

True Greatness

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Date: 05 December 2021

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Literature, Greek literature.

Dr. E.B. Rue completed a translation of the ancient Greek author Homer into modern English. How many of you guys have tried your hand at that?

No, you know, me either. You know, it was published in the Penguin Classics series. That tells you what type of guy this was in the Penguin Classics, which is quite a popular publisher.

And he was, so he published it, and he was six years old and had been an agnostic his whole life. So that means he believed there was something out there, but was just unwilling or unable to commit to what it could be.

[1 : 11] Afterwards, Penguin approached him and asked him to do a most interesting project. The publisher asked him to translate the Gospels, the first four books of the Bible.

So, when Dr. Rue's son, listen to this, heard of the project, he said, it will be interesting to see what Father makes of the four Gospels.

But it will be even more interesting to see what the four Gospels make of Father. He didn't have to wonder long like so many unbelievers who give time to reading and studying the Word of God. Within a year of beginning his translation of the Gospels, Dr. Rue, the lifelong agnostic, became a committed follower of Jesus Christ. And those are just, some of those are just totally incredible testimonies.

And this morning, as we return to the Gospel of Mark, to focus on it verse by verse, week by week, until the end, the most interesting question is not, what will we make of the Gospel of Mark?

[2 : 21] What do we think? What will we discover? What will we take away from this book? There's no, those are no doubt interesting questions, important questions. But the most important question, most interesting question is, what will the Gospel of Mark make of us?

What will these verses detailing and describing the final days of the life of Jesus Christ do to us?

How will they change us, challenge us, and compel us to follow Him?

Will they cause us to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that never leaves us the same again? Will the Word fall on good soil?

Will we truly hear? Or will we be like those who see but do not truly see, and hear but do not truly hear? In so many ways, we will see what the Gospel of Mark will make of us by how we respond to this morning's passage.

This passage is the core of the Gospel of Mark. It's the most central passage and the most urgent charge of Mark's Gospel. In so many ways, this passage is a fork in the road.

[3 : 35] If you look in it, you look down the barrel, this passage, you'll never be the same again. If we face it honestly and sincerely, it will force us to question nearly everything about us, our mission, our motives, and our motivation.

So let us lean forward and let us have ears to hear what God is saying. Look down with me in verse 42, chapter 10. This is the Word of Mark.

This is the Word of God. And they were on the road, the disciples and Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them.

And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him.

Saying, see, we are going up to Jerusalem, and 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.

[4 : 38] And they will mock him, and spit on him, and flog him, and kill him. And after three days, he will rise.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you. 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 hand, in your glory. Jesus said to them, you do not know what you're asking.

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink? Or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? And they said to him, we are able.

And Jesus said to them, the cup that I drink, you will drink. And with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized.

[5 : 45] But to sit at my right hand, or at my left hand, is not mine to grant. But it is for those to whom it has been prepared. Verse 41.

And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said, You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them.

And their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant.

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 to give his life as a ransom for many. May God bless the hearing and preaching of his word.

[6 : 47] In a word, where we're going this morning. The son of man came to call you to follow him by serving others for the glory of God. The son of man, Jesus Christ, came to call you to follow him in serving others for the glory of God.

We're going to break this out. Three points. The first one is don't chase political power. Follow Jesus. Don't chase political power. Follow Jesus. In verses 32 to 34, Jesus tells the disciples again.

That he did not come to establish a political kingdom, but to take up the cross. As you likely remember, since chapter 8, Jesus and his disciples have been making their way to Jerusalem.

So once in chapter 8, twice in chapter 9, and again in verse 32 here, Mark tells us that Jesus and his disciples were on the road. They were on the Via Della Rosa, the road.

Well, Della Rosa road. Della Rosa way that will take them all the way to Jerusalem. So like other Jews at this time of the year, Jesus and his disciples were on the way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

[7 : 54] Mark's gospel is breakneck pace, but it's beginning to slow down very, very slow. In fact, after the next two weeks, we'll just be in Jerusalem, the final week of our Lord's life, for four months.

