

Servant Messiah
Mark 10:32-45

Isaiah 53
John 13:1-20
Responsive Psalm 23

I want to start out this morning by reading last weeks passage, Mark chapter 10:17-31.

Over the past 3 weeks, we have been looking at what it means to be a disciple of Christ and how it effects each and every aspect of our lives. Being a follower of Christ is not something that you can just claim like many people today like to do, calling themselves Christians yet there is no mark, no evidence of discipleship that God calls his believers to be. The Term Christian anymore is nothing more then someone who believes that God exists. But God has very little to do with our lives, and judging by how people who claim Christ act, very little interest in how we conduct ourselves. But as we have seen that is not the God of the bible, for God is very much interested in how we conduct ourselves for if we are his children, we should be a reflection of him.

And in a sort of summary this is what Jesus has been teaching in here in chapter 10, That Christians are to be humble, patient, and loving servants of God, and of each other not self seeking, self indulged, but rather living for others instead of self. It is through this life style, and commitment to the faith that God's love can be displayed before mankind. Last week we talked about what would we give for the gospel? That is a hard and difficult question to answer, and upon reflection I think each and every one of us can say that such a question steps on a few of our toes...or maybe even our whole foot! The life, and purpose of a Christian is to live for Christ, knowing that he is our hope, our salvation, and peace, and our joy. And yet, even while we know this we are constantly falling short of what is expected of us.

There are some who think themselves to be pretty good, such as the rich young ruler who came to Jesus that we read about here in Mark 10. Who see very little wrong with in themselves, judging themselves to be righteous, upright, upstanding individuals who because of this deserve some sort of reward. It was obvious in the rich young rulers questioning that he was seeking how he could gain something, What must I do to inherit eternal life. He saw it as a meritorious reward for his righteous acts and goodness. And yet, we fail God every day do we not? In fact its probably safe to say, constantly. This rich young ruler, and Jews, and even many Christians today concern themselves with breaking some list of rules and regulations, they worry that they will disappoint God if they falter, They look to the 10 commandments, the look to Moses to find guidance as to how one should live and abstain from sin and temptation.

But as each and every one of us know, we can pretty much all stand here today, looking at the 10 commandments and say like the rich young ruler did, I have kept these things, if not from my youth, at least from my new birth. But as we have been seeing here in Jesus teaching about discipleship, there is so much more then just following the 10 commandments for holiness. If every Christian were to be honest with themselves, they honestly could not answer like this young ruler. We recognize that we are lost, vial, unclean, and undone before God, when we start to see and understand the gospel ministry, his instruction to love, to teach, to preach, to be servants in this ministry we realize that we all fall short, every single day.

Pastor Vic had always said, as you age, and as you mature in your christian faith you come to realize that your sins are no longer those of the physical realm, that judging by our conduct one could be seen on the outside as being blameless. But the reality is as we grow in faith, we recognize just how deep and entrenched sin is in our thought patterns. And our rebellion in our lives no longer is our actions, but our thoughts. We start to get a bigger picture of how gracious God has been toward us, and how precious the blood of Christ that covers over all of our sin truly is. This should cause in us a series of mixed emotions, sadness over our constant failure and sin, but joy and relief over the grace that has set us free, and hopefulness that one day these struggles will be behind us, and we will no longer be held down by this fleshly vessel that struggles with sin and rebellion against God.

We as humans seem to constantly like to complicate things, we add on, we create, we demand, and it seems to me that faith in God is really no different. In an attempt to understand God, and in an attempt to police ourselves to make ourselves more righteous we end up complicating the entire thing. Just taking what Jesus has been teaching here in Mark 10, and the latter half of 9 and showing what discipleship truly is, it is not all that complicated. Yes, complicated to achieve, impossible actually on our own, but we are not on our own are we?

If we were to put Jesus teaching of his disciples into a quick all encompassing summary I think it could be expressed like this. Imitate Christ in his ministry, putting the needs of others before ourselves but that is not the only thing, first and foremost is the centrality of the gospel. Being compassionate, loving, caring, sacrificing, serving, while all of these things are good, before God they mean nothing without Christ's atoning work, without Christ's imputed righteousness all the good that we do ends up being like the rich ruler. Looks good, sounds good, but amounts to nothing when it comes to inheriting eternal life. As James says, works without faith is worthless, but like wise faith without works is dead. You can not claim Christ, and not have the works that show forth Christ.

So much ink, and time is spent on Christian guides and self help books to living a holy life, but the simple truth is, if we are truly living for Christ, then we will be truly living a holy life. Yes we will stumble, yes we will fall, we are still held down and bound by this sinful flesh but God has given us power to overcome, and mercy and grace when we fall. So as we have seen, the Christian faith is all encompassing in our lives. We have not been called by God to just continue on our way, but rather he has made us new creatures, we are a new creation born out of the blood of Jesus Christ, and it does have an effect on everything we do. Which was my point of last weeks message, that we should be so christ centered in our life, and in our thoughts that we should scrutinize how we act, how we respond, what we do, what we say, and the company we associate with. Not that any of those things will add to our righteousness, or make us more holy and deserving of eternal life. But rather we should be so gospel centered that we act in the such a way that our lives show forth Christ.

