



Following the Servant King

Mark 10:32-52, Part 5

Patrick Havens February 2, 2020

Please turn to Mark 10. In our current series, we started in Mark 8 in the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Now Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem, where He's teaching His disciples as they travel. Today He'll be reaching the end of their journey, then in Mark 11 He will be in Jerusalem.

The first miracle we read about in Mark 8 was the healing of a blind man and today the journey will end with the healing of a blind man. One lesson we might draw from this is that Jesus wants us to see clearly Who He is.

Let's hear God's Word together, beginning in Mark 10:32:

³² *They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were astonished, but those who followed him were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he began to tell them the things that would happen to him.* ³³ *"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles,* ³⁴ *and they will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days."*

³⁵ *James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, "Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask you."*

³⁶ *"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked them.*

³⁷ *They answered him, "Allow us to sit at your right and at your left in your glory."*

³⁸ *Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink or to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"*

³⁹ *"We are able," they told him.*

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with. ⁴⁰ *But to sit at my right or left is not mine to give; instead, it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

⁴¹ *When the ten disciples heard this, they began to be indignant with James and John.* ⁴² *Jesus called them over and said to them,*

“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. 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.”

⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸ Many warned him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!”

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called the blind man and said to him, “Have courage! Get up; he’s calling for you.” ⁵⁰ He threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ Then Jesus answered him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Rabboni,” the blind man said to him, “I want to see.”

⁵² Jesus said to him, “Go, your faith has saved you.” Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.

This is God’s Word. Let’s pray.

Jesus, we want to see great things about You in this passage. Open our eyes, Lord, and teach us. We look to You. In Christ’s name. Amen.

If Jesus took you aside and asked, *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* what would you say? That was the question He asked first to James and John, then to blind Bartimaeus. Would you start dreaming about your wish list of all those things you desire? Are you following Jesus to gain things to advance yourself? *“What do you want Me do to for you?”* It’s a question we need to ponder.

The wrong answer, as we’re going to learn, came from James and John, then the right answer came from Bartimaeus. He was asking for mercy, grace. He wanted to see. To answer the question properly, we have to really understand Who Jesus is. Mark is taking the time to explain to us Who Jesus is and why He came. If we want to be His disciple, this means everything. The implications are life-changing. That’s what the gospel is about.

At 9:00 in the morning, on April 3, in the year 33 A.D., a Jew—Jesus of Nazareth—died on a Roman cross and that event changed the world. Mark is eager for us to know the story. You can sit

and read for an hour and a half and hear the whole thing. It's a short, pithy, to-the-point book, and in it Mark answers some basic questions.

First, "Who is Jesus? Who is this Who can calm the storms? Who is this Who can heal the sick? Who is this Who can cast out demons? Who is this Who can raise the dead?" It's the question Jesus asked His disciples: "*Who do you say that I am?*" (Matthew 16:13-20). Peter responded, "*You are the Christ. You're the Messiah.*"

That was the right answer. But then Jesus went on to say, "The Son of Man must suffer many things. He's going to be handed over." It's one thing to confess Jesus as the Messiah, but we have to also know there are other messiahs. Which messiah are we talking about? Jesus is the Messiah Who was promised in Scripture.

Jesus didn't have His disciples in a classroom; they were on the road. He taught them as they traveled on their way to Jerusalem and Mark draws us into the story to walk with them. Three times He pulled them aside to explain, "I'm going to die." The first time He told them, "The Son of Man is going to be killed, and three days later He will rise again," Peter responded, "No. You can be King without that." But Jesus rebuked him. The second time Jesus gave them more detail in Mark 9, but the disciples missed it again. Instead they were arguing about who was the greatest. Then today we read the third time Jesus explained what was going to happen when they reached Jerusalem. But again, they were still arguing over greatness, still missing the point of the gospel.

Think about it this way: James, John and Peter are now all in heaven. They know that for thousands of years every Christian who reads the Gospels are hearing about their conversation on the road to Jerusalem and how they kept missing what Jesus was saying. It's kind of like someone playing your blooper reel over and over again with all the dumb things you've ever said. I think it might be funny to see some of mine. I've mispronounced words. I've messed up facts. One time I did a welcome here at this church and said, "Welcome to Christ Community Church." That would be a funny blooper reel.

But the disciples' comments to Jesus were actually not that funny. What was going on was not a blooper reel. They actually missed the central truth about Jesus. In Mark 8, Jesus warned them of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod. The religious elite did not believe in a suffering Messiah. The idea that the Messiah would die on a cross and rise again is unique to Christianity. Those who want to be His disciples need to understand this. But the cross is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Think about the implications of this to those of us who want to be Christ's disciples. Three times Jesus had told them He was going to die, but this was the first time He explained to them

why He was going to die. The disciples had already seen Him calm storms and raise the dead, but for some reason they had a hard time believing what He was saying.

