

BLESS – S – SERVE

Mark 10:35-45

Hey good morning church. Glad to have you with us today as we come down the home stretch of our series called BLESS. And just a reminder – BLESS – not as a program but simply trying to put language around a lifestyle – the life on mission that Jesus calls all of followers to. All of this, modeled after Jesus' life and ministry.

B – Begin with prayer – the priority of prayer in the life of the missionary

L – Listen – listening as an act of compassion toward people

E – Eat – who are you sharing your meals with. Listening and eating go really well together by the way.

S – Serve – this is where we are for today. And what we are considering today from the scriptures is the role of servanthood in the life of a missionary, in the life of an ordinary Christian seeking to live on mission – ordinary normal faithfulness. But more importantly, we see the servant nature of Jesus' life. And that's our model for being a servant to others. Not just like stuff I think will be good and helpful, but modeling our lives after the life and ministry of Jesus.

And then next week we will complete this series with the word STORY.

When we think about the word SERVE.

Think about some of the people you've known through your life – I'm sure there's one or two that you'd say – that person is a server. Humble, great attitude, always ready to help and do whatever, never looking for a pat on the back. I think there really are some people that have a unique wiring toward servanthood – and there's a spiritual gift of service or of helps that Paul would write about in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. Then there are others that are always willing to help when there's a need – but maybe our unique wiring and gifting isn't directed toward service. Maybe even some that are reluctant servers – those that serve when asked (and when it can't be avoided). Maybe best to think of it as a range.

And while not all of us has the spiritual gift of service or of helps → every one of us is called to live like Jesus, who did not come to be served, but to serve. To serve.

Turn with me, if you have a Bible, turn with me to Mark 10:35-45. We're going to look at this story that's found a couple of places in the Gospels about two of the original 12 disciples kind of jockeying for position – trying to use a special relationship they had with Jesus to get whatever they wanted. Rather than humble service – they wanted to be served.

READ Mark 10:35-45

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.”^[k]

PRAY.

I. A Revealing Question

So, where we’re are is right before passion week – toward the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry travelling up to Jerusalem – where he would ultimately be tried and killed.

And interestingly, this isn’t the first time these dudes were arguing about greatness. Like a group of middle school boys arguing about who’s got the better jump shot, or who punches harder, or who can run the fastest. Just a grown up version I guess.

This interaction can also be found over in Matthew 20 – and in Matthew’s version their mama goes to Jesus and asks that he give her boys some position of power. Like, two guys named the sons of thunder, at one point wanting to call down destruction on people, sending their mama to get the good spot that they’ve always wanted. Bunch of mama’s boys.

Their question revealed their true desires → for fame, notoriety, reputation, wanting to “be someone”.

What their question really showed was, at least a little bit, they still viewed Jesus as a genie in a bottle – existing to satisfy their own desires. Rather than seeing Him as the Son of God – at some level they viewed him as existing to help them meet their own selfish ambitions.

They wanted a crown. Maybe even a fancy robe.

Jesus answers their question with a question – what do you want for me to do? They say – give us your right and left side – so we can be something when you establish your kingdom.

See, in the Jewish expectation, Messiah would come and establish an earthly Kingdom. They fully expected Jesus to sit on a physical throne – and they wanted to be with him up there. They had no concept that the way through which Jesus would usher in the Kingdom of God was through the cross. They wanted a crown. Jesus would offer them a cross.

II. They didn't know what they were asking...

They didn't know what they were asking

Re-READ 38-39

Cup – OT reference to the wrath of God

Baptism – Similar connotations

And we see their response → **Blind Arrogance**

They wanted a crown – Jesus points them first to the cross.

Suffering should be an expectation for the Christian. In fact, Christians that don't experience some level of suffering should be the small exception, not the rule. We've missed this point in 21st century America. So much easier to fill a room with a positive pep talk – think it and believe it – your best life now. It's just not true. 2,000 years of church history tell us it's not true, and more importantly the scriptures, the literal Holy Ghost-breathed Word of God tells us it's not true.

There is a crown, but it comes through the cross.

READ James 1:12

Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the **crown** of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Paul, writing to his son in the faith Timothy (T-Bone) some of the final words he would ever write, he says

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing.

And here's the thing – it's easy to talk down about James and John – these two mama's boys trying to jockey for a good seat. It's super easy. But I wonder if we aren't just like them at times. We want a crown without the cross. We want easy success, easy influence, easy whatever. We don't want to suffer. But suffering in the life of a Christian is a given.

Well, as this story goes, the other 10 caught wind of what James and John were asking for, and they weren't happy. The Bible says they began to be indignant with James and John.

And Jesus kind of calls them all out and tells them – that’s what earthly minded unbelievers do. Always jockeying for the best spot, trying to raise their own profiles, their own platforms, their own image – and then looking down on everyone else – thinking how awesome they’d be. Like this happens in virtually all walks of life.

But Jesus – He lovingly and firmly corrects them all. And he points them to TRUE GREATNESS

III. The Mark of True Greatness → Gospel-directed service to others

Re-READ V43-45

And the reason I say Gospel-Directed service – is because the Gospel of Jesus has to ALWAYS be our motivation for service to others. Always. We serve, not for a sticker, or for a position, or for power, or for a trophy, or whatever. **We serve others – regardless of the cost – we serve others as Jesus Himself has served us!** And we trust that when we breathe our last breath, for those in Christ, when we breathe our last breath that there is waiting for us a crown that will never fade. **We don’t need the praises of people when we have the approval of our heavenly Father.**

In John 12:26

If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there my servant will also be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

The disciples kind of missed it. They’d be the champions of missing the point. But honestly, so do we. We so often miss it. That the mark of true greatness is Gospel-directed service to others. I want to share a quote from my studies this week in this passage. Written 30 years ago, but still ringing true (maybe even more true) today than when originally written. Don English, commenting on these verses:

Jesus’ teaching in these verses shows discipleship as a self-denying, self-risking, self-giving part of lowly service for the redemption of the world.

Yet so much of Christian life as one can now observe it is about gaining a secure position in society, inviting others to join us where we are, and doing little to change the structures of our political and social life, thus lending our support to the structures which oppress the poor and needy at home and abroad, and largely leaving it to preachers and full-time evangelists to spread the good news about Jesus.

We are not (mostly!) as crass as the disciples in jockeying for seats of power in the kingdom, but by much more subtle behavior we show how little we grasp what it means to be disciples of a crucified Lord who gave his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus offered his life – as a ransom (payment) – for sinful, jacked up people like me and like you. And he calls all of us – not some super special class of Christian – he calls all of us to a life of

serving others in his name. And our motivation for serving others – it's a response to how He has served and saved us. The question is will we do it.

CLOSING

Will we see the people we come into contact with as Jesus sees them – in need of a Savior. Will we pray, listen, eat and serve others in a lifestyle that is committed to sharing and showing Jesus to all of the people we come into contact with?