

SENT TO SERVE
(Why Did Jesus Come?)

Mark 10:32-45

INTRODUCTION: 1) In 2006 John Piper wrote the book, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came To Die*. Among those 50 reasons:

- 1) To Absorb the Wrath of God
- 2) To Please His Heavenly Father
- 4) To Achieve His Own Resurrection from the Dead
- 5) To Show the Wealth of God's Love and Grace for Sinners
- 6) To Show His Own Love for Us
- 9) For the Forgiveness of Our Sins
- 12) To Take Away Our Condemnation
- 15) To Make Us Holy, Blameless, and Perfect
- 16) To Give Us a Clear Conscience
- 17) To Obtain for Us All Things That Are Good for Us
- 18) To Heal Us from Moral and Physical Sickness
- 19) To Give Eternal Life to All Who Believe on Him
- 21) To Reconcile Us to God
- 29) To Free Us from the Slavery of Sin
- 32) To Enable Us to Live for Christ and Not Ourselves
- 33) To Make His Cross the Ground of All Our Boasting
- 34) To Enable Us to Live by Faith in Him
- 36) To Create a People Passionate for Good Works
- 38) To Create a Band of Crucified Followers
- 39) To Free Us from Bondage to the Fear of Death
- 40) So That We Would Be with Him Immediately After Death
- 43) To Unleash the Power of God in the Gospel
- 47) To Rescue Us from Final Judgment
- 50) To Show That the Worst Evil Is Meant by God for Good

2) In addition to these, there are 3 others that are particularly relevant to the text before us:

- #8) To Become A Ransom For Many
- # 37) To Call Us To Follow His Example Of Lowliness And Costly Love
- #45) To Ransom People From Every Tribe And Language And People And Nation.

3) Mark 8-10 is a remarkable portion of Scripture. It is the most sustained and specific teaching on discipleship in the New Testament. The 3 chapters follow a very distinct pattern on being a servant. In each chapter there is:

- 1) A passion prediction of our Lord's death and resurrection 8:31-32; 9:30-31; 10:32-34.
- 2) A foolish response by the disciples 8:32-33; 9:32-34; 10:35-41.

- 3) A lesson on discipleship, service and true spiritual greatness 8:34-38; 9:35-37; 10:42-45.
- 4) Now in Mark 10:32-45, our Lord's instruction on spiritual greatness reaches its climax with His breathtaking declaration in v. 45. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." This is the key verse of Mark's gospel. And, this is the reason Jesus came. This gets at the heart of the gospel. This is the pattern for all who would follow Christ. We are sent to serve, even laying down our life if God ordains it, just as He ordained it for his Son.

TRANSITION:

This passage will raise and answer a very important question, "what will the gospel make of us?" In grateful response to the One who came and gave His life as a ransom for many, just what will the gospel make of us? The answer: it will make us lowly, humble servants just like the Savior. However, before we surrender to serve, before we say yes to being sent to serve, we must consider the issue of servanthood: what is its nature? What is involved? What do we see and learn from the greatest servant of all, King Jesus?

I. You must Consider the Cost of Being a Servant 10:32-34

- "And they were "on the road ("the way") going up to Jerusalem" (This is the first mention that Jerusalem is where His passion will occur). We might have expected it, but now it is plainly stated.
- Jesus the Savior leads, going before them, his face set for the destiny that awaits Him ("He is inflexible in His determination to do the will of God," Lane, 374). He has counted the cost and nothing will stop Him on His march to the cross. Nothing! I believe the Servant Song of Isaiah 50:4-11 was in our Lord's mind as He marched on to Calvary. Verse 7, must have especially comforted Him, "But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame."

1) The road of service invites misunderstanding 10:32

- "Jesus was walking ahead of them." He leads the way! Their response?
- Amazed – astonished, awed. It unnerved them. They just do not know what to make of all this.
- Afraid – (gr. *phobos*), terrified. Of what? No! Of who! He knows where He is going and what He will do, but they do not. They watch our Lord in amazement and fear, even though they have no idea what is happening and what awaits Him. That may have contributed to their fear.
- Ill. Larry and Jean Elliott going to serve and die in Iraq (2004). Son, Scott, told me, "had they known in advance that going to Iraq would have meant their death, they would have gone anyway."