This time He went into more detail, telling them He would be betrayed and handed over to the Gentiles to be tried in court. They would mock and spit on Him, then flog and kill Him. He knew everything in advance before it took place. Everyone in the world was represented in the people who would crucify the Son of God. But through His death would come victory. He promised over and over that He would rise again.

He told them why He was going to go through all this in Mark 10:45: *“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.”* This is the kind of heroic, loving rescue we’re going to sing about for all eternity. *“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation’”* (Revelation 5:9).

To ransom something is to pay a price to redeem it, to secure its freedom. Jesus paid the price for our freedom from our slavery to sin. We were trapped in the kingdom of darkness, held by the power of the evil one, darkened in our understanding. Whether they are aware of their slavery or whether their bonds are hidden from them, Jesus will rescue every believer. But the price was His own blood, His own life. He offered His life as a Substitute for us, to rescue us. That’s the point of the gospel. If we don’t understand that, we won’t have the right answer when Jesus asks us the question, *“What do you want Me to do for you?”*

There are two stories today which both highlight Jesus as the Servant King Who calls us to leave everything and follow Him. That means we’re with Him, learning from Him and becoming like Him. It’s interesting how Jesus has applied His once-for-all sacrifice to us. If we want to confess Jesus as the Messiah, we also have to become His disciples. And this then shapes who we are, as we’re learning in this story. The disciples were trying to get their heads around what Jesus was telling them. They’d seen Him do some great things, but adding death to that was hard to understand.

There is a strong contrast between the story of James and John and the story of Bartimaeus. It’s a good illustration of verse 31, where Jesus said, *“But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”* Those who were closest to Jesus were missing it, but the least likely person, Bartimaeus, understood. When Jesus asked both of them, *“What do you want Me do to for you?”* one sought fame and the other sought faith.

Let’s look first at James and John, who gave the wrong answer. They seemed to think Jesus’ mission was about self-advancement. When they were asked the question, they responded

with a selfish request. When we first met them at the beginning of the Gospels, their dad had a fishing business. They had hired servants. They had grown up relatively privileged in a stable environment and a secure home. They left that to follow Jesus. But as they were getting closer to Jerusalem, they still were unclear about Who He was.

It's not like they're asking Jesus to be Number Two, but they wanted to be second and third to Him. They just wanted to be in front of the other disciples. They boldly approached Him, saying, "*Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.*" The rich young ruler in Matthew 19: 16-30 didn't say that. Rather, he asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" James and John were asking Jesus to do what they wanted Him to do.

They said to Him, "*Allow us to sit at your right and at your left in your glory.*" They knew His Kingdom was coming. But what was in their minds? Think about the last time they saw two people standing next to Jesus? It was on the Mount of Transfiguration in Mark 9. That's when they saw the blazing glory on His face and clothes. On His right and left were two Old Testament prophets, Moses and Elijah. Might that have been on their mind in that moment, thinking about the Kingdom that was yet to come?

They had often heard Jesus say, "The Kingdom of God is near," but they didn't understand what He meant. There was a sense in which the Kingdom had arrived, but it hadn't yet fully come. Nor did they understand what Jesus was trying to tell them, that the Kingdom would be brought in through suffering and serving. It doesn't come to us through our abilities and power, but through humbling ourselves. No one was in closer proximity to Jesus than were James and John. It is possible to be very close to Him and still not understand Him.

In 1998, I came on staff with David Sunday at Grace Church in Roselle. I was finishing seminar, and was the part-time youth pastor. I had the ambitious idea to take the youth group to Mexico where I had some friends at a partner church. I asked one of the leaders who went with us to take pictures of the trip.

Everyone was safe and we had a good time. After we came back, the group presented a slide show of our trip. As I watched it, I began to feel uncomfortable because I wasn't in any of the pictures. I thought, "Well, don't the elders need to know I was there? After all, I planned this trip. It was my contacts there who worked with us." This leader's fiancé was right there in a lot of the pictures, but I was missing.

That was 20 years ago. But in that story, God was showing me that this was about Him, not about me. Looking back over my life, I can see moments when He showed me that this is not about me—and it's not about you either. It's about Christ. That's what genuine discipleship means and it's important for us to learn.

To make Jesus' point crystal clear, He used three metaphors in His response to James and John. First, He mentioned a cup and baptism, then He compared their mindset to being a Gentile tyrant. This can bring it home to us as well. He asked them, "*Are you able to drink the cup I drink or to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?*"

The disciples did not get the cup reference, but there were several times in the Old Testament when God said to Israel, when they were disobedient, that He would make them "drink a cup" that would make them stagger because of His fierce anger over their sin. They would become so drunk they would lie down and not get up again. Jeremiah and others spoke of the cup of God's wrath that He was threatening them with because of their rebellion.

