

SESSION EIGHT

The Authority of Jesus: *The Sacrifice in Following* (Mark 10:17-45)

“Christianity is Christ because there isn't anything else. There is no atonement that somehow can be detached from who the Lord Jesus is. There is no grace that can be attached to you transferred from Him.

All there is is Christ and your soul.” ~ Sinclair Ferguson

I. Overview

The way to Jerusalem and the cross casts a shadow over chapter 10. Here Jesus provides a third prediction of His death, burial, and resurrection. Once again the disciples misunderstand Jesus' mission and the kingdom of God. Contrary to their expectations, a messianic mission entailed suffering, losing one's life resulted in gaining it, and becoming the least turned out to be the first. Commenting on this set of paradoxical concepts in Mark 10:1-31, R. T. France writes, “. . . these already bewildering demands are reinforced in ways which leave the disciples increasingly uncomfortable and reveal how far their re-education has still to go in order for God's kingship to be established among them.” (*Mark*, 386).

II. The Content

A. The Rich Young Ruler: *What it Means to Really Follow Christ* (10:17-31)

When it comes to recruits for the Kingdom of God, the rich young ruler would have been a prime candidate. Conventional human values would applaud this man's wealth, exemplary character, and age. And yet, these values fail to be counted in these “upside down” values of God's Kingdom.

vv. 17-18 - Jesus' response to the title “good” most likely is challenging the young man's thinking. No human being is ultimately righteous except God alone (cf. Rom 3:10). In no way is Jesus implying that He himself is not good.

vv. 19-21 - Scholars have debated why Jesus only lists some of the commandments, and why they are listed in this particular order. While one can only speculate, what can be noted is that Jesus emphasizes those injunctions which govern behavior towards one another. The placement of honoring parents last may be due to it being associated with long life—closely linked with the man's desire for eternal life (cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 561).

The noticeable absence of the first set of the Ten Commandments is where the issues reside for this rich young man. His love for his riches results in idolatry.

v. 22 - “*became sad at this saying and went away grieving.*” This rare Greek term for “sad” denotes a physical appearance that is downcast and even angry (cf. Eek 27:35; 28:19; 32:10). These earthly possessions became a curse. The brief pleasures of this earth robbed the rich man of untold eternal wealth. To enter the Kingdom of God, one must give up anything that might stand in the way (cf. 9:43-47). In his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Sten aptly notes, “Christian discipleship demands a radical reorientation of life and priorities.” (p. 475).

vv. 23-25 - In a culture where wealth was equated with divine blessing (cf. Prov 10:22), the disciples would have been utterly confused and troubled. The analogy of the camel and the eye of the needle only further heightens the anxiety of the disciples.

vv. 26-27 - Clearly the only means for entering into the Kingdom is by God's grace.

vv. 28-30 - In sharp contrast to the rich young ruler, Peter indicates that they have left everything. Ultimately, those who do forsake all will inherit the very thing the rich young ruler sought—eternal life!

B. Third Passion Prediction: *Who They are Really Following* (10:32-34)

In the journey towards Jerusalem, Jesus provides a third and most detailed passion prediction (cf. 8:31; 9:31).

v. 32 - The mention of the “way” continues the motif in this pilgrimage to the cross (cf. 9:33, 34; 10:17). The disciples’ “amazement” suggests their awe of Jesus’ obedience and unfailing commitment to God’s will. The “fear” denotes the disciples’ negative sense of being afraid in light of what awaits them in Jerusalem.

vv. 33-34 - The description of Jesus’ looming passion recalls four important elements in the description of the suffering servant in Isaiah: mockery and spitting (Isa 50:6; 53:3), scourging (Isa 50:6; 53:5), and death (cf. Isa 53:8-9, 12).

C. John and James’ Request: *Failing to Miss Why They are to Follow* (10:35-45)

As in the previous passion predictions, Jesus’ words are then followed by an example of failure on the part of the disciples (cf. 8:32-33; 9:32-41). Undoubtedly reflecting on the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, James and John failed to hear anything Jesus had just stated. The “Sons of Thunder” still hoped, as Peter did in 8:32, that this topic of rejection was a mistake. Rather, Jesus would fulfill the expected role of a Messiah—sitting on the Davidic throne in Jerusalem.

vv. 35-37 - The indirectness of the request suggests the impropriety of their words. The content of the request seems to imply their desire to sit by Jesus’ side when He is enthroned as the supreme judge of the world (cf. 8:38; 13:26-17; 14:62).

vv. 38-40 - Both the cup and baptism conveys suffering and martyrdom. Indeed, James and John will fulfill this prediction (cf. Acts 12:2 - James serves as a martyr; John - imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos).

vv. 41-44 - While James and John may have had the audacity to ask, all of the disciples are guilty of seeking the highest place.

Not only has wealth been shown to be inadequate for those seeking to follow Jesus, power and prestige also have no bearing on the qualifications of Christ-followers.

The greatest example of being a servant is found in their model leader—Jesus Christ. It is a fitting conclusion to this discourse on discipleship. Followers of Jesus are to imitate Him!

“ransom for many” - This idea of a payment in order to secure the release of a slave or captive embodies the reason for Christ’s coming (also, cf. Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14; Heb 9:12; 1 Pet 1:18). The verse alludes to Isaiah 53, especially verses 10 through 12: the voluntary giving up of one’s life in order to redeem. The Greek preposition for “for” can mean “instead of”, only further conveying Jesus’ death as substitutionary and His standing in the place or stead of those He ransomed. This is why Jesus had to die! He did not die the death of a martyr because He willfully gave up His life rather than someone “taking” it from Him. He died to ransom men and women from sin and death.

III. The Intersect

- A. The believer should give generously as a conduit of God’s grace and goodness. Our willingness to emulate the grace of God in our giving reflects not only that God is the initiator of the thought to give, but He also is the originator of all that we possess.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18a -

2 Corinthians 9:11 -

- B. The believer should not lose sight of the blessings that come from serving Jesus—now and for all eternity. These blessings far outweigh any sacrifices made along the way.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 —

- C. We need to spend some time thanking the Lord for settling our debt our profound debt: our sin, which held us captive until Christ settled our debt once and for all on the cross!

1 Peter 1:18-21 -

“Those who have a saving interest in Christ must be willing to part with all for Him, leave all to follow Him. Whatever stands in opposition to Christ, or in competition with Him for our love and service, we must cheerfully quit it, though ever so dear to us.” ~ Matthew Henry