And so look in verse 32. There's where he says, And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem. Mark rightly points out that they were walking up.

Jerusalem is only 20 miles from Jericho, but it is 3,500 feet above it in elevation. So all the way was up. That's why all the way was down in the parable of the good Samaritan.

But Jesus is not merely leading his disciples up to Jerusalem. Jesus, Mark is whispering here, is leading the disciples up to God and beginning to prepare a way for many others to go up to God with him.

As they make their way, they're stunned, though, that Jesus is out ahead. Look down there. It says, Jesus was up ahead.

[9 : 06] Now, when I'm running hard, and I'm amazed when somebody like John Olson comes bopping along past me in the midst of my strenuous exertion. But the disciples are not amazed at Jesus' strength or stamina.

They're not amazed that he can walk that fast. They're amazed and afraid, it says, because they don't understand what's going on.

Why this sudden change in clip. They don't know what's about to happen. They don't know why he's out ahead. So Jesus pulls them aside. Look at verse 33, and he says, Verse 32, he says, Taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was going to happen to him.

He said, See, we're going up to Jerusalem. Son of man will be delivered over. Chief priests and scribes, they will condemn him to death, deliver him over to the Gentiles, mocking, spitting, flogging, killing.

After three days, he will rise. Now, this is the third time our Lord has forecasted what will happen to him, and it begs the question, why?

[10:07] Why? Some scholars say that these predictions were written after Jesus died, because he didn't know the cross was going to happen to him, but he wanted to assure his followers, or the disciples wanted to assure his followers that he did know.

Now, that doesn't hold up, because these things don't run parallel. They would be a little more harmonious if they were written afterwards. So why? Why? Because Jesus wants them to know that all that will happen to him is according to the plan and purpose of God.

Now, that may be kept in obvious, but it's very important. Underlying Jesus' actions and his words in this passage is a determination to uphold the plan and purpose of God.

Jesus is out ahead because he knows the mocking, the spitting, and the killing are the definite plan of God. It was promised long ago, over 700 years ago, Isaiah prophesied these words, that the servant of the Lord would come in this way.

Look in Isaiah 50. I think we have it for you. He says, I gave my back to those who strike. Does that sound like anybody? My cheeks to those who pull out my beard.

[11:18] I hid not my face from the disgrace and spitting. Right there in our passage. But the Lord helps me. Therefore, I have not been disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like flint.

That's the way Luke describes it. Referencing this passage, I know I shall not be put to shame. So that's why Jesus is out in the head. His actions are communicating, his determination to uphold the perfect plan and purpose of God.

He set his face like flint. But it's also clear in the words. Wonderfully, Jesus tells us that the Jews will condemn him. Well, that's not wonderful, you know. But helpfully, he tells us that the Jews will condemn him.

But because they have no judicial authority in Jerusalem, he says they will condemn him and then deliver him to the Gentiles. Did you see that change there? That wasn't in the first two predictions. So they will condemn him. Then they'll deliver him to the Gentiles. And the Gentiles will be the ones that mock him, flogging, spit on him and crucify him. But before the Jews deliver him over to the Gentiles, Jesus says he will be delivered to the Jews.

[12:26] Now that's interesting. It says he will be delivered from the Jews to the Gentiles after the Jews condemn him. But the passage also says that he will be delivered to the Jews.

Look in verse 33a. It says, We're going up to Jerusalem. Son of man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes.

So it begs the question, Who delivers Jesus to the Jews? We know who delivers Jesus to the Gentiles, but who delivers Jesus to the Jews? It just says the son of man will be delivered. But who does it?

And that might be a little technical, but this is what, this is an instance of what scholars call the divine passive. The subject of the delivering is not mentioned, but it is very clear to anyone familiar with the Bible, when the subject's unmentioned like this, it often refers to God.

