

Sermon Notes, Mark 10:32-45, Sunday 29th March 2026

We're used to asking the question: "What do I get out of it?" Loyalty cards (every shop has them). Some, answer is "nothing much". Some, you get real money off, or real treats you'd enjoy. Knock at the door – yet another broadband provider. "What does it cost? What do I get?" Fast / slow. Reliable / flaky? When there are problems: Good customer service / poor.

What about with Jesus? What does it cost? What do you get? How does the cost / benefit analysis work in your head? If following Jesus: How does he improve your life? What is it costing you? Is it worth it? If you're not yet: Maybe you can see what it would cost, and wonder what do you think would be in it for you? Maybe you know what's on offer, but aren't sure he can deliver?

In Mark 10, we meet different people asking that question: What can Jesus do for me? This passage will answer that question. But it will seriously recalibrate our expectations as it does so.

Jesus must suffer, and so will we (32-40)

Read verse 32a. On the march. Jesus striding ahead. Disciples were astonished (such determination). Others tagging along were afraid (they knew opposition was building, Jerusalem wasn't going to end well).

Read verses 32b-34. Most detailed prediction yet. What's new? Jerusalem (won't die fighting in battle, but condemned to death). Romans will kill him (handed over to Gentiles). And extra details about how he will suffer.

Those details explain for us (for the first time) *why* Jesus had to suffer and die. Going up to Jerusalem. Isaiah 52 comes before the famous chapter 53, "when the Lord returns to Zion". God's rescue happens as God comes to Jerusalem. Then there's the way he's treated: Isaiah 50:4-9 (third "servant song"). Jesus is saying he will suffer as the servant of the Lord from Isaiah 40-55, who dies to bear his people's sin.

Jesus must suffer. And so will we.

James and John. Want a blank cheque. (Picture a child, "I need to ask a favour, but before I ask I need you to promise you'll say yes!") Jesus already knows, wants them to say it out loud. Out they come with it. To their credit, they believe Jesus is a king headed for glory. Maybe think next king of Jerusalem. Not so good: They want to be number 1 and number 2. Most important people in the kingdom.

Don't know what they're asking, at so many levels. So Jesus asks verse 38. Old Testament language. Cup of God's wrath. Isaiah 51 (which we heard read), God will take the cup out of the hands of his people, and put it into the hands of God's enemies instead. Jesus is saying he will drink the cup. He'll become God's enemy for us. He'll take the cup of God's wrath out of our hands, and drink it himself.

Baptism: In secular use the word meant to be swept away and overwhelmed by disaster. The picture of a deluge is another OT picture of the judgement of God.

Still don't know what they're asking. No, they can't do those things. They are all going up to Jerusalem, but only Jesus will die for the sins of the world.

But because they're associated with him, they too will suffer. Not the same for everyone. James executed in Acts 12. John died an old man. Need to get our expectations right. Used to be a song about the victory of Jesus: "In his presence, our problems disappear". I think I know what the song meant. As you come to pray, your problem get a whole new perspective. But they really won't disappear. Follow Jesus, your life is wrapped up with the one who suffered and died. You're signing up for more trouble. It could cost you friendships, closeness with family, parts of the world imprisonment and death.

We may suffer, but that doesn't mean God owes us. Verse 39. James and John will suffer. But that doesn't mean they've earned those prime positions. Parable of the labourers in the vineyard. People who'd worked all day in the blazing sun thought they should be paid more. They weren't, and it all felt unfair. In fact, the vineyard owner was paying a really generous wage, so no it was unfairly generous. It's easy for us to feel that way: We've paid our subscription, done our time, so why don't we get what we paid for? But Jesus' kingdom is all about grace. We will suffer if we follow the suffering servant, but that doesn't mean God owes us. "I've worked so hard, suffered so much, and there's nothing to show for it." That really eats you up. Instead God says, "I just want to be generous to you, is that OK?"

Jesus served, and so must we (41-45)

Suffer, verses 32-40. Serve, verses 41-45.

We might think, "at least Jesus has a 10/12 success rate". Verse 41. "Indignant" is a strong word. They're absolutely furious. Same word as in verse 14. Jesus was absolutely furious the children were being kept away. The other 10 were furious that James and John got in first. "That's not fair. They should have left him to choose. They've put ideas in his head now. He's less likely to pick us!"

The other 10 are just as bad.

Jesus always knows what we're thinking, so he reminds them of how political leadership goes. It's intense. They make the most of the fact they're in charge. Those who hold rank know the benefits, and they make full use of them.

Not in Jesus' kingdom. We are to be different. This is about how we use our greatness. We thought about this last week. The mark of true greatness in Jesus' kingdom is that we serve. We walk into every situation, asking the question: "How can I help?"

Why is this how the great ones behave? Verse 45 tells us. Read verse 45 ("for / because ...").

Partly, Jesus is the Son of Man. God's great king from Daniel 7. He is the greatest of all time. If even he came as a servant, greatness won't look any different for us.

But our service is even more tightly tied to what Jesus did than that. We get more insight into why Jesus had to die. "Ransom for many" is another echo of Isaiah.

“For many.” Read 53:12. Isaiah says the servant “bore the sin of” many. Jesus translates that as “a ransom for” many.

Familiar with the idea of a ransom from hostage negotiation. Someone wealthy is kidnapped and the kidnappers hope a ransom will be paid. Ransomware is software that locks you out of your computer in the hope you’ll pay the criminals money. In 1190, Richard I was kidnapped by Duke Leopold V of Austria. The ransom was set as 150k “marks” of silver, roughly 35 tonnes. Equivalent value today: about \$3 billion. It was paid!

In the ancient world, the context was slavery. Someone could be captured in war, stolen to be a slave. Then someone else could buy you back. Jesus’ death paid the ransom price for our freedom. He paid for our sin. That means he’s paid for us, so we now belong to him.

Read Verse 43. Jesus says, “do you want to *become great*”? Then you need to become a servant. Let Jesus buy you out. Then you’re free, but you’re free to serve him. He paid the ransom for our sin. That means we serve king Jesus, and in his name we serve others.

Conclusion: What do you want me to do for you?

We started by asking what following Jesus costs, and what we get out of it.

In the Bible reading, Jesus asked two people the same question. Verse 36, verse 51.

Imagine Jesus appears to you in a dream and asks you that question. “How can I help? What would you like me to do for you? Ask me: What would you really, really like?”

The two answers were so different. James and John, the sons of Zebedee: “We want to be the greatest. We want to be known. We want to be loved. We want to be popular. We want to be important. We want a reputation. We want people to know who we are.”

Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. Verse 47, “have mercy on me”. Verse 51: “Rabbi, I want to see”. “I need mercy, and I need the gift of sight”.

What do you want Jesus to do for you? If you want him to make you great, you don’t know what you’re asking. If you want him to pay you back for the hard yards you’ve put in, you don’t know what you’re asking.

If you want mercy, if you want him to pay your ransom, then that’s why he came. He will serve you, and he will give you your heart’s desire. He will serve you and buy you back, then you’ll be his servant, and he’ll use you to serve others too.