thank you for all the promises that we find to that end in your word of the one who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

May it encourage us may it humble us and may it make ourselves cast ourselves upon him who came from the father's throne to give himself for us that we might see the privilege that there is in following him and believing in him and praising him with all our hearts so hear our prayers and pardon our sin in Jesus name Amen we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 138 in the Sing Psalms version page 179 Psalm 138 page 179 we'll sing from verse 1 to 3 we'll sing from verse 1 to 3 to

God's praise we stand to sing! I'll praise you Lord with all my heart before the God's and Savior praise I'll learn to worship holy praise and bless your holy name always I'll praise you for your faithfulness and for your calm and love O Lord God over all things you have raised your holy name and faithful words the very day

[35 : 55] I called to you you gave an answer to my plea you made me hold within myself with pure soul!

strengthened me after the benediction I'll go to the door to my left we'll close with the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forever more Amen