

FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN

Mark 10:32-45

Key Verse: 10:45

"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."

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus again predicted his sufferings, death and resurrection. Jesus really wanted his disciples to understand the meaning of his death and resurrection. But his disciples hardly accepted his words because they were in their dream world. Rather, James and John requested the right to sit, one on the right, the other on the left of Jesus in his glory. Jesus' discipleship training seemed to have been in vain. But Jesus taught them the basic principles of being true servants in the sight of God. Jesus said in verse 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." May God teach us at this time the true servanthship of Jesus.

I. Jesus again predicts his death (32-34)

First, Jesus visits his sheep one more time. According to the geography of Mark's Gospel, Jesus had been to the north, and after a brief stay in Galilee he moved toward the south. While he was on the way to Judea, he spent time in the hill country and beyond the Jordan. There Jesus spent a short while right before going up to Jerusalem. How did Jesus spend his time? Jesus visited his flock of sheep one by one who were scattered all throughout the region. He was visiting them to pray with them one more time, and to encourage them to stand firm in the glorious hope of the kingdom of God. Jesus was burdened with his upcoming crucifixion. In the midst of sorrow and anguish, Jesus was mindful of his sheep. This event reminds us of John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Second, the prediction concerning his death and resurrection (32-34). Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, and he was going ahead of them. It was the time when the Son of Man was approaching Jerusalem to die on the cross so as to fulfill the will of God. Through his death and resurrection, the people living in darkness will have a living hope in the kingdom of God (Mt 4:16). But the work of salvation demanded Jesus' suffering and death. As Isaiah had prophesied, he was like a lamb led to the slaughter (Isa 53:7). Jesus had to carry out this mission all by himself. So he was lonely. How about his disciples? They were only astonished, for they sensed his anguish of heart. When his disciples were afraid, those who were following were all afraid (32a). The way to Jerusalem was hard. But Jesus was pressing on toward Jerusalem.

What did Jesus do with his fearful disciples? Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what he had said to them concerning his death and res-

urrection, which were going to happen in Jerusalem (32b). He had already told them twice before concerning his upcoming death and resurrection. The first time was right after Peter's confession of faith (8:29-32). The second time was right after the event of the transfiguration. Jesus' death and resurrection were to fulfill God's will for world salvation (9:9,31-32). This time was the third time Jesus told them about his suffering, death and resurrection on the way to Jerusalem. In verses 33 and 34 he said, "...and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

Why did Jesus predict his death and resurrection? He said this beforehand so that when he was handed over to the Gentiles to be crucified, his disciples might not lose heart but believe what they had been told. Jesus said this so that after his resurrection they might be witnesses of his resurrection. Jesus said this because his death was to become a ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world, and his resurrection was to defeat the power of death and sin and bring a living hope in the kingdom of God to those who believe in him. Even the Old Testament, in the form of prophecy and literature, procreated his messianic work. Therefore, the disciples needed to know the deep meaning of his death and resurrection. When Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, he hoped that his disciples would somehow open their spiritual eyes and see God's will for world salvation. But to the disciples, God's will for world salvation was still hidden.

What do we learn through his death and resurrection? First, through his Son's death and resurrection we can see that God is love. God is the Creator. So God could destroy sinful mankind and throw them away, as a watchmaker throws away broken watches. But God did not exercise his power and authority over mankind. Rather, he willed to save all mankind through his Son Jesus Christ, for God is love. 1 John 4:16b says, "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God gave his one and only Son to save us from our sins. Children are the joy and crown of all parents. There is a story about an American Indian. He gave one of his sons to a foreigner. The next morning the father was supposed to get some money from the foreigner. But the father came and said to him, crying, "Give me my son, not money." Since then, a saying has spread, "You're an Indian giver." To love one's one and

only son is easy, but to give his one and only son is impossible for anyone. But God gave his one and only Son for the sin of the world. By the fact that God gave his one and only Son we can believe that God is love. Those who know that God is love can overcome the world. 1 John 5:5 says, "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." But double-minded people cannot realize the love of God and experience one defeat after another.

