

Christmas Eve Message: The Son of Man Came to Serve Mark 10:35-45

Humiliation is hard.

No one likes to be humbled.

On an airline, who pays for a first class ticket and yet is content to be demoted to coach class- or as I have heard it called, “Cattle Class”?

Who takes a job, expecting to be in management and paid as a manager, only to show up on the first day to serve on the cleaning staff, and paid as an office cleaner?

Who works hard to build a respectable reputation only to be treated as the lowest of society?

None of us likes being humbled.

And few of us would ever choose the lowest place if we could help it.

And yet, at Christmas, this is what we celebrate.

Our Savior came to earth not to be glorified and worshipped, but rather to be disregarded and humiliated.

This was his mission and during the days of his earthly ministry, even those closest to him did not understand it.

We have proof of this in Mark’s gospel in the 10th chapter.

Mark has only 16 chapters and so the 10th chapter tells us something right away- it’s not early in Jesus ministry.

As a matter of fact, he is nearing the end of his mission and his disciples have already been with him for two years.

They spent all that time with Jesus, and yet still, they were oblivious to the heart of Jesus’ mission which was to humbly serve.

And so, in **Mark 10:35, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”**

Now, this is not simply a bold request. It’s actually selfish and rude.

It’s an instance where James and John are putting themselves first.

Yet Jesus, in his perfect patience, listens to their request.

He says, **36 “What do you want me to do for you?”**

I would love to have heard Jesus’ tone of voice when he said that.

And so they present their request:

37 “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

Now this has got to be one of the most bare-faced attempts at self-promotion in the bible.

I believe this is the reason why this conversation is in Scripture- because James and John merely articulated what our hearts desire every day.

We want glory and honor. We want to be loved by all and to be in charge.

By asking to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus, James and John are asking to be promoted to the highest place of honor and authority.

I love Jesus' response.

He said:

38 “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

Jesus is indeed the messiah and he will have glory.

Yet the disciples are clueless about the path Jesus must take in order to be glorified.

They think His glory is just automatic.

Little do they know of the humiliating cross that awaits him- even though he has told them about it explicitly.

James and John are so clueless about the mission of Jesus that they actually think they can walk the path he will walk.

They think he will just march right up to “glorious world-wide leadership” and not down into suffering.

And so they reply to Jesus question by saying: “We are able.”

Now, they will indeed follow Jesus into humiliation but they don't know that yet.

A great change will have to take place. They have much to learn.

And so Jesus says to them:

39 “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

Now, we all know how inappropriate it is to ask to be promoted to the highest place.

And so we would never dare ask for this kind of promotion.

But boy do we get mad when we hear anyone else ask for such glory.

Because when they ask for such glory, we think to ourselves: “How arrogant. They're cutting in line!”

“That glory could be for me and they are stealing it by promoting themselves.”

You see, we all secretly want the glory for ourselves.

And this is why we get mad when others promote themselves.

And this is just what happened when the other disciples heard what was going on.

41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.

Now Jesus saw the division that all this selfishness was causing.

And so he gathered His disciples around to teach them a simple but hard lesson.

The lesson is that Christ's kingdom does not work the same way worldly kingdoms do.

He said:

42 "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Christ is so unlike anyone else in Human history because his mission in life was not to achieve any kind of worldly glory. He didn't come to be served.

His mission was to save us from the sin of self-promotion and to achieve for us eternal glory with him.

And in order for him to do this, he had to serve.

When Jesus was born into poverty, it was an act of pure service.

His humiliation began at his birth.

And his entire life was one continuous act of service, pointing in a downward direction.

The Cross was downhill from the manger.

God had called him to such service.

And we needed such service if we were to ever be saved.

And so, at Christmas, we remember God's gift to us in Christ.

He came to serve both God and us so that we could be saved.

This is just what he did in his death on the cross for our sin and his resurrection for our eternal life.

We need a servant-savior because we cannot save ourselves.

We are too weak, too sinful, too proud.

Praise God, that he gave us such a savior in Jesus Christ.

So this Christmas, receive God's greatest gift – the servant -savior Jesus Christ.

45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Amen.