Now hang with me. Look at this. Peter Bolt says it like this. Because the suffering of Jesus is all according to definite plan, God is ultimately behind this handing over. Human hands are instruments of his judgment, his wrath, but God is ultimately behind the handing over of Jesus Christ, because his death is part of the divine plan, and because it is governed, in particular, by the prophecies relating to the suffering servant.

[13:53] And so it is God who hands Jesus over. That's what he's telling these guys. Nothing's going to happen to me that will be a surprise to me. Nothing's going to happen to me that will take me off guard.

All that happens to me will be according to the definite plan and purpose of God. Again, talking about the servant of the Lord.

Isaiah prophesies in this way. Isaiah 53, the central passage on the servant of the Lord. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grieve.

So all that's going to happen, it's going to be devastating.

It's the plan of God to rescue sinners. There's another thing we need to see here, though. Mark includes this scene for the original audience and for us to help us see something very important.

[14:57] It's not the plan and purpose of God for Jesus to establish a political kingdom. It was not the plan of God for Jesus to sit on an earthly throne.

It was not the plan of God for the kingdom to come through worldly and political power. For the 12 disciples, this is so hard to understand. Every or most of the expectations about him, they assumed

Jesus would come into Jerusalem and make heads roll.

Because that's the way kings roll. They assumed he would come into power and drive out all their fears. And this is still very hard for us to understand.

I was recently reading the story about a Jewish refugee named Stefan Zweig. He was a Jew living in Austria, but forced to flee because of all that happened in Europe in the last century, particularly with the rise of Nazi Germany.

At one point, he describes this time when his Austrian citizenship was removed. Listen, he says, I was admitted to the office dealing with these matters.

[16:13] So he's in an English country. He said, I was admitted to the office dealing with these matters. And I had a right to my Austrian passport. So all my life, I had an Austrian passport. It had been the duty of every Austrian official or police officer to issue to me the full rights as an Austrian citizen.

But upon entering another country as an immigrant, he said, I had to ask for the favor of receiving a document that could be withdrawn at any time.

Overnight, I had gone down a step. Now I was an immigrant. Now I was a refugee. And when we come to Christ, a similar transaction takes place.

Yes, we are Americans. But in a much more profound sense, when we come to Christ, we become citizens of another country, of heaven.

And therefore strangers, aliens, and refugees in this world. Why? Because Jesus did not come to create a political kingdom to gather earthly citizens for an earthly kingdom.

[17:40] Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom of people from every nation who are strangers and aliens in this world. And I want to argue that we should become increasingly aware of our stranger status.

getting older should be a feeling of growing increasingly strange. Not because this world is going to hell or something.

Sorry, not because this world is going down the tubes or something like that. But because we're getting closer to heaven.

We belong to a different country. And so I would just ask, are you at home in this world? Are you at home in this world? Are you at home in either political party? Sometimes it's in the south.

It's, you believe in Jesus and you believe in a certain political system. Must not be. Are you caught up in the chase for political gain?

[18:46] We belong to a different country. We submit to a different Lord. We're committed to different habits and cultivating different convictions. So don't chase political power. Follow Jesus. Point two, don't chase comfort.

Suffer well. Don't chase comfort. Suffer well. And verses 35 through 40, one of the things Jesus tells James and John is that he did not come to give them a life of ease.

In each of the previous two times, Jesus forecasted what would happen to him. The disciples responded in a way that made it very clear they didn't understand. Taylor preached quite a few weeks ago now about this and they began to argue about who is the greatest and immediately after Jesus tells them what would happen to him in Jerusalem that makes it clear they still don't understand.

The two brothers affectionately called the sons of thunder, James and John, come to Jesus with an almost humorous request. Humorous if it wasn't so sad.

Look at verse 36. He says, what we, sorry, sorry, teacher 35, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you. They're essentially asking Jesus for a blank check.

[19:59] Now if you've been a parent for any length of time you probably had your child come up and ask you to agree to a request before they ask what the request is. So just agree dad, it's going to be good. You know, just agree to this request and I'm like, no way, you know, we're not doing that.

