

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPT 19TH-20TH, 2020 // VISION SERVICE

WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY (MATTHEW 20:20-23)

James and John were the sons of Zebedee, and their mother came to Jesus along with them with an interesting request.

- Mrs. Zebedee was probably not acting on her own here- her sons most likely had coerced her to ask Jesus for this favor on their behalf.
- Respectfully she knelt before Him and requested that when Jesus ascended the throne as Messiah, one of her boys could sit on His right hand, & the other on His left.

The person on a king's right hand was his 2nd in command, and the one to his left was 3rd

- We've got to give her a gold star for her faith! She believes that Jesus is the Messiah and will establish His Kingdom, and she believes He's gracious and kind enough to listen to her requests.
- But within this request there are three flawed assumptions.

The 1st assumption was that when they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus would assume His Kingship and establish the Kingdom- but they were forgetting the cross.

- The 2nd assumption was that one could influence or manipulate God's bestowal of reward- but they were forgetting grace.
- And the 3rd assumption was that greatness in God's Kingdom was based on status, rank, power, and authority- but they were forgetting humility.

To correct their misunderstanding and assumptions, Jesus alluded to the fact that the path to the kind of authority they were seeking only came about through the same kind of suffering He would endure.

- "You don't know what you're asking" (vs. 22)- in just a few days, to be on Jesus' right and left wouldn't mean sitting on thrones but hanging on crosses!

A cup was often associated with judgment and suffering (Ps. 75:8), so Jesus asked them if they were willing to "drink the cup", to which they responded, "we are able" (vs. 22).

- Jesus assured them that they would "drink the cup", but the bestowal that reward is only in the hands of the Father (vs. 23).
- Church history tells us James was martyred (Acts 12:2) and John was exiled (Rev. 1:9).

We often hold to the same flawed assumptions as Mrs. Zebedee and her two boys.

- We want the Kingdom; but we often forget that it involves sacrifice, difficulty and suffering.
- We want God's grace, rewards and favor; but we often forget that we can't earn it and it sometimes looks different than we expect.
- We want greatness; but we so often think about greatness through the lens of earthly kingdoms.

NOT TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE (MATTHEW 20:24-28)

When the other 10 disciples heard about the request of James and John, they were, "indignant" (vs. 24).

- This isn't "righteous indignation" at the immaturity of these two, this is wounded pride and jealousy because they "called shotgun" before any of the others got the chance.
- So Jesus as the patient master teacher calls them once again into the classroom (vs. 25).

The Caesars of the Roman Empire gained their position and kept it through coercion, manipulation, conspiracy, intimidation, and sheer force of power.

- The way they demonstrated their "greatness" was to lord it over others and to exercise authority by demanding compliance and respect.
- But this understanding of authority and greatness isn't just confined to rulers in the Roman times.

This mindset and attitude is prevalent in workplaces, churches, and in family dynamics.

- It's the mindset that says, "greatness is power, power is achieved through getting to the top, and power is kept through manipulation, domination, control, and being right."
- This is born out of tremendous insecurity and pride- a person who bosses everyone else around, has to be in charge, and has to always be right has something to prove.

Their obsession with power is simply a cover for the fact that they feel fearful and weak.

- "It shall not be so among you" (vs. 26a)- as children of God, we're not dabble in all these puny efforts at worldly greatness and trying to prove our significance.
- We're significant because God says we are! We don't have to earn it, achieve it, and we don't have to crush anyone else to keep it.

When we recognize and are secure in who we are in Christ as a child of God, we're then free to pursue true greatness by serving others and putting them first.

- According to God's standards, the person who is truly great is the one who chooses an attitude of humility, meekness, and submission to others in the family of God.
- Even Jesus didn't come to be served, but to serve!

Although Jesus came with every right to be served, His purpose was to serve them.

- He willingly laid down His rights and took on a responsibility He didn't have to take- to offer His life as a ransom (a "substitute") for many (vs. 28).
- Can the same be said about us as His followers?
- Do we willingly lay down our rights and take on responsibilities we don't have to take to serve others around us? That's true greatness.

SON OF DAVID (MATTHEW 20:29-34)

After Jesus instructs His disciples on true, Kingdom greatness, He gives them a demonstration of it.

- Beggars were considered outcasts in Jewish society and few holy men would have anything to do with beggars (and would NEVER touch for fear of becoming unclean).
- The Gospel of Mark identifies one of these beggars as Bartimaeus ("son of excrement")- these two low-lives were subhuman in this society.

But as Jesus passed by on the road out of Jericho, these two blind beggars called out to Him using His Messianic title- "son of David...have mercy on us" (vs. 30).

- So these two low-lives wouldn't disturb the important holy man, the crowd rebuked them, telling them to be quiet (vs. 31).
- But they were desperate, and the crowds' rebuke caused them to cry out even more.

But with great astonishment, the crowd looked as Jesus stopped and asked them an amazing question- "What do you want Me to do for you?"

- Put yourself in the story in the shoes of these two men- if Jesus asked you, "What can I do for you?", what would you say?
- Would you be like James & John and ask for great blessing, power, authority and privilege? For Him to make you rich, powerful, beautiful, or famous?

What's so incredible is to consider Jesus' question- "What can I do for you?"

- Shouldn't we as humans be the one asking Jesus as God what we can do for Him?
- These two men simply say to Him, "Lord let our eyes be opened", and Jesus in His mercy, great love, and pity touches them and heals them.
- Their response? They open their eyes, see Him, and begin to follow (vs. 34).

Every miracle of Jesus preaches a sermon, and here there's great symbolism.

- In Matthew we've already seen children who in their humility could see Jesus, a rich young man in his riches who couldn't see his need for Jesus, and disciples in their pride who couldn't see the humility and love of Jesus.
- But here are two blind men who by faith confess Jesus as God and their eyes are opened.

They were physically blind, but spiritually they could see clearly that they needed the mercy of Jesus and that He had the power to save them.

- And they asked Jesus not for fame, riches, blessing, power, or authority- but simply that He would open their eyes so they could see Him and follow Him.
- This account is an invitation for each of us to daily confess our need for Him.

But it's also an invitation to dare and believe that Christ has offered to "serve" us- the created being served by the Creator!

- He has offered us the mercy, grace, strength, healing, encouragement, guidance, and love that we desperately need.
- But so often we don't ask Him because we don't think we deserve them- but that's exactly the point of the Gospel.

We don't deserve ANYTHING from God, and yet He's given us EVERYTHING through Christ.

- When we understand how broken and undeserving we are, how desperately we need His mercy, and how willing He is to stoop down and touch us in our time of greatest need- that's when our eyes are opened to see Him.
- When we see Jesus in His love, mercy, grace, and power- we want to follow Him.

THE MIND OF CHRIST (PHIL. 2:5-8)- SACRIFICIAL, HUMBLE, OBEDIENT.

Does the Church have the mind of Christ right now? How do we get, "mind of Christ"?

- We recognize that our significance and identity has already been decided.
- We lay down our rights, we surrender ourselves and yield to the Holy Spirit's leading.
- We ask Him to "open our eyes" so we can see.
- We follow Jesus by doing as He did- He served, therefore we serve!