

The Servant King

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[0:00] My name is Toby. Grew up going to this church. Lived most of my life here in Dubuque before going off to college at Iowa State University! where I studied mechanical engineering.

! I try to reach college students.

For me on the college campus of Iowa State University, I try to reach college students with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I do that through my church in Ames. It's called Stonebrook Church. And now I help direct the college ministry there.

We have a college ministry of around 100 students or so. And it's just the joy of my life to get to share the gospel with college students, get to disciple students. Right now my main role is involving leading the teams that we have, leading our staff and our leadership teams, helping disciple students.

And we have a midweek gathering that I preach at regularly. So I do want to give a little bit of an update. Don asked if I'd give a little update of what's going on in our ministry. And so just a couple things.

[1:13] Over the summer, some of us from the ministry, we took a mission trip overseas to Central Asia, to the country of Turkey. We have a church that we know there that we partnered with. And a lot of it was just witnessing the mission.

So Turkey is about 99% Muslim, about 0.01% Christian. So there's not very many Christians there. But God's really moving there. It's amazing to see how people across the world in a very different culture are much like us.

They're our brothers and sisters who love the Lord and are seeking to proclaim the good news there. This fall, we've been seeking to, especially as new students come to campus, seeking to reach students with the gospel.

Just a few nights ago, we baptized one of them. In a couple weeks, we'll have more getting baptized. We're very excited about that. And just a few focuses that we have this year. One is discipleship.

We just really want to help our students be equipped in what it really means to make disciples. The second is outreach, what it really means to love the lost, to love their classmates, the people on their dorm floors, the people around them.

[2:16] And the third is the necessity of the church, of why the local church is God's vessel for reaching the world. And the Christian life is not a solo endeavor. So that's just some of the things that we are focusing on for this fall.

It's been great so far. And we're excited for what God has for us the rest of the year. So this morning, we're going to go through a passage in the book of Mark. So you can open up your Bibles to Mark chapter 10.

Mark chapter 10. And we're going to be in verses 35 to 45. So Mark 10, 35 to 45. And our passage this morning shows how Christ, how Jesus Christ, who came to the earth, how he came to serve.

This is one of the primary reasons he came. He came to be a servant, to serve. And before we read that passage, I first want to read a passage in Colossians, because I think this helps us see why it's so important that he came as a servant, why it's really groundbreaking for Jesus to be a servant.

So Colossians 1, verses 15 through 16, says this. It says, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

[3:32] For everything was created by him in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

So as we think about who Christ is, this is one of the most profound passages on who Jesus is in Colossians.

And I understand you guys have been going through Colossians, so maybe this is familiar with you. And I hope it is. Jesus says he is the image of the invisible God.

He is the revealing. He's the image of the revealing of the God that from the time before time began, as he'd been revealing himself, Jesus was the most clear picture we've ever gotten of God. He is God in the flesh who created all things, all thrones, all dominions, all rulers, all authorities. So he is truly the Lord of all lords, the King of all kings, the King of the earth.

[4:37] And this morning, as we read our passage in Mark, we'll see how this King, who has all authority, all lordship over all the earth, who all things were created for him and through him.

How he's the most royal of all royalty. This King came to be a servant. He flips on its head what we think of hierarchy, what we think of rulership, what we think of authority.

He came to serve. Instead of being put up on a pedestal and worshiped like we might think, he came to lower himself beneath us. We're going to see how Christ, in doing so, calls us to join him in how he served us, to join him in how he laid his life down for us, and how he calls us to give up our vain desires for glory and to join him in what he has done.

So, before we read, let's pray. Father, we thank you for this morning, God, as a chance to gather as your church, and the joy it is to have fellowship with one another, to sing praises to you, hear from your word.

So, Father, as we read your word, God, I pray that you'd help us to have soft hearts to receive it. God, that we'd be changed by the living words of God.

[5:54] I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, we'll be reading in the CSB, and I'll start here in Mark 10, verses 35 to 45, as this is as Jesus is traveling with his 12 disciples.

It says this, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask you. What do you want me to do for you?

He asked them. They answered him, Allow us to sit at your right and at your left in your glory. Jesus said to them, You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?

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. But to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give. Instead, it is for those for whom it has been prepared. When the ten disciples heard this, they began to be indignant with James and John. 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.

[7:06] But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all.

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. So we see immediately here as James and John are approaching Jesus, we see immediately it reveals that the human heart desires glory.

