

Mark 10:32-52

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[0 : 00] I want to take you forward a couple of weeks into the future. Christmas is well and truly over, and it's back to real life.

It's just another morning of another weekday. Maybe you're getting ready for work. Maybe that means just rolling out of bed and sitting at the desk. Maybe you have to get the kids ready for school.

Maybe you have to get ready to go to school yourself. I'll head off to uni. It's just another morning in the middle of the week. There's a knock at the door, and you go and open it, and it's Jesus.

Unlike this morning's illustrations, this is hypothetical. All he says, right, is, what do you want me to do for you? It's just another morning in the middle of the week, and the king of heaven and earth says to you, what do you want me to do for you?

I don't know how you'd answer that question. Maybe you don't know how you'd answer that question. Whatever answer, it will say a lot about us.

[1 : 32] What our desires are, what our concerns are, what we get worried about, what we look forward to. What do you want me to do for you?

It's exactly the question Jesus asks twice in that passage we've just read in Mark 10. First to James and John in verse 36, and again to Bartimaeus in verse 51.

What do you want me to do for you? And when we look at their answers, on surface level, they don't seem a million miles apart.

James and John, they ask to be seated on the right hand and left hand of Jesus in glory.

Bartimaeus wants to be able to see.

Seems like they both want something for themselves. Is there really any difference? Well, Jesus certainly seems to think so, doesn't he?

[2 : 41] Because he answers the two requests very differently. Simply put, he says a definite no to James and John. He says, I can't do that for you.

And a resounding yes to Bartimaeus. To one, Jesus says no. To the other, yes. What is going on?

Where did James and John go wrong, but Bartimaeus seems to get it right? Well, if we look at James and John, their request, they recognize that Jesus is the top dog.

He is the most glorious. But they want to be on the next step of the podium. If you take that in isolation, you might think, that's a bit cheeky.

But what's the harm in asking? There's a saying in Nidri, which seems to be the motto of everyone. Shy bairns dinna get. If you want to get something, you've got to go and ask for it.

[3 : 52] But this isn't just a cheeky request. It's an insight into their hearts. It's probably an insight into our hearts.

To see what's going on here, right, we need to see this request in the surrounding context.

Particularly in light of what Jesus has just been saying.

Just look up a few verses there, right, to verse 33. Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem.

And as they're traveling, Jesus turns and says to them, 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. They will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise. This is the third time in Mark that Jesus has told the disciples of what is awaiting him in Jerusalem.

[5 : 07] And by some distance, the most detailed account. And the way he describes his mission is telling. First notice the title that Jesus uses of himself.

They are in 33. The Son of Man. It is a title that Jesus uses often of himself. In fact, it's the title that Jesus usually calls himself by.

And if you look through the Bible, particularly in the book of Daniel, you see the picture that this paints. Who is the Son of Man?

The Son of Man is the one who has all glory and authority. Dominion over a kingdom in which all peoples and languages and nations should honor him.

His dominion over a kingdom in which all peoples and nations should honor him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion. That shall not pass away and his kingdom shall not be destroyed. He is the Son of Man.

[6 : 16] This is humanity at its pinnacle. Distinguished from all others. Seated at the right hand of the Father. Power to forgive sins.

Coming on the clouds of heaven in the glory of his Father with his angels to judge the earth. Lord over all. That is who the Son of Man is. That is the Son of Man.

It is an impressive picture. That is who Jesus rightly sees himself as. And yet, look at what he has come for.

To be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes. Condemned to death. Delivered to the Gentiles. Mocked. Spat on. Flogged. And killed. Very contrasting pictures, aren't they?

[7 : 23] Seated at the right hand of the Father. Power to forgive sins. Coming on the clouds of heaven in glory. Lord over all. Delivered to the chief priests and scribes.

Condemned to death. Delivered to the Gentiles. Mocked. Spat on. Flogged. And killed. What we have here is a picture of the greatest.

Making himself the least. And as we saw this morning, willingly so. Casting aside everything he is. And everything he has. That is the path that Jesus is walking on. And it is a path he wants his disciples to follow him on.

It says that most clearly in Luke 9, right? If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself. Take up his cross daily and follow me.

[8 : 27] To be a disciple of Jesus is to follow him. To follow Jesus means to walk that same path that he walked.

To deny yourself. To deny yourself. And to take up your cross. Paul says the same thing in his letters to the Philippians.