But they, so they ask him and we want you to do for us whatever we ask. John Stott said, this prayer surely qualifies as the worst, most blatantly self-centered prayer ever prayed.

Now he hasn't heard all my prayers. And Jesus refuses the blank check and says, what do you want me to do for you? Look at verse 37.

They say, grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, and your glory. Now, in Jewish circles, the place of highest honor was in the center of everyone present.

That's why in that, that famous picture, Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, Jesus is in the middle and everybody's kind of leaning on them. You know what I'm talking about? So he's in the place of the highest place.

[21 : 01] He's in the center. And so, so the right and left are just either side of the center, center place. And so, so what they're asking is when Jesus established, Jesus, when you establish your throne in Jerusalem, would you put us there on your right and left?

Hey, what's so bad about that? They're not asking for the place of highest honor. Just the next two spots after that. Now, this is one of those moments where we think, I could never do that.

I would never do that. But if we look more closely, as one author has said, looking at James and John, it's like looking in the mirror. When prayer becomes more about getting what we want instead of aligning our hearts with what God wants, we show we're more like James and John than we think.

When prayer looks more like using God than worshiping Him. Isn't that so often the case? Give us what we want.

Make us healthy, wealthy, and happy. That's not true prayer at all. I did one of these new members' interviews. I was talking with the husband about his, some situations in his life and was asking how I could pray for him and his response, I quote, was, God knows what I want and I want what He wants.

[22 : 24] Sounds like Jesus. The Lord knows what you want before you even ask. So He's after something different. I love that. That phrase is hung with me.

Jesus responds, you don't know what you're asking, man. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptized with which I am baptized? Now, my first thought was, wait, I think they know exactly what they're asking.

Right and left. Seats in honor. Honor, recognition, and comfort. But Jesus tells them why they don't really know what they're asking by talking about the cup that He will drink and the baptism that He will undertake.

What He's saying is, if you want to be honored with me, you have to suffer with me. The cup is the cup of wrath that Jesus is going to drain.

That's mentioned all throughout the scriptures. The baptism are the waters of judgment that Jesus must pass through. He's right. They don't know what they're asking. So when Jesus asked, are you able to drink the cup, undertake the baptism, they should say, no.

[23 : 38] Absolutely not. Only you can do that, right? That's the only logical response. Only someone fully God and truly man can do this. But look at how they respond.

These guys are just great. They say, we are able. Sign us up. But listen to how Jesus turns it. He says, then the cup that I drink, you will drink.

The baptism, with the baptism, which I am baptized, you will be baptized. What are you? You're just saying, are you speaking out of both sides?

I mean, what's going on, Jesus? You just said, we can't drink it. Now you say, what He's saying is, He's underlined a very hugely important truth. No one will suffer in the same way as Jesus. All who follow Jesus must suffer with Him.

Though no one will suffer in the same way as Jesus, all who follow Jesus must suffer with Him.

Now, Jesus has already made incredible promises to those who follow Him. Look up to the last time we were studying the book of Mark.

[24 : 41] Look in verse 10, 29. It says, There is no one who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or land for my sake, and for the gospel, will not receive a hundredfold, now in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands with persecution, and in the age to come, eternal life.

And so, He promises great honor, but before receiving this great honor, He promised for all who follow Him, all who follow Him must suffer with Him. Romans 8, the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we're children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him, in order that we may be glorified with Him.

Interestingly, the next time, the right hand and the left hand appear in the gospel of Mark as the two thieves on either side of our Lord Jesus Christ, as if to say, if you're going to follow me, that's the place you'll go.

That's what the disciples said. We're honored to suffer. So don't taste comfort, suffer well.

On the one hand, this truth is very sobering. Jesus did not come to secure a life of ease for you or me. Jesus did not come to secure us an easy life.

