

Serving as a Reason for Living

Scripture Mark 10:35–45

Key Verse “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)

Objectives

- Understand that Jesus came to earth to serve, not to be served.
- Make a commitment to live a life of serving others, including family, neighbors, and the church, with joy and a positive attitude.



I. Sharing Thoughts

1. Why do individuals often strive for greater levels of power and status?
2. What does it mean to you to say that you follow Jesus?



II. Expanding Thoughts

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem, Jesus told them that the Son of Man would be betrayed, mocked, scourged, and crucified but that he would rise again on the third day. At that time, the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and asked that her sons be seated at the right and left hand in the Lord’s kingdom (Matt. 20:17–21). However, according to today’s passage, it was James and John who asked the Lord for this favor. While their mother had made the initial request on their behalf, James and John themselves also desired this honor. Using this opportunity, Jesus started teaching something profound regarding how they were expected to live as followers of Jesus Christ. Now, let us turn to the voice of the Holy Spirit, for we are following Jesus too.

1. True greatness comes from serving others, not from being served.

When Jesus asked, “What do you want me to do for you?” James and John quickly answered that they wanted one of them to sit at the right hand and the other at the left in the Lord’s glory (Mark 10:37). Jesus was likely disappointed and saddened by their



response, as this conversation took place shortly after he had foretold his suffering, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem. The Gospels state that Jesus spoke about his passion, death, and resurrection three times (Mark 8:27–31, Mark 9:9–30, Mark 10:32–34). However, it seems that the disciples had not fully grasped the reality of Jesus’ suffering and death. It appears that they had a flawed belief that Jesus should not have to endure such pain and sacrifice.

When Jesus asked his disciples “Who do you say I am?” Peter replied, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:15–16). It was a great answer. However, after hearing about Jesus’ impending suffering and death, Peter rebuked Jesus, saying that such a thing should never happen and that he would not allow it. Jesus responded by saying, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns” (v. 23). Did you know James and John were present with Peter when he received such a severe rebuke from Jesus? Nevertheless, when Jesus spoke to them about his suffering, death, and resurrection as before, they asked to be seated at the Lord’s right and left hand.

Kyle Idleman, in his book *Not a Fan*, argues that a fan is someone who only loudly proclaims their love for Jesus, while a disciple is someone who serves like Jesus, even to the point of death. According to Idleman, fans are those who pay lip service to the Lord, but their hearts are far from him (Matt. 15:8), and they often mistake their enthusiasm for true devotion. They may have a good knowledge of Jesus and the Bible, but this does not necessarily translate to intimacy with the Lord. In this light, the behavior of James and John, who sought high positions of honor instead of embracing the idea of Jesus going to Jerusalem to die, can be seen as that of fans rather than disciples. They were following Jesus to receive the seat of glory rather than serving God and doing his work. Those who desire to be in a position of service, respect, and power are not true disciples but rather just fans in disguise.

This was not just a problem for James and John. When the other ten disciples heard about their request, they became angry with them. This shows that the other ten disciples also had similar thoughts. In response, Jesus taught them that true greatness comes from serving others, not from seeking positions of power or glory.

2. Jesus set an example of humility and service.

Jesus instructs his disciples, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all” (Mark 9:35). This aligns with the teachings of the Golden Rule, “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31). Who should initiate reconciliation? Who should be the first to extend love and forgiveness? Who should take the lower seat and serve first? If you think carefully about the teachings of Jesus, it is the one who wants or expects something who should act first. In other words, it is the one who asks these kinds of questions.



At the time, the disciples were more concerned with securing their own place of power and prestige. However, Jesus revealed his true purpose in coming to earth as a human being: to serve humanity and offer his life as a ransom for many. God the Son, who is deserving of all service, humbled himself by taking on human form, not to be served, but to serve others. “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). Jesus not only taught and instructed his disciples but also demonstrated his teaching through his own life, especially through the cross.

This message is further emphasized in the book of Philippians, where Paul writes, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil. 2:6–8). Jesus, the creator of the universe and the King of kings, came down to the earth to serve humanity and obeyed God the Father, even to the point of death. The teacher Jesus himself showed what the path of discipleship looked like. God exalted Jesus, who humbled himself and served, to the highest place and gave him the name above every other names.

3. It is time to act.

The book *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein tells the story of a large tree near a boy’s house. As a child, the boy would climb the tree to play and swing from its branches, enjoying the shade and fun that the tree provided. As he grew up, the boy stopped using the swing, but the tree continued to give him delicious fruit. When the boy grew up and needed firewood for his house, the tree said that he could take its branches and make them into firewood. When the boy later needed a boat, the tree said that he could take its trunk and make it into a boat. Despite giving everything, the tree remained happy, and when the boy returned as an old man, he sat on the tree’s stump. Until the end, the tree was happy.

This story portrays the life of Jesus very well. Jesus gave everything he had to humanity and found joy in serving us (Heb. 12:2). The King of kings, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is exalted above all, showed us an example of how we should love by serving us. Now it is our turn. Let us walk the path of true discipleship that Jesus showed us.



III. Living Thoughts

1. How can we put our faith into action and live as worthy followers of Jesus?
2. Following Jesus’ example of sacrificial service to humanity, what are some ways that our small group can serve our worshiping community together?