Where he says that in your relationships to one another have the same mindset. As Christ Jesus. Who being in the very nature of God. Did not count equality with God.

Something to be used to his own advantage. Rather he made himself nothing. By taking the very nature of a servant. Being made in human likeness. Being found in appearance as a man.

He humbled himself. By becoming obedient to death. Even death on a cross. To be a disciple of Jesus means to count yourself nothing.

[9 : 30] To count others more important than yourself. And to put Jesus first and foremost in all things. Jesus asks his disciples.

What do you want me to do for you? Right off the back of this. James and John. They say.

Could you make us great? Can you imagine? It's hard to. Right? Imagine you're with a group of friends.

People you spend loads of time with. You share some terrible. Heartbreaking news with them. And this is how they respond.

It's like sharing with your closest friends. That you've been diagnosed with a life altering disease. Or terminal illness. You tell this to the people you love.

[10 : 36] They hear what you've said. They've taken it in. And then they go. When you die. Can I get your house? Can I get your house? Can I get your house? Can I get your house?

Can I get your house? Jesus has told his disciples that he is going to be mocked. Spat on. Flogged. And killed. James and John come along and say.

So when you die. Would you mind making us great alongside you? Make sure we get sorted out. They've misunderstood what it means to follow Jesus.

Jesus on the road to Jerusalem is the greatest man making himself the least. And his response. In response.

His followers. His disciples. Who are the least. Seek to make themselves the greatest. It's interesting.

[11 : 41] The rest of the disciples are indignant with James and John. Kind of looks like they're raging. Because they didn't get there first.

I think if they understood true discipleship. They wouldn't have cared. As always.

It's very easy. Right. To look at the disciples. And think. What a bunch of morons. They just don't get it. They keep on missing the point. Time after time. Stare at them in utter disbelief.

At their incompetence. But how often do we walk the same path? Looking at Jesus. At the price he has paid. At the path he walked.

And thinking. Wonder what I can get for myself out of this. True discipleship is not about us at all. It's got nothing to do with what we get out of it.

[12 : 45] It's all about Jesus. They were hoping they could honor Jesus by honoring themselves. It's worship and discipleship. It's worship and discipleship blended with self-interest.

I think that's a generous reading anyway. How often do we mask self-interest as worship and discipleship?

Do godly looking things. But our motivation is for people to look at us and go, hey, they're doing well, aren't they? Looking to serve.

But hoping for our own glory off the back of it. Our own comfort and pleasure. See Jesus' response in verse 42.

He says to his disciples. All his disciples. I think there's a reason he's saying this to all of them. It's not just James and John we should pick on here. He said, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them.

[13 : 53] And their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant.

And 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.

What is Jesus saying here? He's saying, yes, there is a world out there where everyone is self-serving. Where people use their positions of authority for their own sake.

Where people look out for themselves and watch their own backs. But Jesus says to his disciples. People who want to follow him. He says, it shall not be so among you.

Do not be like the world. Whoever will be first among you must be slave of all. Follow the example of the Son of Man.

[15 : 02] The pinnacle of mankind to despite all that he actually deserved. Came not to be served but to serve. The point here is truly honoring Christ means denying yourself.

Genuinely denying yourself. And following Jesus. And I think even then, right? Our prideful little minds are very good at reading this and thinking, right, if I look humble.

If I look very servant-hearted, then I'm going to be made great. It's not a point of what Jesus is saying at all. Right, we manage to read taking up your cross as a step-by-step guide to making your own name great.

If I just look very humble, people will think great things about me. They'll talk about how great I am, how good an example I am, how they wish they were like me. The whole point is forget about yourself.

Actually, forget about yourself. We are not our own. Our purpose is not to secure something great for ourselves, but to serve God and honor Him and glorify Him.

[16 : 19] Deny yourself. Deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me. That is the true Christian walk. I think it was Calvin who, I think quite rightly so, we all think far more of ourselves than we'd ever like to admit.

Or that we'd ever admit to anyone else. Following Christ means casting aside ourselves and following in the footsteps of selfless service.

To abandon ourselves. That we may give everything we have. And everything that we are.

All of our strength to be obedience and service of God in whatever we might do. And the question to ask ourselves, would you be content if people thought nothing of you?

If the world looked down on you with derision, but God was ultimately glorified through your life, would you be content? Would you be content?

[18 : 05] Don't hear me wrong. There are great privileges we enjoy of being part of God's people. And there are a multitude of benefits that we should rejoice in.