[26 : 10] Jesus did not come to make us comfortable. Often, comfort is where the daily battle for following Christ occurs. In the West, or in America, in general, we're not worried about, our next meal, we're not worried about our life being threatened, and so comfort becomes the battle where following Christ often rages.

Is it not the craving for comfort that trips us up when the children interrupt our relaxation? When something unexpected, like a blown tire, disrupts our plans for the day?

I remember, a couple weeks ago, I flew to a conference, and I missed the first flight because I was in this TSA line, and my fault, I wasn't there on time, and I missed the first flight, and I was on standby for the rest of the day.

Like, I had zero control, and it just completely disrupted my comfortable little plans for the day and the meeting I needed to attend to. Finally, I just threw my heads out, I'm just going to sit down and read a book, because I don't know when I'm getting out of Knoxville, Tennessee, and making it. Last week, I bought a book called After Acts that tells us what happens to the disciples after Acts, and a little spoiler alert for you, it wasn't comfortable. We know from Acts that James was, this James, James' son of Zebedee, was executed in AD 44.

[27 : 35] We have good reason to believe James, Jesus' brother, died violently in Jerusalem in AD 62. Good reason to believe Peter was executed in Rome in AD 65. Paul was executed in Rome in AD 66.

Philip, the evangelist, was murdered in AD 98. That's just what we know from the first century. All the other centuries are filled with blood too. The gospel does not promise a pain-free life.

The gospel promises a pain-free eternity, and it might take everything now. So this truth is very sobering, but it's also very clarifying. If this is true, then your life's not spinning out of control when things are uncomfortable.

Better yet, when things are painful and when you suffer. I had a friend of mine from college this week die. He had sclerosis, and he went to Duke to get a stem cell transplant, and it did not work. His body rejected it, and he died. 36 years old, two kids, his wife testifying to the grace of God.

[28 : 41] I'll never forget teaching on suffering in South Korea one time. If you know anything about South Korea, there's a few parts of the world that have been as prosperous as they've been, and the prosperity gospel, the so-called prosperity gospel, just thrived in South Korea.

You're taught that if you come to Jesus, he'll make you healthy, wealthy, and happy. And we were teaching on glorifying God in suffering. Talk about a lead balloon. He was wealthy and healthy, but he was not happy.

He was overwhelmed with running three businesses, and he attempted to commit suicide three times in July of that year. And with tears in his eyes, after exploring this conference, his words were, I never thought I could glorify God in suffering.

So Jesus says, follow me on the way to the cross. Point three, don't chase power, serve others. These are blunt, forceful, because this passage is, don't chase power, serve others.

In verses 41 through 45, Jesus gathers the 12 and tells them he did not come to give them position and power. Yeah, new regime comes to the White House, they give out positions and power.

[30 : 10] Everybody kind of been nice to him along the way. Jesus is not doing that. You know, after Jesus is talking, no surprise, it's obvious the other disciples are angry with James and John.

Look down there in 41, when they heard it, when the 10 heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. You know, what this tells us is they don't get it either. They're not upset that James and John asked for honor, they're upset that James and John asked for honor only for themselves.

They all wanted it. Then Jesus gathers them. Look in verse 32. He says, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over and their great ones exercise authority but it shall not be so among you for it will be great must be your servant and be first must be slave of all.

Threading through these passages is an extremely important distinction. You know, he begins, you know. Now, he's already said several times, you don't know. Like, you don't know what you're asking but now, this is something you know.

So much of this passage, focus on what they don't know but he's underlying what they do know. You know that greatness in this world is all about position and power, right? You know that. We

know that.

[31 : 21] He could say that right here in this setting and be completely accurate. You know that greatness in this world is all about position and power but it must not be so among you. Jesus is upholding two opposing definitions of greatness.

Greatness in the world about position and power. Greatness, as the Bible defines it, is about serving others. Greatness in the world, position and power. Greatness in God's eyes, in Jesus' eyes, is about serving others.