- Jesus knew, and He knew fully. He considered the cost even as others misunderstood. Know it will be the same with us.

2) The road of service involves a mission 10:32-34

- Private time with the 12 “taking the 12 again” (v. 32).
- These verses (vs. 33-34) provide the most detailed & precise prophecy of His passion. Jesus’ words reflect text like Psalm 22:6-8 and the mocking of the Righteous Sufferer; Isaiah 50:6, one of the Servant Songs, and the Suffering Servant of the Lord.
- 8 specific aspects of His passion, His mission are delineated (Read). “Condemn” is a legal term. It indicates He will be tried and executed within the legal system as a criminal. God sovereignly and providentially has laid out the road He will walk, the plan He will accomplish.
- It is no different with us. God orchestrates the steps of our lives, down to the final detail, the last breath of life. No accidents. No surprises with our God. Not a one.
- Family and friends may misunderstand. Ministry? Are you kidding? What a waste of talent and education! Missions? Have you lost your mind? Do we need to get you on medication and into counseling?
- God has a plan for your life crafted and ordained to the last detail, the last breath. The last beat of your heart. He was sent to serve. He sends us to serve. Count the cost!

II. You must Consider the Challenge to Being a Servant 10:35-40

- Being a servant doesn’t come easy, especially for those who have been trained to lead; especially for those who dream of being served. Of course there is also the battle we must engage with the flesh. After all, there is a voice in our head from our fallen sinful nature that can whisper quite persuasively, “The Lord takes care of those who take care of themselves.” Just enough truth to deceive us, and just enough heresy to derail us.
- That is a good description of James and John in these verses. They get one thing right but everything else wrong. They are correct that Jesus is headed for glory (v. 37). They believe in the end He wins and will reign as King Jesus. Good. They got that right! But, as for the rest, and in particular, how the glory would come, they don’t have a clue. They still don’t get it.
- They, we all, need a discipleship lesson on a cup and a baptism.

1) Being a servant goes against our human inclinations 10:35-37

- James and John come (without Peter!). Matthew 20:20-21 reveals they had their mother do their dirty work! (She was possibly Jesus’ aunt. This makes James and John His cousins!). Blood after all is thicker than water, and Peter is cut out along with the rest of the disciples.

- Their request reveals their complete lack of comprehension of what Jesus has just said. It also reveals their selfishness. Jesus had promised the 12 in Matt 19:28 that they would sit on 12 thrones with Him in the Kingdom. That, however, was not enough! They wanted more! They wanted the two most honored thrones!
- Sensing, no doubt, the inappropriate nature of their plan, they try and trick Jesus into agreeing without hearing the request (v. 35, read). Sounds like our children doesn't it?! Jesus doesn't bite and simply ask, "What do you want...?" (v. 36).
- Their request: the best seats in the house, in the Kingdom (v. 37). Their request reveals 1) their superficial understanding of what it means to follow Jesus, to be His disciple, 2) their inflated opinion of their own importance, something those who are called to lead are especially susceptible to, and 3) wrongheadedness on how God measures greatness (cf. 9:34-36). Being a servant goes against our human inclinations. It is counter to our opinion of ourselves. We know who we are, what we have done and what we deserve. Being a servant after the pattern of Jesus is a divine enablement, not a human inclination.
- It is interesting to note at the point and time of our Lord's greatest glory there was 2 men on his right and left. They were not 2 apostles on thrones. They were 2 criminals on crosses bracketing His own!

2) Being a Servant is Ordained By Divine Revelation 10:38-40

- Jesus is gentle but firm, gracious but direct in his response (v. 38). He compares His approaching suffering and death to drinking a cup and experiencing a baptism.
- Drinking a cup and being baptized are interesting and powerful metaphors. Drinking a cup speaks of sharing in ones fate, experiencing one's destiny. It was also a common picture in the Old Testament of the wrath of God in judgment. (cf. Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17-23; Jer. 25:15-17; Ezk. 23:28-34). Baptism clearly parallels the image of the cup, referring to Jesus' passion and death as a baptism, His being overwhelmed, flooded and immersed in the destiny planned for Him by His Father. (cf. Gen. 6; Ps. 69: 2, 15). His cross was a divine destiny!
- Jesus understood this was providentially the will of God for His life. And, even knowing it was the will of His Father, He struggled with the weight of it. What did He pray in the garden of Gethsemane as recorded in Mark 14:36, "And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And in Luke 12:50 did He not say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!"
- Did James and John understand? Their all too quick answer (v. 39) reveals that they did not. Jesus, by divine revelation, tells them that they are indeed ordained for a similar destiny (v. 34). James would be the first of the apostles to be martyred (Acts 12:1-2). John would experience, alone, the great persecution of Domitian and be exiled to Patmos to suffer (Rev 1). But to sit on His right or left is a decision reserved for His Father (v. 40). And, it is not the kind of question those who will sit in those chairs would ask!