Jesus was telling James and John that He Himself was going to drink that cup down to its dregs, bearing the full wrath of His Father. "Are you able to drink that cup?" He asked. It was a very strong question. We know Jesus was not looking forward to that cup. In Mark 14:36, we see where He pled with the Father to take that cup from Him.

Experiencing the full measure of God's wrath against sin is something we can't imagine. But Jesus became a Servant, saying, "*Your will be done*" (Matthew 26:42). We read about this position He took in Philippians 2, where we're told He was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. This was a powerful image. "Can you drink that cup?"

Then baptism was another very strong image in the Old Testament, a reflection of God's judgment against our rebellion. Look at Psalm 69. Can you hear Jesus saying this from the cross?

¹ *Save me, God,
for the water has risen to my neck.*
² *I have sunk in deep mud, and there is no footing;
I have come into deep water,
and a flood sweeps over me.*
³ *I am weary from my crying;
my throat is parched.
My eyes fail, looking for my God.*
⁴ *Those who hate me without cause
are more numerous than the hairs of my head;
my deceitful enemies, who would destroy me,
are powerful.
Though I did not steal, I must repay.*

Although Jesus had done nothing wrong, He suffered in the place of sinners. We read this again in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" Jesus drank that cup and experienced that baptism alone, abandoned on the cross. And this is what He was asking James and John: "Can you drink

that cup? Can you receive that baptism? Do you know what you're asking when you want to sit at My right hand and My left hand?"

They may have seen Moses and Elijah on His right and left, but then the next people who would be on His right and left in the Gospel of Mark would be two crucified thieves. That would be the perfect image for them. When they would see that, then they would understand what they were asking. Did they really want to take up their own crosses to follow Him? These two shocking images should cause them (and us) to think seriously about self promotion.

James and John missed the references to the cup and baptism, assuring Jesus they could accept those. However, it's interesting that Jesus went on to say, "*You will drink the cup I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.*" It's not that these were necessary for their salvation. The atonement Christ purchased was once for all and perfect. He was our Substitute on the cross and that would never be repeated. It's why we no longer sacrifice lambs. We celebrate in communion what has been done, what Jesus accomplished perfectly.

But as a disciple, it's different. Remember that being a disciple means being with Jesus, learning from Jesus and becoming like Jesus. They would be taking up their crosses, and if we're being faithful in following Him, we will also have crosses to bear. We will experience suffering because we belong to Him. Twelve years later, James was beheaded because of his love for Christ. Sixty years later, John was exiled on an island and in prison because of his love for Jesus. They would drink the cup and experience the baptism.

If we think following Jesus is about our own promotion, to gain status or advance our reputation or power, He warned us that this attitude is common to man. Jesus called the rest of the disciples to Him, and spoke tenderly to them: "*You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them.*" That's where this attitude takes people and that's the history of our world—oppression and abuse of power.

He went on to explain how His Kingdom was different. His Kingdom was about serving, about loving neighbors, caring for the poor and helping those in need. Think about Christians in our society who have an attitude of the cross. They contribute to human flourishing in homes, neighborhoods and workplaces, because they are different. What they do brings glory to God. That's the transformation Christ brings.

The ten other disciples became angry because of what James and John had requested. But if they had been honest, they wanted the same thing. It's likely that we also need to challenge ourselves with this as well. "*What do you want Me to do for you?*" Are we thinking about

promotions or personal advancement? Are we willing to step on others to get what we want? What is on our hearts today? What can Jesus do for us today?

This also reminds us to ask, “How am I serving? Do I enjoy serving? Do I quietly serve, or even secretly serve, just because I love Jesus? Or is my service even about me? Is there a subtle, selfish ambition even in the things I do for others?” If the people closest to Jesus thought that way, we probably do as well. We need to continually challenge ourselves with these questions.

Although there is a wrong answer to Jesus’ question, “*What do you want Me to do for you?*” there is also a right answer. We see this in the least likely person. This was someone who was not in the center of the crowd, but off in the margin. Bartimaeus was poor and blind, yet he was able to see better than the scribes and Pharisees who were ignoring him, or even the disciples themselves.

⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

When Bartimaeus found out it was Jesus of Nazareth, he knew it was not just one more self-proclaimed messiah. He had heard Jesus’ reputation and realized Jesus was the rightful “Son of David” who was the rightful heir of the Messianic Kingdom. He also knew Jesus was a merciful Messiah.