Look at the way he says it. Look at verse 33 and 34 with me. He says, it shall not be so among you but whoever be great must be your servant. Whoever be first must be slave of all.

Whoever be great must be your servant. Whoever be first must be slave of all. So, so first increases to great. Right? Whoever be, whoever be great, great, great, sorry, I said that wrong.

That's why I was looking. Great increases to first. So whoever be great, so that might be a number of people, whoever be great, but whoever be first, so great increases to first. Okay?

[32 : 24] So hold that with me. Great increases to first, but, he says, servant decreases to slave. So at the same time that great increases to first, servant decreases to slave.

So what he's saying is, it says, if you want to go up in the kingdom of God, you must go completely down. Not only that, he says, you must be your servant, he must be your servant, but it decreases to slave of all.

If you want to be truly great, if you want to climb higher and higher, keep going low. Keep going lower and lower and lower. Keep, keep devoting yourself to serve more and more and more and more people.

Notice, Jesus is not so much correcting the disciples. He is doing that. He's not so much commanding the disciples. He is doing that a bit too. He's telling the disciples, this is the way it is. This is the kingdom of God. You know the way it is out there, but this is the kingdom of God. It's very different. Whoever be great and moving to first must be servant moving to slave.

[33 : 35] Bondservant. Limited rights. John Stott says, the symbol of an authentically Christian leadership is not the purple robe of an emperor, but the coarse apron of a slave.

Not a throne of ivory and gold, but a basin of water for the washing of feet. Those who are truly great serve others.

1997, 23-year-old Leonardo DiCaprio starred in the blockbuster movie The Titanic. The movie tells the true story of the sinking of the Titanic, but it revolves, like you'd expect in Hollywood, around the fictional story of a poor boy, Jake, Leo, chasing the heart of a first-class passenger, rose while the ship sinks.

It swept the awards. It swept up every teenage girl's heart. The beginning of Leo.

However, in several important details, the movie's plot changed from the true story. When the ship begins to sink, the movie shows countless men in first-class fighting for their spots on the lifeboats while there were still women and children left behind.

[35 : 08] In fact, the true story is just the opposite. In first-class, every child was saved, and all but five women were saved of 144, but 70% of the men died.

In second-class, 80% of women saved, 90% of men died. The men in the first-class included many of the richest men in the world, and they were no exception.

John Jacob Asher, the richest man of the day, said to be the richest man of the day, is said to have fought his way to a boat, put his wife on the boat, then stepped back and waved goodbye.

Benjamin Guggenheim, the museum's named after him, simply refused to take a seat, saying, tell my wife I played the game out straight. That's what I want to say to her.

I played the game out straight, and to the end, no woman will be left aboard this ship. Because Ben Guggenheim was a coward. There was an unwritten code of honor in that day for men to live and even die serving others.

[36 : 17] It's no wonder Hollywood changed the story to suit our culture where we're encouraged to show no restraint in serving ourselves. let us follow their lead.

Don't chase power. Serve others. These opposing definitions of greatness continue today. True greatness is not about position and power. True greatness is about serving others for the glory of God.

True greatness is not about position and power no matter what they tell you. True greatness is about serving others for the glory of God. Christianity is, as one author said, an inverted pyramid.

So the world has a pyramid.

The pyramid is climb up and more reports come to you. More people report to you. More employees report to you. But Christianity says, climb down and you report to more people.

Christianity says, instead of climbing up where more people serve you, you're climbing down more and more that you might serve others and more.

[37 : 20] Those who are truly great are the ones that getting closer and closer to the bottom find out more people they can joyfully serve. So true greatness is not what you read in the papers. True greatness is the teenager who respects their parents and does what is needed around the house.

True greatness is a suffering saint who keeps serving others though they have a broken heart. True greatness is the exhausted mom of young children who keeps rising early to wipe noses, change diapers and pull together a meal.

True greatness is the employee who does not spend his time angling for a position but devotes all his energy to make his company a success. True greatness is a successful businessman or leader who jumps in to do whatever is needed on Sunday morning.