- Sadly James and John fail to see that the pathway to glory is always the pathway of suffering. Before the crown there is a cup of suffering. Before the blessings that flow there is a baptism that overwhelms and drowns.

III. You must Consider the Conflict in Being a Servant 10:41-44

- The ten are angered and ticked off at the two, because of their request (10:41) and probably because they had not thought of it first! (cf. 9:33-34 and their lust for position as well). Jesus steps in again (v. 42) and uses the occasion for His greatest and most powerful lesson on being a servant, on being great in God's Kingdom. It is a hard lesson to learn. It just doesn't seem to make sense. By earthly standards you are right. By heavenly standards you could not be more wrong!

1) You must say no to the ways of the world 10:41-43

- The lost world is driven by selfish ambition and a lust for raw power and position. They "lord it over" (*katakuriuousin*) and "exercise authority over" (*kataexousiazousin*) them (v. 42). In the world the more important you, the more are the people who serve you. Jesus says, "but it shall not be so among you" (v. 43). In His world the more important you are, the more people you serve. Jesus opposes the mindset of the world, its way of thinking, and so must we. (Romans 12:2).

2) You must say yes to the work of a slave 10:43-44

- You want to be great, do something great for God? You want to please and honor the Lord Jesus with you life? Then become a *diakonos* (servant; v. 43), a *doulos* (slave) of all (v. 44). Become a servant, a table waiter, a household servant. Become a slave. Such a person will have the mind of Christ, esteeming others better than himself, looking out for their interests. Such a person, like Jesus, will live life not giving attention to their own interests, but to those of others (Philippians 2:3-5).
- Jesus reverses all ideas of greatness, turning the world's philosophy on its head. So, who will we say "no" to and "yes" to? It will be a battle, there will be conflict. To many it will not make sense. Be a servant? Be a slave? Why? How?

IV. You must Consider Christ when Being a Servant 10:45

- Jesus has told us He will die in Jerusalem. Now He tells us why.
- In this verse Jesus makes a promise no other religious leader in the world has made or could make. And in making it He declares for all to see what He came to do. He came to serve you and me, not just as our example, but as our ransom!

- William Lane said, “The reversal of all human ideas of greatness and rank was achieved when Jesus came, not to be served, but to serve (p. 383).
- John Pipers says, “Mark 10:45 is what turns Christianity into gospel.”
- The word “for” connects v. 45 with the argument of vs. 43-44. Why should you become a servant? A slave? Answer: because that is what your Savior did. It is that simple. And oh, what a servant He is!
- Before we unwrap this incredible verse we need to make a couple of important theological observations: 1) There is no thought in the Bible at all that the ransom was paid to Satan. At the cross Satan received only one thing: his defeat and ruin. 2) The price Christ paid was not coerced or taken from Him. He freely and, as Heb 12:2 says, joyfully gave it. He was the great giver and not the pitiful receiver. John 10:18 says it perfectly, “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

1) Follow Christ in Service

- “For even” emphasizes the remarkable humility and service of one who should by all rights be honored and served.
- The “Son of Man” title (Daniel 7:13) is wed to “ransom for many” language (Isaiah 53:12) and radically redefines who and what Messiah would be. He is Messiah, but a suffering Messiah, a servant Messiah. The man for all men, the Man from heaven, the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve. This is what Christmas is all about!
 - It’s about the Son of God, who existed eternally with the Father as “the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his nature,” taking on human nature and becoming a man (Heb 1:3).
 - It’s about the birth of a man by a virgin conceived miraculously (not sexually) by the Holy Spirit so that he is the Son of God, not the way you and I are the sons of God, but in an utterly unique way (Luke 1:35).
 - It’s about the coming of a man named Jesus in whom “all the fullness of deity was pleased to dwell” (Col 2:9).
 - It’s about the coming of the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4) that had been prophesied by the prophets of old that
 - A Ruler would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2);
 - A child would be born called Wonderful Counselor, Might God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6);
 - A Messiah, an anointed one, a shoot from the stem of Jesse, a son of David, a King would come (Isa 11:1-4; Zech 9:9);
 - Christmas is about the coming of the Son of Man who “came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Application

- If He serves, we must serve!
- If He gives, we must give!
- If He stoops down, we must stoop down!