Think of the stories he must have heard. One of Jesus’ most common emotions was compassion. In Mark 1 He felt pity for a leper. In Mark 6 He felt compassion for the crowds. Bartimaeus could hear of the contrast between Jesus and the rest of the people in his world, so he was convinced Jesus might also have mercy on him. At this point, that’s what he needed most. But even as he was asking for compassion, the crowd showed him none. We read in verse 28, “*Many warned him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, ‘Have mercy on me, Son of David!’*” The people tried to stop him. “Be quiet. Here, take a dollar. Leave Him alone; He’s too busy for you. He’s on mission.” There was no mercy from the people.

I don’t know what it’s like for you when you cry out to Jesus. Are there people in your life who hold you back? “Don’t be such a fanatic. Just accept your situation. That’s how the cookie crumbles. This is your lot in life.”

It was a large crowd that day and they made a lot of noise, but still Jesus heard Bartimaeus’ cry. “*Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’*” There were some ‘good Samaritans’ there who said to

Bartimaeus, *“Have courage! Get up; he’s calling for you.”* What did he do? *“He threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.”*

He freely left all he owned, his jacket. For a homeless guy, that would have been his sleeping bag on a cold night. That would have been his tent on a rainy day. It might have been where he stored his food or alms. But he threw it off. He left it all for Jesus. What an image! He truly had faith in what this Messiah would do for him. This gives us a contrast to the rich man who was asked to leave his wealth and give to the poor. But here, the poor man left all he had to go to Jesus.

What did Jesus say to him? *“What do you want me to do for you?”* Bartimaeus replied, “Rabboni.” That was a special word we see several times in the Bible. Mary Magdalene also used it. It was a reverential address. Bartimaeus simply said, *“I want to see.”* He didn’t ask to become great. He asked for mercy. He asked for ordinary health. He asked Jesus to restore him.

Jesus might have said, “You will be healed one day, but come follow Me now.” Bartimaeus would have done that. But instead, Jesus healed him right then. *“Jesus said to him, ‘Go, your faith has saved you.’ Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.”*

Tim Keller wrote, “Freed by Christ from one form of suffering, he takes the road to endure a much greater form of suffering.” This man counted the cost and followed Jesus to Jerusalem. Bartimaeus was a model disciple. Think about it. He cried for mercy. He left everything he owned. He was saved by faith and he followed Jesus on the road of the cross.

Jesus is the perfect disciple maker. Look at how he interacted with Bartimaeus. He was compassionate. He heard his cry. He stopped and interacted with him. Yes, He was focused on His purpose—to go to Jerusalem—but He still had time for Bartimaeus. People sneered at Bartimaeus to speak up, so it took courage for him to keep shouting. He was willing to ignore all the opposition in order to reach Jesus.

Jesus was also personal. He asked Bartimaeus, “What do you want?” You would think it would have been obvious to Him what this man wanted. But Jesus acknowledged the blind man’s dignity. Studies have shown that when poor people are approached by rich people, often they say, “Well, these rich people think they know what I need.” But when they are asked, it acknowledges their ability to decide for themselves what they need. “I want friends. I need a family.” It might surprise us what people see themselves as really needing most. But Jesus did ministry perfectly in His encouragement of this man.

Jesus was also inclusive in His offer. Remember in Mark 10:29-30 where He told His disciples that anyone who left all to follow Him would receive houses and family from Him? Here

Jesus gave Bartimaeus something spiritual. He actually spoke to him of salvation by faith. This man was being invited to follow Him into eternal life.

We should never do humanitarian projects separately from sharing the gospel message. On the other hands, we should never simply preach Christ without caring for those we're ministering to. Both of these are wonderfully blended in the life of Jesus: real ministry to the situations people were in, but also connecting this to following Him as Savior.

How do these understandings shape our answer to His question, "*What do you want Me to do for you?*" If we're following Him to seek our own gain, we're missing Who He is and where He's going. Our perspective instead should be this: "I've been given much! I've been ransomed! I've been rescued! How can I now give? How can I now serve? Where do You need me to be?" Think of the transformation that comes when we ask Jesus for mercy. That's what we're praying for.

Lord, we thank You for the great message for us here in Your Word. Jesus, thank You for coming. You're the Son of Man Who gave Your life as a ransom for many. I pray that as we celebrate Your Supper that this would be a meaningful time in which we reflect on the extent of Your service to us. What we couldn't do, You have done. What we were unable to do, You have accomplished. We were dead in sin and You have rescued us. What we were deserving, You've taken on Yourself. Thank You, Lord. We pray all this in Your name. Amen.

New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the Christian Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Text provided by sermontranscribers.com ♦ emily@sermontranscribers.com