



1. The Passion of a Servant King (Mark 10:32-45)

Have you ever been in that situation where you thought that you knew someone and you discover that they weren't who your thought they were?

One of the most powerful impressions I get of Mark's gospel is the way in which the disciples thought they knew who Jesus was, but the way in which they acted showed Jesus and everyone else that they didn't had a clue. Yes they knew He was Messiah. They knew He was anointed of God. They had seen Him transfigured and yet as we look at this passage this morning, we see them making the wrong connections. Jesus was clear about who He was and what He was going to do: but the disciples? Oh dear! They had been with him for three years and as they make the last journey towards Jerusalem we read that they were astonished and the people that followed behind were afraid. Earlier in the chapter we find the disciples amazed at His words.

What was the problem? They were discovering that Jesus wasn't quite the Messiah they had expected. There were miracles. There were profound words about taking up their crosses and following Him. And Jesus tops it all with the statement that He was going to Jerusalem to die and be raised up again.

You can't get clearer than that. We know what it all means because we have the wisdom of hindsight. But the disciples? How did they react to it. We see the response from James and John. Was it questions about why Jesus would die? Not on your life. They missed that bit completely! All they wanted to do was to establish their position in glory. *Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."* 36 *"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.* 37 *They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."* What a cheek! Where were they coming from. Perhaps they thought as two of the special three that saw Jesus transfigured, that they would get to stand in Moses and Elijah's place. No wonder the ten were upset at their nerve. They were hardly Moses or Elijah at that point. But Jesus uses this incident to teach them the values of heaven, which are quite different to the values of earth.

You see, they thought as people who had been close to Jesus that they were entitled to glory and entitled to ask Jesus for it *"Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."* . Well, Jesus had said *Mark 11: 24 Therefore I tell you , whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.* So they asked. How often we use scripture to ask stupid things of God. "Lord give me this. Lord give me that. Because you promise You'll give me whatever I ask" and all that. At least you know James and John did it. And people still do it today.

But James and John were thinking with the world. They felt that what is valued in heaven and what God exalts is the same as on earth where people strive for positions that lord them over others. And Jesus uses it to teach them that the opposite is true. Here's His answer. *Mark 10:38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?"*

You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. Did they? In one sense yes. They thought that as they had been close to Jesus, they had a right of authority. But they didn't understand how authority is gained in the kingdom of Heaven so as Jesus tells the – they had no idea.

That's something else that's still very much with us. That attitude of superiority. What gets my goat are Christians who think that somehow they have superior revelation. Their understanding of scripture is better. They have been given some prophetic word. They exercise certain gifts. And as a result they feel that they can stand in judgement over everyone else. That, of course is what

James and John were asking for. That position of authority which comes from being seated on the right and left of Jesus. How things never change! Why were we given these words. Because the behaviour of James and John is the behaviour of too many of God's people today. It's all tinpot theology – believing that you're more blessed than someone else because of who you are and what you have done. Jesus turns all this rubbish on its head

"Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?" 39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with, 40 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."

We find here what really counts for something in heaven – those who have drunk the cup and had the baptism? What's all that about?

Cup in Bible often means a sharing in – we share in the blood of Christ as we take the cup in communion. And when we think of the cup of Jesus we think of His suffering. Jesus talked in Gethsemane about the cup of suffering being taken from Him.

So Jesus is saying “You want to be recognised in heaven – then be prepared to share my cup.” And to share that – I don't think James and John even had an inkling in their enthusiastic response. It costs to be a Christian. It costs to drink of the cup of Jesus. Remember, James and John weren't interested in the suffering and dying bit – only the glory!

But the cup can be positive. There is glory and blessing but perhaps only if we drink all of it – including the persevering and suffering bit! Psalm 23: 5 *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* Ps 16:5 *LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure.* Ps 116:13 *I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.*

And then Jesus refers to baptism – being immersed into something *Can you drink the cup I drink or be immersed with the immersion I am immersed with?" 39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be immersed with the immersion I am immersed with*

What picture does immersion give us – you've got to be immersed in what I have been immersed in. You're in it up to your neck and more. It's an absolute identification with Jesus. If you want to know what it is like to be exalted in heaven – then recognise what God sees as greatness: be like Jesus.

It's interesting that Jesus uses the cup and baptism. They represent the two most potent Christian symbols because they remind us that we are called to be like Jesus – to be prepared to drink His cup and be immersed in what He is immersed with.

Does Jesus mean this literally? In some cases yes but what being like Jesus means that our actions should match His. We need to live as He did. What would Jesus do? And how did He live?

45 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."

Greatness is having a servant spirit – giving ourselves for the benefit of others to bring glory to God.

Like all the previous items in our series – the Heart of Service is in Jesus and His life and work. He is our role model.

He's a ransom for many. What is a ransom – it's a price that is paid to free captives. It cost Jesus to free captives. It's a powerful act of service. A servant is one who obeys. To obey to that extent doesn't just show devotion for the master, but commitment to the cause and to the rescue of the captives. And Jesus' commitment was to death that we may have life.

That's the heart of service – the ultimate honour is the person who serves and gives his life for the freedom of others. And Jesus said to James and John – that's you. And James gave his life as the first of Jesus' disciples to be martyred and John dedicated the whole of his long life to the gospel. They drank the cup and were up to their neck in Jesus and they served Him and they brought freedom to people in Christ. The cup was a difficult one to drink but the blessings are eternal. Although of course we shall not know until we get to glory just who is sitting with Jesus! 40 *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." I guess that suitably deflated them. The Father knows who will have those places, but we know from what Jesus said the reason why they will be there – they have lived with the same value of Jesus: *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."*

As we see the example of our Servant King, we are called to serve as we drink His cup and receive His baptism. We are called to serve and as we shall see as we go through the series, we are *all* called to serve. We'll also find that service can be large or small – we aren't all called to be ministers or deacons. We will be exploring some of that tonight in our series on the parables.

Praise God that the gospels are so consistent. We have seen this message in so many different contexts in the last two years. What about us really matters to God? That we are like Jesus.

Worship - they expressed in their lives their devotion to the God who had showed His love to them. Worship is an expression of worth. We had a series called Heart of Worship – greatest act of worship wasn't singing or being reverent, but offering ourselves and our lives for His service.

Fellowship - they met together and expressed their love for one another. Jesus says *12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you*. Mission - they were people that believed they had something so amazing and so radical, that they couldn't wait to tell everybody about it – they were passionate about their faith. What was Jesus' passion? To die for us.

Discipleship - they were a people who committed themselves to learn and grow in their faith. Discipleship is about repentance – I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back.

Service - they served one another and served Christ.

And for our last series in this group of five we find that at the heart of God's values is service

45 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."

DL Moody once said, "The measure of a man is not how many servants he has, but how many men he serves."

Martin Luther King on greatness:

"Everybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don't need a college degree... When evil men shout words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glory of love."

We're called to serve. Not just one or two of us. Not the minister. Not the deacons. All of us. It's not a case of whether we should serve, but what we should be doing.

Prayer

Let's repent of asking for stupid things - wanting to lord it over others – wanting things our way.

Let's thank God that we are each called – yes, us - to serve Him.