That was the entire point of the teaching of the rich young ruler, who was unwilling to put aside his riches to follow Christ, and to minister the gospel. His riches held him back, they were holding him down and we should be careful that we do not have anything in our lives that hinder our ability to witness for Christ. And when we are confronted with those things in our lives, we need to not be like the young ruler but rather be willing to distance ourselves for the sake of the gospel.

So last weeks message was the 3rd and final conclusion of his discipleship teaching here in Mark chapter 10, and we see here in todays passage is Jesus 3rd and final prediction of his death and resurrection. So let us read mark 10:32-45

So we see that Jesus once again tells his disciples that he is going to die, and out of the 3 predictions here in mark this one is the most explicit. The first time he spoke of it to his disciples was in chapter 8, verse 31 which says, “And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after 3 days rise again.” As we know after he had said this, Peter took him aside and rebuked him for Peter did not believe that the messiah would die, he had come to set up his kingdom. The 2nd mention is in chapter 9, verse 31 which says, “For he taught his disciples and said to them, The son of man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And after he is killed, he will rise again the third day. Now this time it appears that there was no denying what he was saying, but it says that they did not understand what he was saying and was afraid to ask. But immediately following that teaching Mark records that the disciples were then disputing among themselves who would be the greatest in the coming kingdom.

And in our passage today, in the final prediction of his death, Jesus gives even more detail saying that he will be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes, condemned to death and handed over to the gentiles and they will mock him, scourge him spit on him, and kill him, but he will rise up on the 3rd day. In each of these accounts he gives a little more detail, but each one ends with him telling them that he will rise again on the 3rd day. But as we can see right away in our passage today, that Jesus disciples still do not get it, they still are unable to understand and see the bigger picture. After Jesus had spent all this time, and the last couple of events that has been recorded to teach them about discipleship, servant hood and suffering James and John approach him and ask if they could be seated at positions of honor and authority over God's kingdom. Just like in chapter 9, before Jesus started teaching them about discipleship they were arguing over who among them was going to be the greatest, and here they are asking for a favor to be elevated to a point of high honor.

In these statements by Jesus informing his disciples what lies ahead for him, stands as instruction that all of those who follow in his path will likewise go through suffering and persecution. Discipleship is not only characterized by our behaviors in our marriage, with children and new believers, or even our possessions but it is characterized by faithful following of Jesus even through trials and sufferings. Let us not forget what James wrote, to count it all joy when we call into various trials knowing that these serve as a test of faith and it produces in us patience, as we learn to wait upon God. It is also interesting to note, that in language in vers 32 that says as they were on the road going up to Jerusalem that Jesus was going before them. He is leading them, on the road to Jerusalem toward his death. This is not someone who is hanging their head low, feeling pity for themselves for the trials that await, but rather Jesus is leading the way, and his disciples are following him toward suffering.

We have all heard the term that it is best to lead by example, and that is exactly what Jesus is doing here. He is leading his disciples, forward toward Jerusalem to his inevitable death which must come for without it there would be no redemption, no sacrifice and covering of our sins. But notice in the last half of verse 32, what are his disciples doing. They are following, but in fear. By this time it is pretty clear to them that Jesus has not been very successful in making friends and influencing the Religious leaders. At every turn they were seeking reasons to discredit, and catch him so that they may hve him killed. We saw that early in Mark at the synagogue where after he healed the man with the withered arm that the pharisees were plotting with the herodians to have him killed. So the disciples fear was natural and not surprising since they were on a death march toward Jerusalem, the center of the very religious group that was seekign to have Jesus killed.

And you would think that Jesus would maybe try to calm their fears, but instead he tells them that the scribes and pharisees are indeed going to have their way, and he will be tortured, and suffer and die by their hands, and after all of this we see James and John's response was one to seemingly take advantage of the conversation and request to be put in positions of honor. While Jesus had instructed them on sacrifice, and service and he himself is being the perfect example by faithfully, and willingly going toward Jerusalem to offer himself as a sacrifice for this very men who are following him they can only think of themselves and their own reward. Just think about this request for a moment, the audacity of even asking such a thing. Jesus says, I am going to die, and they are asking that before he does for him to promise them this place of honor, above all of the other disciples. This request is even more offensive then when Peter rebuked Jesus when he had first told them that he was going to die. Jesus responded to Peter by saying, Satan get behind me for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. While Peter could not imagine the messiah dying and reacted hastily, and brash, James and John were seeking their own self interest after Jesus had just spent this entire time teaching that discipleship is sacrifice.