- C.J. Mahaney says it so well in his book *Humility: True Greatness*, “Ultimately our Christian service exists only to draw attention to *this* source - to our crucified and risen Lord who gave Himself as the ransom for us all” (p. 48).

2) Follow Christ in Sacrifice

- “came.” He came. Tim Keller rightly says this “is a strong giveaway that he existed before he was born.” (*King’s Cross*, 140).
- “give His life”, no one takes it. This is why He came. Jesus did not have to die despite God’s love. He died because of God’s love. The cross is the self-substitution of God for sinful humanity.
- “give His life”, why? How? As a “ransom” (*lutron*). Here is what theologians often call “the wonderful exchange.”
- “Ransom” means to deliver by purchase, whether a prisoner of war, a slave, or a condemned/forfeited life. It means a payment, usually of money, required to release someone from punishment or slavery. We needed a ransom because we had all gladly and willingly sold ourselves into the bondage of slavery to sin. When he purchased us, our slaver masters, sin, death, hell and Satan had to set us free and let us go! 1 Peter 1:18-21 says it like this, “Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”
- Here ransom speaks, and speaks clearly, of Jesus’ substitutionary atonement, His sacrificial death on the cross as the price paid to purchase the release from guilt and bondage sinners who would trust and believe in Him. Again, the ransom was not directed to the devil, but the Father. Righteousness demanded it. Love provided it. And, we were not only set free from sin. We were then adopted into a new family. Galatians 4:4-5 says it like this, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” We had run away like fools and sold ourselves to Satan and slavery. Jesus sees our pitiful and hopeless situation, pays the ransom, redeems us out of slavery and brings us into the Father’s house!
- “Guilty, vile, and helpless we, Spotless Lamb of God was He! Full atonement! Can it be? Hallelujah, what a Savior!” Can I atone? No, but I can act! Can I save? No!, but I can serve, perhaps even laying down my life for others.

Illustration: In June 1999 American flight 1420 crashed on landing in Little Rock, Arkansas. Among the 145 passengers were 25 students from Ouachita Baptist University who had been on concert tour. When the plane crash landed, it split in to allowing many to escape quickly. The plane also immediately caught fire. Tragically, but gratefully only 9 persons died. One was an Ouachita student named James Harrison. A strapping 21 year-old saxophonist, student, and part-

time music minister from Paragould, Arkansas, James never left the plane. He had been seated in the right rear and joined a line of people moving to the exits. Then he stepped aside. Witnesses say they saw and heard him helping others, including a burn victim, to get out first. Everyone assumed he finally also had left. Only later was he discovered missing. He apparently was overcome by smoke and perished. He always was known for helping others, said Allison Hunt, his singing partner for two years. "He gave up his life so that others might live." (*World*, 6-19-99, p. 37).

CONCLUSION:

- The greatest and best person who ever lived and walked on this earth was a humble servant. He got down low, real low, so that He might lift others up. He, as Phil 2 says, "esteemed others better than Himself," all the way to the death of the cross. And now, he calls us, those who follow Him, to do the same.
- Francis Schaeffer understood what our Savior calls us to do, and he also understood the challenge, the conflict, that too often confronts us. "Christ says we are to take the lowest [spot], but we like to take the higher. And we have a lovely rationalization for doing so because every time we take a bigger place we say that we can have greater influence for Christ. But this is not the Lord's way. Leadership is not to be sought; Leadership is to be waited for... To the extent that we want power among men, to that extent we are in the flesh and the Holy Spirit has no place in us. To the extent that I demand leadership and want leadership, to that extent I am not ready..." (*Compass*, Sum 1997, p. 26).

Sent to Lead? Perhaps.

Sent to Serve? No doubt.