

3. Invitation to the Cross

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. - Matthew 16:24-25 NIV

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." - Mark 10:45 NIV

There's a big difference between losing what you are trying to hang on to and choosing to lose what you can't keep. Jesus' ultimate act of love and humility was laying down His life as a ransom. And He invites us to follow Him in doing the same. Jesus didn't hide the fact that following Him means that we will join Him in His suffering. We can't remove the cross from the victory of Jesus.

What would it look like to follow Jesus to the cross? How would you explain to someone that you are willing to suffer to follow Jesus? Why is following Jesus worth the cost?

WRAP-UP

In this week's study, Jesus is entering Jerusalem fully aware that His suffering and death are near. Despite explaining His fate to the disciples, they still misunderstand His mission, expecting power and glory instead of a servant's sacrifice. Jesus rejects worldly ideas of greatness and power, choosing instead to follow God's difficult path, modeled in humility, suffering, and service. He teaches that true greatness in God's Kingdom comes not from authority or status but from serving others selflessly. As He approaches the cross, Jesus calls His followers to embrace this upside-down way of life, even when it means enduring hardship or appearing foolish to the world.

MEMORY VERSE

43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. - Mark 10:43-44 NIV

Challenge –

This week watch for the ways you can willingly “lose” for the sake of others. How can you serve without expecting to be served in return?

Choosing Servant-hearted Greatness Gospel of Mark Ch. 10 - Week 4

INTRODUCTION

At this point in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is entering Jerusalem as the Holy Week leading to Passover begins. He is aware that His time on earth is drawing to a close and He knows the suffering He is about to face. And although He clearly tells His disciples what is about to happen, they are still confused about how Jesus will come into power. Jesus had already made His decision to follow God's plan, as painful as that would be, rather than accepting the temptation of an easy way out. Once again Jesus must explain that His Kingdom is radically different than anything His disciples could imagine, and to be great in His kingdom means being a servant of all.

Ice Breaker

Did you ever occupy a position of leadership, such as captain of a team, head of a company, president of an organization? If so, what did it take to attain that level of authority?

Key Passages

42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. - Mark 10:42-44 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Temptation

5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" - Luke 4:5-8 NIV

At first glance our passage in Mark may not appear as a temptation. But as Jesus approaches Jerusalem He knew what He would face there. When Jesus began His ministry, following His baptism, He spent 40 days in the wilderness and at that time Satan made a tempting offer – “I’ll give you the kingdoms of this world if you worship me and you can bypass the suffering of the cross”.

What was Jesus’ reply to Satan’s offer? What did that encourage us to keep in mind as we pursue our goals in life? When have you been tempted to set aside God’s priorities to attain something you felt was more important?

42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." - Luke 22:42 NIV

Perhaps the greatest test for Jesus took place in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was agonizing over what He was about to face.

When we find ourselves in an overwhelming circumstance, it is not wrong to ask God to take it away. But what does Jesus’ prayer model for us as we ask God to change the course of our circumstances? Have you faced something that you desperately asked God to remove, but that He didn’t change? How do we find peace in those situations?

We will all face temptations to bypass difficulties in life’s path. But sometimes God uses those difficulties to teach and to grow us. The challenge is to remember we serve God in both the good times and the bad times. We trust that He is good, even when things go wrong.

2. A Different Kind of Kingdom

5 "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' "

- Matthew 21:5 NIV

5 "Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;

- Matthew 23:5 NIV

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. - Isaiah 53:7 NIV

Jesus had a choice of how He entered Jerusalem. He could have ridden in on a war horse as the Roman leaders did to display military force, but he rode a donkey’s colt instead. He could have entered with flowing robes and tassels worn by the Pharisees or gathered religious zealots willing to use violence to

take back their freedom from Roman oppression. But Jesus came humbly and gently as a lamb to the slaughter. The difference between the kingdoms of this world and God’s Kingdom are summed up in our key passage. (Mar 10:42-44)

Jesus says that following His example of serving others is what makes us great in God’s Kingdom. The Greek word used for great is “megas” and means having rank or importance. By what means are we seeing those around us today make themselves great? Are there examples of humility and gentleness that you’ve seen in positions of leadership? Do you think humility and gentleness must be sacrificed to be a great leader?

But many who are first will be last, and the last first. - Mark 10:31 NIV

Apparently, James and John missed the point when Jesus said the first shall be last. Their request revealed their misguided ambition for a place of honor and power (Left and right of the throne) Jesus redirects their understanding of greatness and illustrates this by telling them for the third time (Mark 8:31, Mark 9:9) about the suffering He was about to face.

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "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." ... 41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

- Mark 10:35-37, 41 NIV

"We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles,

- Mark 10:33 NIV

What harm was done by James’ and John’s ambitious request? What do you think would have happened if Jesus had not immediately stepped in?

42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. - Mark 10:42-44 NIV

Jesus expected His followers to be different. But we have a temptation to wear the cross and sing the songs yet still go with the flow of cultural expectations.

What are some ways that our faith may appear to be foolishness to others?