Human heart desires glory. Right off the bat, James and John, they ask Jesus this honestly kind of cryptic question. They're like, Hey Jesus, we want you to do whatever we ask, but we're not going to tell you what it is until you say yes.

I think a lot of us have probably been in this position. Maybe you have kids that have said something like this to you. They're maybe trying to pull a fast one on Jesus here.

He doesn't, Jesus doesn't play into their games. He pretty much is like, Okay, what, just tell me what you want. Tell me what your desires are. So of course they tell him, I wonder if at this point maybe sheepishly.

[8:13] And they ask him, Allow us to sit at your right and your left in your glory. So they're asking, Hey, we want to be your top guys when you're glorified. We want to be on a pedestal above all of the rest.

They wanted the glory and the recognition of being at Jesus' right and left hands. They wanted to be seen. They wanted to be praised. They wanted to be honored.

And it's easy to look at James and John in this story as I often have throughout the years. And it's easy to look down upon them like, Guys, you guys are traveling with Jesus.

You're one of the 12 apostles. You have direct access to the living God. What more could you want? And now you're suddenly asking this question, Who's going to be at your right? Who's going to be at your left? But the truth is, I think we are all much like James and John. We are all much like James and John. We all desire glory.

[9:10] We all desire glory. This is the condition of the human heart in our flesh. We want glory. We want praise. We want recognition. We want others to look at us, to admire us.

We want to be superior. We want to have a position of authority over others, to be able to tell others what to do, and they have to listen. And maybe this doesn't come out in the exact same way as it does for James and John.

And I think it can manifest in us in many different ways. Maybe it's just wanting that promotion, wanting that leadership position, wanting to be with the in crowd or the cool people or the people that everybody else likes.

Wanting recognition, popularity. Maybe it's simply just wanting to feel superior to those around. The problem is, the problem is, we always desire this, or almost always desire this for personal gain. We want glory. We want praise. We want personal gain above everyone else. And I'll be honest with you, I'm not apart from this either.

[10:18] I've struggled with this for a long time. It has manifested itself in different ways. In high school, it was through the things I was doing, the activities, the sports I was doing, the music I was playing.

I wanted to be the best so that others would see me as the best, would respect me, maybe even have reverence of me. When I got to college, this just shifted to other things.

It shifted maybe to my spiritual walk and the accomplishments I was making, the leadership positions I was attaining. And it's still, even now that I'm on staff, not of them in the role I am today, I still have to battle this.

I still have to recognize that I have this sinful desire to feel like I'm superior, to feel like I am better than others. Because I desire my own glory.

We have to know and remember that we are not different than James and John here. Our hearts are prone to sin. We desire glory and this glory comes at the expense of others.

[11:17] As we'll see later in this passage, this glory can come at the expense of others. So as we move on to our next section, in this next couple of verses in 38 to 40, we see Christ's response and how he shows us that those who follow Christ must suffer with him.

Those who follow Christ must suffer with him. He answers their question by saying, you don't know what you're asking. And then he asks them a question that they might not have understood yet.

He says, are you able to drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with? He says, James and John don't know what they're asking and here's why.

They don't understand what it will require, the cost it will take to sit at Jesus' right and left hands. Because this means that they will endure many of the things that Jesus will endure.

They will have to endure many of the things that Jesus will endure. Although even this will not necessarily earn them the place at his right and left hand. He says that it's not for mine, not for me to give.

[12:26] He says they will be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with and they will drink the cup he drinks. So what does this mean? The cup, as it's referred to throughout the Bible, can mean a couple different things.

Sometimes it refers to God's judgment, God's wrath. Sometimes it refers to suffering and death. And it could mean both here.

It could mean that Jesus takes on God's judgment, takes on our judgment, which we know he does. This is very true. But I think in this passage, as he's saying, I take this on, you take this on as well. I think he's talking about the suffering and death that is about to be poured out on him as he goes to the cross. And he's saying that James and John will also experience this suffering and this death in a similar way.

Likely it's speaking of the suffering death Jesus speaks of in a couple verses prior to our passage. So if you look up in your Bibles to verses 33 and 34, we're still in chapter 10 here.

[13:29] Jesus says to the 12, he says, So Jesus is predicting what is going to happen.

He's saying he's going to be mocked. He's going to be spit on. He's going to be flogged and he's going to be killed. And we know this suffering, this death that he is going to experience at this time

is beyond what anyone has ever seen before.

