

## Pentecost 23; October 20 & 21, 2024

### Mark 10:32-45

Some things just wouldn't work if they were upside down. Bicycles. Toilets. Sandcastles. Houses. The list could go on and on. When we hear that something is "backwards" or that things have "gone upside down," we know what's being talked about is not as it should be – it's broken, confused and chaotic. We think of greatness being found in glory. We do not think that greatness is found in suffering. We get moving up, but we don't think of greatness as going down.

We get upward mobility. You work hard, and you get a promotion at work. The harder you work, the greater promotion. Picture the person who serves as coach for his son's little league. Even though the coach may say: *"It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game,"* it's sure more fun to win the game. The coach is not going to go on the field and tell his team that today's purpose of the game is to lose it as bad as they could. We get moving up in the standing not going down. We understand going for our dream job. We don't understand going for a nightmare job. We understand upward mobility, moving up the ladder and doing better in the standings.

That's why Jesus' statement at the end our text stands out to his disciples: **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** Even though they have heard Jesus speak before about glory being found in suffering and death, it's still hard for them to understand. They are more interested in upward mobility than downward mobility. Jesus has made it clear that he is willing to suffer and die for us. That's why he came. That is why they are on their way to Jerusalem to suffer on the cross. But these disciples still want the glory and not the suffering. They are still hoping that they are on the way to Jerusalem to get the glory. They do not want to go through the suffering. Jesus once again shows them that God's kingdom is upside down. Glory comes through suffering, and greatness comes through service.

Let's put these words of Jesus in our text into context. Peter, James and John were part of Jesus' inner circle. There are things that they will only see that the other disciples will not see. In Mark chapter 9, Mark writes: **"After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them."** They saw what only a few people have ever been allowed to see – the Glory of God. They see Jesus in a way they had never seen before. They wanted this Jesus. After all, in the kingdom of the world, rulers rule and servants serve. Jesus needs to once again show teach them that in kingdom of God, things are upside down. Servant rule and the first are last.

If these words of our text sound familiar, it is because they are familiar. In the middle of 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark, Jesus asked his disciples: **"Who do people say I am?"** (Mark 8:27) Peter answers the question by saying: **"You are the Messiah."** (Mark 8:29). Yet when Jesus tells them that he is going to Jerusalem to suffer and die, Peter says that this will never happen to you. Jesus' response: **"Get behind me, Satan."** (Mark 8:33) Fast forward to chapter 9. Jesus teaches his disciples a second time. **"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise."** (Mark 9:31) Their response? They are arguing about which one of them was the greatest in the kingdom of God. Fast forward to chapter 10.

**"They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again, he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."**

Yet, what does James and John do? **"Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."** **"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."** What would you do if you were Jesus? How would you respond? Maybe – *"You idiots! Don't you get it. How much clearer do I need to make it?"* While we might be surprised by their actions, we understand their desires. They were interested in upward mobility. They had been successful fishermen, part of a family business, but now they have the opportunity to be something more. Had Jesus not called them to follow Him? Why not follow Him to the top? Had Jesus not named them the **"sons of thunder"** (3:17)? Why not show Him their potential? So, with the Kingdom drawing

near, they seek positions of honor. The other disciples' response: **"When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John."** They are mad that James and John got to Jesus first, because they all felt that way.

Jesus' response: **"You don't know what you are asking,"** Jesus said. **"Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"** **"We can,"** they answered. Jesus said to them, **"You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."** Moving up in the kingdom is God is not moving up, but moving down to serve. Jesus has set His eyes on a downward mobility which takes Him to the very bottom, the depths of Hell itself. He will drink the cup of His Father's wrath against sin. He will be baptized with the waters of judgment. He will walk through the halls of death. He does this for one reason: That He might gather all who have sinned, all who have suffered, all who have been separated from the love of God and rise from the dead so He might bring them back to His Father and give them life in His Kingdom. Jesus has come to be a suffering servant, to die for the sinful, and gather the lost. His downward mobility reveals the love of God.

What's in your junk drawer in your house? My answer would be: *I'm not sure*. But I do know that it is almost overflowing. Bolts that I will probably never use. Old batteries that I'm not sure I will ever use. Tools that I can't find when I need them. After all, it's a junk drawer. You and I are junk drawers. We are sinful human beings that are filled with all kinds of junk of sin. Let's give thanks that Jesus has come to take all that junk away. Let's give thanks that Jesus came **"not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."** May God help us to serve others with the same love that Jesus has shown to us. Amen.