

ZION, MARCH 21, 2021

After the transfiguration, Jesus started heading for Jerusalem. He knew His time was coming. As He travels along with His disciples, He teaches them many things. He also tells them a second time about His death.

Mark 9:31-32 reads, **'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.'** But they did not understand the saying and were afraid to ask him."

Jesus tells them again, **"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. And they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."**

Jesus has now told them about His death 3 times. And now He is telling them more details. He will not only be killed, He will be condemned. He will be handed over. He will be mocked, spit on, and whipped.

These words have just fallen from Jesus' lips, and James and John respond, **"Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask."** He has just told them in graphic terms what is going to happen to Him. Their response is not one of concern for their Lord and master but for themselves. They call him "Teacher," which means that He is in charge, and He is the leader. Then they flip it all around, asking that He do what they say.

But Jesus has patience with them. **"What do you want Me to do?"** He replies. They say, **"Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."**

These two are thinking that Jesus is about to establish an earthly kingdom. They want in on the action. Jesus, you are number one, but make us number two and number three. Crowned princes as it were. Vice President and Secretary of State we might say.

It's easy to see the foolishness and arrogance of James and John, isn't it? Jesus has told them three times about His death, and they are still looking for glory.

And the other disciples saw their arrogance. "What do you two think you are doing? What makes you think you get to be number two and number three? So you think you are big shots, and better than us?"

Why did James and John want to be number two and number three? They wanted these positions so that they could sop up the glory they thought would be surrounding Jesus. They wanted His glory for their glory. Sopping up glory isn't limited to them.

Their words keep echoing through the centuries. I want you to do what I want, Jesus. This is what I want, so please do it. Our flesh is quick to want what it wants when it wants it. And it wants to sop up glory. Pay attention to me. Me. Me. Me-me-me.

We are like the proud grandfather who said of his grandson, **'Look how smart he is. He can count all the way up to one.'**

Ours is a "me-first" world. This mind-set says indulge yourself, fulfill your desires, satiate your appetites, pursue pleasure, take off all restraints. With this mind-set comes an elusive promise: If you seek first your own good and satisfy your own desires, then you will be happy. In print, on television, and in the movies, over and over we hear the lie. The road to contentment, satisfaction, fulfillment, and true joy is marked with a street sign flashing "Me First." ... People are pathologically self-centered and ignore the needs of others. The "me-first" mind-set is controlling many lives, even the lives of those who call themselves followers of Christ."

The world cannot always understand a persons' profession of faith, but it can understand service.

A servant's job is to do all they can to make life better for others - to free them to be everything they can be.

Like James and John, we seek to serve ourselves. In fact, we are born enslaved to ourselves, our own wants, passions, and desires.

We live in an egocentric age where the "what's in it for me" mentality has permeated every aspect of our society. Instead of asking ourselves "How can I best be used by the Lord in serving the church and others?" we want to be served.

One Christian author has written that, "**Looking at the needs of others rather than one's own is possibly the most serious deficiency in the church today.**"

Many Christians aren't interested in being servants. If we are honest with ourselves, most of our thoughts, actions, and even our prayers center around fulfilling our desires. But this wasn't the case of the church in the Book of Acts. The attitude of servanthood made the New Testament church an astounding community for its time.

The Roman culture at that time, was one of prestige and power. In the Roman Empire, "from the emperor to nobles, to officials, to landowners, to freemen, to servants and to slaves, each layer of society existed by wielding power over the layer below."

Christ addressed this attitude in Luke 22:25-26, when He said, "**The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'** But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves."

The church in Acts, in contrast to society, existed for service. Every member was committed to allow God to use them in serving others.

In Acts 2:44-45 we read "**And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.**"

The early church was a model of the commitment to service that should be a part of every believer's life. Our best example of servanthood is the Lord Himself.

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Paul challenges us with the servanthood of Christ in Philippians 2:5-8 when he wrote, **"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."**

He could have others serve Him while he was on earth, but he said, **"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."**

Service is a matter of humility. Humility is when we take our focus off ourselves and make our end serving the needs of others.

C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity wrote, **"True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less."**

Philippians 2:4 reads, **"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."**

Andrew Murray wrote, **"Jesus became nothing, so that the Father could be everything. He submitted His strength and will completely so that the Father could work in Him."**

What did Jesus have to say about His own power, His own will, and His own glory, about His whole mission with all His works and teaching? "It is not I; I am nothing; I have given Myself to the Father to work. I am nothing. The Father is everything."

A man by the name of Travis Dickinson wrote in "The lost virtue of humility, **"What Christian discipleship amounts to is that we become disposed to serve the interests of God in surrender of our own self-serving interests. When we act, knowing our place relative to the proper place of God as God, then we have put on Christian humility."**

Service is a matter of obedience. Christ, **"being found in appearance as a man... humbled Himself and became obedient..."**

All that Jesus did and said was exactly what His Father wanted Him to do and say. From His lowly birth in a stable to His ignominious death on the hill of Calvary. Everything was obedient surrender and submission to the will of God.

If you are not serving God in some fashion, you cannot grow spiritually as you should grow. In every church, there are people who have talents, skills, or gifts but never use them for the work of the Lord. Christ cannot live through you without you becoming a servant. Only through servanthood are you obedient to God's call on your life.

Service is a matter of sacrifice. Christ took on the form of a servant, lived a life of continual sacrifice and ultimately became a sacrifice in humble, obedient servitude to God, the Father. In the plan of redemption, the sufferings of Christ were essential.

Salvation is free. Yes, it is free in that it does not cost silver, gold, dollars, or cents. But that does not mean that it doesn't cost anything. In fact, it cost Christ everything GRACE is so free because it cost Christ so much.

If it cost Christ everything, in servitude to the Father, to reach down and redeem us to Himself do we think it will not cost us to serve Him and others?

In Romans 12:1, Paul says, **"I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service."**

Church father St. Ignatius wrote, **"Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve, to give, and not to count the cost, to fight, and not to heed the wounds, to toil, and not to seek for rest, to labor, and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will."**

Service is a matter of commitment. Christ was committed completely to doing the Father's will. He was committed "to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

1 Peter 2:23-24 reveals the depth of Christ's commitment. **"...when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed."**

Jesus Christ was committed to the call of God on his life and he pleased the Father in all he did. But not only was Christ committed to the Father, He was committed to us even before we became Christians. Romans 5:8 tells us that He suffered and died for us while we were yet sinners.

Christ was committed to die on a cross for you and me, so that we might be free to delight in Him forever and bring glory to Him with our lives through service in the Body of Christ. He was totally committed to the Father and you. How committed are you service through Him?

Service is a matter of privilege. It is important for believers to actively serve in a local church. It is a great privilege to serve the King of all kings, the Creator and our Great Savior. Not everyone can do it - only those who have been redeemed. Only those who are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus are privileged to render good works or service to Him alone.

John Stott wrote in his book, *The Cross of Christ*, **"If the church was worth his blood, is it not worth our labor? The privilege of serving it is established by the preciousness of the price paid for its purchase."**

Service in and to the local church is a privilege because we are serving the object of Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross. Our motivation for service is rooted in the cross.

The Father honored His son for His service. Philippians 2:9-11 reads, **"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him. And given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

It is a privilege to serve the Lord Jesus Christ! But not only is it a privilege it carries a reward. He Himself assures us in John 12:26, "**If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.**"