Second, through his Son's death and resurrection we can learn the obedience of Jesus. God's will for his Son was to die on the cross to fulfill his will for world salvation. God's will for his Son demanded absolute obedience, even dying on the cross. What a difficult command for Jesus to obey. Everybody wants to live forever. Nobody wants to die.

Fallen men are usually very rebellious. One night, for over 5 hours, a shepherd who was sick on his bed told a young man who had been paralyzed by lustful desires to be careful about women and money for the sake of his future success. Finally the young man talked back, saying, "Are you talking to me?" Then he slammed the door and went away. What did Jesus do? Jesus decided to obey God's will. God's will was to put all the burden of the sin of all mankind on his Son, and crucify him on the cross like a criminal. It was impossible for the only Son to obey. But Jesus decided to obey. In order to obey, Jesus took all the sufferings, rejection, and finally death on the cross. How could he obey unto death when he was young? Jesus could obey God because he loved him. John 14:15 says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." Again, John 14:21a says, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." Obedience produces noble character. Jesus saved us through his obedience to God's will.

II. Even the Son of Man (35-45)

First, the disciples' political ambition (35-41). How did the disciples respond to the prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection? They responded very poorly. Contrary to his expectation, they were burning with selfish ambition. Look at verse 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.'" Jesus did not get upset because of their hidden political ambition. Look at verses 36-37. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." Wow! Their political ambition was a fantastic one. They thought that Jesus would establish the earthly Messianic kingdom. They thought that the Messianic kingdom is the most powerful kingdom, which would rule all the kings and their nations. They wanted to be rulers, sitting on the right and left side of his throne. The disciples did not know the mind of Jesus. Jesus wanted to raise a good shepherd like God, who had borne their iniquities and transgressions endlessly. For example, God loved Abraham for 25 years until he was changed from a selfish man to a man of blessing. Jesus also embraced all the weaknesses of Peter. Jesus even washed his feet to teach him spiritual humbleness. Jesus wanted to raise them as his disciples, so that through them, God's will for world salvation might be fulfilled. But the disciples did not know the mind of Jesus. They also did not know what kind of people worldly politicians were.

In view of history, worldly politicians who rose to power were all first-class liars and destroyers of their political opponents, such as Cromwell, Bismarck, Mussolini, Hitler, Lenin and so on. But as we know well, James and John were too naive to be like worldly politicians in history. Most likely, James and John just wanted the honor of sitting at the right and left side of Jesus at the time of his glory. In the best analysis, they were burning with a desire to become the rulers of the world. For this, James and John had grieved a lot because of Peter's top position and his inborn leadership. When we see another gospel, in order to obtain the honor, James and John sent their mother to Jesus to negotiate for her sons, James and John, the honor of sitting at the right and left side of Jesus in his glory (Mt 20:21). James and John were somewhat detestable fellows and they were selfish. But we cannot deny that they had a strong sense of competition. Jacob bought the birthright from his hungry older brother for a bowl of lentil soup. Thus he obtained the honor of being older brother to his older brother (Heb 12:16). And at the same time, he became the ruler over his older brother by putting him under his rule.

Man has a sense of honor because God made man in his own image to be great and honorable. But these days the love of money has taken away the sense of honor from most people. In the past, those who obtained a Ph.D. were honored; universities and companies made contracts with Ph.D. candidates before convocation ceremonies were over. Probably the disciples had a sense of honor like Ph.D. students. But these days Ph.D.s are not honored or welcomed because school authorities and companies have to pay them higher salaries. Instead, universities and companies use many TA's, part-time instructors, or skilled people in order to reduce expenditures. They don't care about the honor of the university or company. This tendency gradually causes people to lose the sense of honor. As a result, the number of dishonorable people grows. The number of ignoble people grows. When men have the sense of honor they can grow in the image of God. When men have the sense of honor they can study well, overcoming themselves. When women have the sense of honor they can overcome a cursed desire and try to be faithful to God.