But we must take note, that despite their self serving request, this question does at the very least convey that fact that they believed and understood Jesus to be the Messiah, and they believed that in Jerusalem he will inherit his promised messianic kingdom. But Jesus does not respond to them in either agreement, nor disappointment but rather more instruction. Knowing that they ask this request out of ignorance, he tells them that they do not understand what they are asking. And asks if they are able to undergo what he is about to suffer. To which they respond that they are able, These two brothers were not nicknamed the sons of thunder for no reason. They are brash, and quick to respond without fully understanding the ramifications. To which Jesus replies, they will indeed share in his suffering, or rather they will suffer on behalf of him. We know that what Jesus endured, and his death on the cross could only be accomplished by him, for it was ordained that he would die in our place, that he would be the sacrificial lamb, who would once and for all reconcile God's children to himself.

So when he tells James and John that they will indeed drink of the same cup, and the same baptism it was not that they would participate in the same way, or even share the same sufferings and persecution but that they would indeed have sufferings and persecution because of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus do not decide to accept or reject hardship based on reward or merit, but they are tied to the sufferings of Christ and must accept that the idea of suffering because of the gospel of Christ is nothing more then what it means to be a disciples of Christ. We see this in the following verses when Jesus says, "But to sit at my right hand and on my left is not mine to give but it is for those for whome it is prepared."

This response points to the fact that it is all in God's hands, and the idea of rewards, or glory is hidden within God's desire and his purpose and plan. ?Being rewarded for following Jesus is not the point, nor the purpose that one follows Jesus, But rather one follows Jesus because of what he has already done for us. It is not to seek merit, or greater reward for our own righteous acts, but rather we follow him faithfully because of the sacrifice he has made on our behalf granting us righteousness. In the last final verses of our passage that we are looking at this morning we see that Jesus As he often does takes this opportunity to teach his disciples another valuable lesson in what it means to be a disciples. Verse 41:445 "And when the 10 heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to himself and said to them, You know that those who are considered rulers over Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever of you desires to be first shall be a slave of all, for even the son of man did not come to be served, but to give

his life a ransom for many.”

James and John were seeking to gain positions of notoriety, of honor and of course upon hearing this the other 10 disciples became upset. It is likely that they were harboring the same ambitions, hoping to gain honor and favor. It is not a far stretch to think this because of how we have seen the disciples thus far conducting themselves. We get glimpses of moments where they are starting to believe that they are something special and lose sight of the fact that it is not about them and their abilities but it is about Jesus and his ministry, and it is he who has given them their mission, and has enabled them to perform it. It was not of themselves, but of God. And as we see Jesus seize his moment to teach his close disciples, he calls the other 10 to himself, instead of just correcting James and John in their selfish desire and ambition he calls them all together because he knew they too all had the same sort of desires, seeking elevation and position within the kingdom of God.

But he tells them that God's kingdom does not operate like the Gentile world, where kings, and men with great power lord it over those who are subject to them. Making all others servants, but in God's kingdom greatness is not measured by the exercise of power over others, but rather by the servitude of others. Even Jesus, the Son of God who was given all authority over the earth did not come to rule it as a king making all his subjects, but rather he came to serve, to sacrifice his life for his brothers and sisters so that they too could be found righteous before God. To lay down one's life for another is the ultimate sacrifice that one can make, and it is for this reason that Jesus had come. This truth is profound, it is the opposite of everything that the world tells us about authority, and power. We even see it in our churches, people who are seeking positions of power within the church, to have some sort of control, to be elevated and recognized among the people as something great.

This sort of mindset is what drives false teachers to heap up followers for themselves, to gain fame, power, and money. It is not for the sake of the gospel, it is not for the ministry of God's word, nor is it out of love for the brotherhood, let alone is it a ministry of servitude toward God. They are ministries of selfish ambition, they are false, not only in their message, but in their purpose. But this mindset doesn't only infect those who are using the gospel for their own gain and glory, it too can creep into the minds of those who are just trying to be ministers of the word. We as humans tend to elevate people, we tend to hold them in a higher regard, we tend to make celebrities out of others who have been given a powerful ministry, but we must always be mindful of Jesus teaching here to his disciples. In all of these things there must be humility, and an understanding that it is God's work and not our own. Look at Paul's ministry, he did not desire fame, even though he was well known and a hero of the faith, he constantly pointed to God who had given him that ministry and enabled him to do it.

Paul was nothing more than a servant of God, faithfully serving others in the ministry that he was given. And this passage here I think stands as a lesson, and a warning to each of those who claim to follow Christ, it is not about station, or power, or what we can gain, but it is about Christ and his ministry and our service to him as we faithfully follow in his word as servants of God, and servants of each other in fellowship around the throne of God.