But the point is, if that is ever our motivation, if that is the reason for our devotion, that we think we'll get something out of it for ourselves, like James and John, we are totally missing the point.

We are totally missing what true discipleship is. Whether that makes us the greatest or the least, in this life or the least, shouldn't trouble us one else.

So long as Jesus is being glorified through all. Because he was the son of man. Because he was the son of man. The Lord of heaven and earth, creator king, who came and gave up everything he had.

Who cast aside any thought of himself for wretched sinners like us. He calls us to follow in his footsteps. But we get the better end of the deal, right?

[19 : 33] Because instead of having to give ourselves up for a bunch of losers like Jesus did, we are the losers who get to live for the greatest king of all. What do you want me to do for you?

James and John, the disciples of Jesus, they wanted to be made great themselves. They got it all wrong. Because in following Jesus, they wanted something for themselves.

But we get the right response. Or I should say the right attitude. Just a few verses later. Pick up in verse 46.

On the way to Jerusalem, they come to Jericho. And as they're passing through verse 47, they see a blind man called Bartimaeus. Look at what he cries out in verse 47.

Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. Verse 51. What do you want me to do for you?

[20 : 44] Jesus asked him. The blind man said, Rabbi, let me recover my sight. Go, Jesus said.

Your faith has healed you. Immediately, he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Bartimaeus gets what he asked for from Jesus.

The big difference, Bartimaeus wasn't in it for himself. He isn't in this for himself and he knows what he really deserves.

James and John asked to be made great like Jesus. Bartimaeus cries out in verse 47, Son of David, have mercy on me. Have mercy on me.

That is the starting point we all need when we come before Jesus. Not, Lord, would you mind making me great? Not, would you do these things so that I look good?

[21 : 54] But, Lord, have mercy on me. Bartimaeus knows he is undeserving in Christ's presence.

He begins by begging for mercy. He knows what he deserves, where he deserves to be, and he simply asks that he would not be treated as he deserves to be.

Have mercy on me. He cries it again and again. The crowd tell him to shut up. He's having none of it. He knows he needs mercy.

Jesus tells the crowd to call him over. I love that, maybe cheer up on your feet. He's calling you. So he comes along, throwing his cloak aside.

He jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. He asks to receive his sight back. He gets his sight back.

[23 : 14] I think partly because he knows he needs mercy, but also if we look to verse 52, I think we get the full answer. It's not just that he knows he needs mercy.

He asks Jesus for something for a purpose. Not so that he would be made great, but look at what he does. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus.

Bartimaeus wanted something from Jesus, not for himself, but so that he could follow him. Not so that he could go and make a name for himself, but so that he could follow Jesus.

Jesus asks, what do you want me to do for you? The truth is, if we are a praying people, we take our petitions to Jesus daily.

We ask of him what we want him to do for us. Every time we make a request in our prayer. The big question, right, is not, are you asking for the right thing or not?

[24 : 41] What is your motivation? What do you want to get out of it? The truth is that Jesus had little time for people who will ask for things for their own sake.

It's those frightening verses in Matthew 7, right? There will be people who will say, Lord, we prophesied in your name.

We did everything in your name. And he will turn and say, I didn't know you. Because there will be people who call on Jesus because they see him as a means to an end.

They think they can get something out of him. But just before those words in Matthew 7, Jesus also says, ask and you shall receive. Knock and the door will be opened.

Because if you truly want to follow Jesus, he will give you everything you need to live and serve him. We don't always know what that will look like.

[25 : 58] But we see it right here with Bartimaeus. He asks for something so that he can follow Jesus. And he gets given it immediately.

It is the crucial difference, right, between James and John, and blind Bartimaeus. Jesus asks all his people, what do you want from me? The right answer should be, I want nothing for myself.

Only that I might follow you and glorify you all of my days, no matter what it will cost, no matter what people think of you at the end of it.

If Jesus is Lord of our lives, if he is the one true love that we have, we will gladly give everything we have to get up and follow him.

May that be true of each and every one of us this evening. Let's pray together. Let's close. Father, we know we are sinners by nature.

[27 : 32] Lord, who so often seek things for our own sake. Lord, forgive us for the times when we have been like the disciples in coming to you to look for something for ourselves.

Lord, may you open our eyes to that blindness. And may we be like Bartimaeus, knowing that we need mercy. Mercy from you, Lord.

We ask that you would have mercy on us and in that mercy, Lord, that you would help us to follow you in everything that we do. In Jesus' name. Amen.