In order to become a great man, everyone must know how to pay the cost. In order to teach them the cost of becoming a great man, Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" (38). Here, "the cup" meant

the cup of sorrow and suffering (Mt 26:39), and "the baptism" his death on the cross (Ro 6:4). To become a great man in the sight of God is indeed costly. But they said, "We can." Their saying, "we can," was nothing but a daydream. They were ready to do anything if only they could obtain the honor of sitting at the right and left side of Jesus in his glory. Their sense of honor and political ambition were inflexible.

Jesus said in verses 39b and 40, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." Here Jesus is saying that honor or power is given to those who deserve it. Look at verse 41. "When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John." They were indignant, not because of James and John's initiative, but because they had the same desire as James and John to obtain honor or power. In this part, we learn that Jesus served his disciples by teaching them the high cost to obtain honor or power. We can serve others well when we become a man of honor.

Second, to be served or to serve (42-44). Jesus knew the tragedy of mankind who were living in a world ruled by applied power--the power of the sword and money. Jesus also knew that his disciples envied the uniforms of the Roman soldiers, with their helmets shining in the sun. Jesus knew that they wanted to be attended like Roman governors. But Jesus was sorry that the disciples did not know great men in history. Look at verse 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.'" Jesus is saying that politicians who are served by people are not great. They are only necessary evils. We must know that those who want to be served are always miserable and sorrowful. There is a woman who demanded absolute love of her husband. Her husband did everything. But she was not happy. She became a depression mental patient. On the other hand, those who serve God are truly great in the sight of God, even if they receive false accusations because of serving others. And they are happy indeed. Truly great men are those who serve God and his people. David is great because he served God and his people like a good shepherd in his own generation. Acts 13:36 says, "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation..." Abraham Lincoln is great because he served God and his people in his own generation. There is a young man who does not study for a degree, but gives his heart to develop the laboratory of his chemistry de-

partment. He is very happy. Look at verses 43,44. "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." This is controversial truth. But it is God's truth which makes us successful in the long run.

Third, "For even the Son of Man..." (45) Look at verse 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." Jesus was the Son of God. But he did not come to the world as a political ruler. Luke 9:58 says, "Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.' He came as a shepherd and servant. His job was a carpenter. In this way, Jesus became a humble servant. Jesus became like this so that he could serve all kinds of people. Jesus teaches us what kinds of people we must be when we want to serve God's flock of sheep."

Fourth, to give his life (45). This part seems to be the key point of Mark's gospel. Jesus came to the world to give his life as a ransom for many. What are you talking about? To give my life! You guy! You are saying something very ridiculous! From the world's point of view, it is ridiculous to give something, especially one's life. These days, under the influence of pragmatism, everybody wants to get something. Most people are like baseball players who hit and run. It means that as soon as they get something they run away without saying goodbye. Mammonism of the last part of the 20th century seems to be the culmination of human history. But mammonism or selfishness makes all people in the world very tragic. Salvation of all mankind comes from one word, give. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Jesus knew God's will for world salvation. It was to give his one and only Son as a ransom sacrifice. Without giving one's life, no one can achieve anything. There are many fools in the world who want to invest the least and harvest the most. They may become gamblers, but they will not achieve anything. John 12:24 says, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Jesus gave his life for our sins. Thus he can give us a living hope, eternal salvation and the kingdom of God. Man's happiness does not lie in selfishness, but in life-giving sacrifice.

Fifth, a ransom sacrifice for many (45). Look at verse 45 again. "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." Jesus' service did not stop with healing the sick and preaching the kingdom of God. He gave his life as a ransom for many. It is indeed a heart-breaking story that our Lord Jesus gave his life for our sins. As we know well, Satan doesn't want anything but blood as a ransom payment for his prisoners. Jesus had to give his lifeblood as a ransom sacrifice for us. Sometimes we wonder why we have to lose so much to serve others through one-to-one Bible study. But we must remember that God gave his one and only Son to save sinners, finally to become a ransom sacrifice for all mankind. May God richly bless us to learn the servanthip of Jesus Christ.