There's a greater suffering than any man has ever endured. And this is what this cup is referring to. This cup that is about to be poured out on him that he must drink. This baptism that he speaks of, which we think of the ceremony of baptism, I think in this context, baptism, the word just means immersed.

So he's just saying, I'm going to be completely immersed in this, this suffering. I will be completely immersed in. He's going to be immersed in this suffering, in this death, in this flogging, this mocking, this killing.

This is what he's going to endure. And he's saying to his disciples, he's saying to James and John, you're going to experience this too. This is the cup that you have to drink. This is the baptism that you will be baptized with.

[14 : 58] And he's asking them, do you know what you're asking? Even when he's asking them to continue to follow him, he's saying, do you know what you're asking me? Not even when you just ask for glory as you ask to sit at my right and my left, but just as a follower of Jesus, this is what you're asking to endure.

You're joining me in this suffering. James and John likely would not have completely grasped what they would endure, what it meant to actually proclaim the name of Jesus Christ as Lord.

But we do know from church history, from church tradition, that this came true for them. James was beheaded. He was, I believe, the first of the 12 apostles to be martyred.

John was severely, severely persecuted. He was even placed in boiling oil, which he did survive. But then he was eventually exiled to the island of Patmos.

And this is what is in store, or in a similar way, this is what is in store if we desire to follow Christ. We must drink the cup he drank.

[16 : 06] We must be baptized, immersed in the immersion that he was immersed with. We must be willing to endure this suffering with Christ.

He says, if you follow me, you will suffer with me. We need to count the cost of what it means to follow Jesus. He promises many, many amazing things, but he does promise trials.

He does promise suffering. Because this following of Jesus, like James and John, it might cost everything. It might cost our lives. It might cost immense suffering beyond anything we've ever imagined.

It might cost other things. It might cost losing a job. It might cost losing friends. It might cost being disowned by family. And while things generally are safe in the U.S., if you're a Christian, God might lead us somewhere in the world where Christians are tortured and are killed on a regular basis.

And this counting the cost isn't really even a one-time decision we can make. While hopefully we've made this at one point in our lives, maybe when we gave our life to Christ, but I think as God leads us into different stages of life, as he leads us into different places, different seasons, we have to continually to make this decision, is it worth following Christ?

[17 : 30] Is the suffering that I'm going to endure, is it worth it? Is it worth the pain? Is it worth making these sacrifices over and over and over again?

This isn't just a one-time decision. Until we've figured things out, we've figured out following Christ, and then we can just coast the rest of our lives. And this, I've thought about, I'm sorry, I thought about Pastor Jack this last week.

I think about how much he must have made this decision. Sorry. The pain that he endured, that never let him not proclaim Christ.

He always was thinking of lifting up others, encouraging them and focusing on them. He'd tell it was his joy to follow Christ.

And this is a decision that we all have to make as we follow Christ. As we see the suffering that Christ has endured for us, the people that are unworthy sinners.

[19 : 03] We have to count the cost. What Christ might call us into. Following Christ means that we submit ourselves to him as king.

As we read in Colossians, he was the creator of all things. He was the Lord of all. By him and through him, all things have been created. That means we have to let him do whatever he pleases with our lives.

Follow him into whatever he calls us to. Obey him, whatever he commands us to do. And we know that whatever that may be, there will be, to some extent, there will be suffering.

Because those who follow Christ must suffer with him. And finally, as we move on to this last section, we will see that those who follow Christ must become servants like him.

Those who follow Christ must become servants like him. See, the other disciples, they become upset at James and John. Likely, I would assume likely because they also want to be at his right and left hands, but maybe they didn't have the boldness to ask him like James and John did.

[20 : 21] We don't know. It doesn't give us the reason, but they were upset. They were indignant with James and John. So Jesus calls everyone together, seeing how there's conflict, uprising, there's some fighting here, they're upset with each other.

He sees how they're wanting to be greater than one another. They're fighting for glory, wanting to be more important, more highly praised. And he says, he's basically saying, look guys, this is what the world does.

This is what the world around you does. That's what the Gentiles and the people of this world do. They lord it over each other. The authority that they have, they treat that as a way to just push other people down.

They act as tyrants toward one another. They use their authority for personal gain, much like the disciples seem to be trying to do. They wanted personal gain.

They were wanting to be served and for the others to be servants for them, wanting to be elevated above the rest. And this is what Jesus says here. This is what Jesus says.

[21 : 25] But it is not so among you. But it is not so among you. He said, this is not what the people of God do. This is not what the followers of God do.