True greatness is you. There's so much true greatness in this room. It's completely unbelievable.

Don't believe the lie. There's more grace in this room than you realize.

Is that it though? It's the main takeaway of this passage. Just don't chase political power. Don't chase comfort. Don't chase power. Wonderfully, no.

[38 : 40] We do not merely need Jesus' redefinition of true greatness. We need Jesus' demonstration of true greatness. Look at the way Mark concludes in this seminal passage.

For even the Son of Man came not to serve, be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. You know, the season of Christmas, which we sang about several times, and even Buddy mentioned the season of Christmas is all about how Jesus came.

How silently, how silently, like snow dropping on the ground. You know, we're overtaken with a wonder. We should be. You know, he came as a baby. It's staggering. It's unbelievable.

Jack Packer says, nothing in fiction is so unimaginable. So nothing written, not even what Lewis is written, is as unimaginable as Jesus coming as a baby.

But this verse alerts us to an equally staggering reality. Jesus came as a servant. He who is rich in glory, he who innumerable angels ceaselessly worship, he who upholds all things with the word of his power, works out every single thing in heaven and on earth according to his will.

[39 : 51] He came to, not to be served, but to serve. He came as a servant, being born in the likeness of men. He didn't just appear as a servant. He didn't just put forward a servant face like we so often can do.

He undertook all the lowliness, the demand, the obedience in living to serve others. He didn't just come to show us how to serve. He came to die. The season of Christmas is all about how Jesus came, but the significance of Christmas is because he came to die.

He came to give his life as a ransom for many. Philippians 2 said he was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

J.I. Packer says, the crucial significance of the cradle at Bethlehem lies in its place in the sequence of steps that led the Son of God to the cross of Calvary.

Now that is so good, I'm going to read it again. The crucial significance of the cradle at Bethlehem lies in its place in the sequence of steps down that led the Son of God to the cross at Calvary, and we do not understand the cradle at Bethlehem until we see it in his context.

[41 : 06] The most amazing thing about the cradle in Bethlehem is that it began this sequence of steps all the way down to Golgotha, all the way down to Calvary, all the way down to the death of our Lord.

The temptation just kept on coming. He was ridiculed, mocked, spat upon, slapped, punched, whipped, and condemned. Yet scripture says he opened not his mouth. He never fought back. One, as a servant, he went lower and lower into what one person calls an un-Roman resume of shame. You know, we build our resume with everything good we've done. Jesus builds his with everything bad laid upon him.

He went down from the glorious throne in heaven, not to a cradle in Bethlehem, but to a bloody Roman cross at Calvary so that he might be the ransom for many.

Really what that means is that he might be the ransom for all, that his blood might be spilled so that anyone and everyone who comes to him might have eternal life. So come to him.

[42 : 12] Don't be duped by the sentimentality of Christmas. See it as the beginning of this sequence of steps.

Wow. this sequence of steps, not for his sins, but for mine.

Not for my shame, his shame, but for mine. so that we might hear the words.

Come to me, my son, my daughter. Hmm. And Mark includes this here.

because this is the engine. It's where the power is for pouring out our lives like Jesus.

[43 : 24] For, that's one of those big purpose clauses, for, son of man, did not come to be served, but to serve, give his life as a ransom of many, so that he might call forth a people who follow him.

2 Corinthians 5, says it in a way that I love to hear it. For the love of Christ controls us because we've concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died. And he died for all. Listen, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

May God help us. Father in heaven, we thank you, praise you, worship you. we give to you all the glory and honor. Father, this time of year, we're blown away at the mystery of Bethlehem.

But Lord, we are more blown away at the mystery of Calvary. That you, in your holiness, would take on our sin.

That you, who knew no sin, would become sin so that we might be forgiven and know you truly and live for you and live as those who don't live for themselves any longer.

[44 : 46] But for him. Thank you, Lord. Praise you. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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