We don't lord authority over one another and act as tyrants towards others. He says, but it is not so among you. But on the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant. Whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. For even the Son of Man, even Christ himself, who had authority, power, and dominion over the whole earth, even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Not only, he's saying, not only do you need to recognize that this desire to be elevated above the rest is wrong, that you need to stop worrying about it. He's saying, you not just need to give that up. You need to become everyone's servant. You need to become everyone's servant. He completely flips the table, so to speak, on what it means to lead, what it means to have authority.

[22 : 43] The great are those who must become servants. He's saying, stop trying to be first. Stop trying to be elevated. Stop trying to have all the authority, all the power, all the superiority.

Don't be like the evil world that Lord's rulership over others. Instead, he's saying, become like me. Become a servant.

I think this takes us a step even further into what Christ is calling us into. Not just the suffering, not just the suffering that we must endure for him, but it's how we must see ourselves because of him. We must become lowly servants like Christ. And I think this helps us get to the heart of what this passage is really, really talking about.

The heart of what he's trying to communicate. Wanting to have glory above others to, as James and John were doing, be at the right and the left hand of Christ is just showing how we want to be better than others.

[23 : 49] We want to be raised above others. We want to be superior to others. But wanting to be like Christ means being a servant and being put below others.

because being a servant, being a servant forces us to consider others as more important than ourselves. Being a servant forces us to consider others as more important than ourselves.

And this is what Jesus is communicating. Being a servant forces us to humble ourselves, to stop seeing ourselves as more worthy, as maybe seeing others as unworthy of your service.

they're not worthy of you serving, of you sacrificing for, of you raising up. It forces us to look around at our brothers and sisters around us whose weaknesses might be very obvious to you, whose shortcomings are very clear.

Maybe you are a lot smarter then, you're a lot more put together then, you're a lot more successful then. Maybe they're hard for you to talk to, to hang out with.

[24 : 57] Maybe they're not even very considerate of others, they're not very considerate of you, they don't have a lot of respect for you. This calls us to look at these people, to look at your brothers and sisters and saying, they are worthy of me serving.

It doesn't matter how much they've wronged you, it doesn't matter how much you don't feel like they have lived up to your expectations, it's to say, because Christ came as a servant, because Christ served me, who was unworthy, they are worthy of me serving.

This doesn't change based on your position, your role, your maturity, your age, your success in life. In fact, I would argue that the bigger your role, the more mature you are, the more important it is to live this out.

To see that these people are worthy of me lowering myself under, to becoming less than, so I can raise them up. I can elevate them above me, to be the least of all, to make sacrifices for others, to let others be praised more than you, to see people not just for how they can benefit you, but for how you can bless them.

Not thinking, what can I get out of these relationships, or what can I get out of my church, or what can I get out of this activity, but to come and see, I get to serve, how can I bless these people, how can I bless and serve my church, how can I lay my life down as Christ already has, how can I make sacrifices to bring others into the family of God, to love the lost like Christ has, because really this is, I think this is the essence of why Christ came, this is the essence of our faith.

[26 : 44] Our faith is centered on the love as seen in the gospel of a God who created the whole earth came to lay his life down, to humble himself, and this is the love that we must have ourselves.

This is the love that we must adopt, the love, the great love of Christ, the love that is willing to sacrifice, the willing to give up our preferences, our time for others.

It means caring for our brothers and sisters in a way that is unlike the world, not based on what they can give you or how you can benefit, but simply because they are a child of God who God died for. And this is what we are called to do. This is what Jesus is calling out here in this passage in Mark. And this is what we must do.

And I think the reason why, and he tells us here at the end, the reason why is because Christ himself did it. Because Christ came to be a servant of all. Christ came to be a servant of all.

[27 : 54] As we saw earlier, the God of the universe, the King of all kings, the Lord of all, who was reigning in heaven before time began, before the earth was created, who by his very words, he spoke into existence everything we have come to know, for whom, for whom, so this whole universe was created for Christ, for him, it was all created as he was the most worthy of all.

This God, this King, this Jesus came to serve. And nowhere do we ever see this, not even in the fictional stories that we read or the movies we watch, definitely not here on this earth, nowhere do we see a king, a Lord over all the people, over all the earth, come to serve.

He didn't come to earth to have us have lots of celebrations where we were putting up on a pedestal and worshiping him, he came to be lowly. This is who Christ is, this is his heart for us, he became lower than us, to serve us, to sacrifice for us, and in the ultimate way to lay his life down for us.

To go up to the cross, to take on the ugliness of our sin and our shame and to wear it as he was bleeding out, suffocating to death, as the wrath of the God of the universe was being took out on him.

And this is the type of servanthood, this is the type of humility that Christ has for us. all of our dirtiness, all of our shame, he took upon himself and he killed it on the cross so that we could walk with him in the newness of eternal life.

[29 : 50] So we could have not just salvation from our sin, but we could be called into a new life that is completely different than the life before. How we get a new mission, a new purpose, a new identity all through him.

so we have a different goal in mind of what our lives are about. We have a different purpose of what we're supposed to accomplish. And this is the beautiful and amazing thing about the gospel.

It doesn't just rescue us from the judgment of the sin that we have committed. It gives us a whole new purpose. And this purpose involves being like him.

And all the amazing ways of slowly being sanctified. killing our sin, becoming more and more in his image, having a purified heart, and it also means sharing with him in his suffering, in his servanthood.

And as we are empowered to do this by the spirit that he's given us, that he's working inside of us, as we suffer with him in this life that he calls us into, here's the amazing thing about the gospel.

[30 : 58] In Romans 8, verses 16 through 17, it says this, the spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children also heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,

if indeed we suffer with him, so that we may be glorified with him.

See, as humans in our fleshly desires, we do have vain desires for glory, for recognition, for honor, but through Christ, these sinful desires are sanctified, are redeemed, and what we have through Christ is greater than anything this world could offer.

Look at what it says here. We become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. This means that the inheritance that Christ will receive, the heirship that he has, he's giving now to us.

He's giving to us. We receive that through Christ on his behalf, which means all the blessings, all the honor, all the praise of Christ is now in part also for us.

So the glory on this earth that we desire, the vain desires that we have, won't even come close to what we will receive through Christ. We're given dominion and authority over the whole earth to reign with him.

[32 : 23] We get to be called sons and daughters of the living God. We get to have life with Christ, eternal life as it says in John 17, 3, which is knowing him, knowing God, having a relationship with God.

In Christ we get to live a life that is full of joy and full of the fruits of the spirit, even in the midst of all the trials and all the suffering and all the pain.

Because of this great gospel, we have more than we could ever imagine, more than any of our vain desires could even think of. In Christ we have all the glory that we could ever want because we share in his glory.

And this is why this gospel is so amazing. This is why I hope you see that the gospel is so much more than we were destined for hell and now we get heaven, which is amazing.

Don't get me wrong. This is one of the most amazing truths of the gospel. It's how we're rescued from our eternal damnation. But more than that, we are also rescued into an amazing life with him.

[33 : 29] And this is what Jesus here is slowly calling his disciples into. This is what it means to have the joy of the gospel, to live with him, to have joy with him, to serve with him, to suffer with him.

As we do this, as we share in the sufferings of Christ, as we share in serving with Christ, we get to experience this gospel all the more. As we suffer as Christ has, as we endure what Christ has, we get to experience what it means to be like him.

We get to experience the blessings of being with him and for him. As this eternal life that we receive is getting to know God, to know Christ, to walk with him as he has walked, to serve as he has served, to suffer as he has suffered.

We get to see how it is better to serve others than to be served ourselves. We get to see how there's no sacrifice too great to make, no person too unworthy to serve and to sacrifice for because Jesus already has before us.

My encouragement this morning is let's be servants together. Let's lower ourselves together. Let's suffer together. serve as Christ has already suffered and served us and laid his life down for us and let's share in the blessings of the gospel together.

[34 : 58] Let's pray. Father, we thank you for who you are and that you are a God that is so great and amazing and powerful.

Before time began, you set in place this plan for our salvation. God, and you carried that out through the person of Jesus Christ.

God, no words can ever praise him enough for what he has done for us of giving us life, redeeming us from our lives of sin and into a life with you.

So God, as we sing to you this morning, as we head out this afternoon, I just pray that you'd help us to experience life with you. Help us to experience the gospel that would be real to us, that Jesus, the king of the universe, came to die for us.

God, and that we would live lives sold out for you because of it. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Excuse me.

[36 : 37] Why don't we stand up and sing one more song before we leave? In Christ alone, my hope is found.

He is my light, my strength, my song. God, and that we are This cornerstone, this solid ground, from through the fiercest shroud and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are still, when strivings cease.

God, and that we are My comfort, my comfort, my all in all, here in the love of Christ I stand.