

The Twenty-Second Sunday of Pentecost

October 25 2015

**Prayer of the Day:** Lord, keep your household, the Church, in continual godliness and set us free from all adversities that, under your protection, we may serve you with true devotion and holy deeds; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia! For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. Alleluia! (Ephesians 2:10)

**Sermon Text:** Mark 10:35-45

He says it three times! *Three* times! I mean, Jesus has to repeat himself over and over and over again just so the disciples can begin to grasp what he, the Son of Man, comes to do.

Over these past few months you have heard what Jesus said. One time, Jesus and the twelve disciples are walking to a certain city. On the way there, he reveals to them that: "*[T]he Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again*"

([Mark 8:31-32](#)). Then the second time, Jesus again is walking with his disciples and he prepares them for Good Friday. "*The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise*" ([9:31](#)). Then he repeats it again! In the words right before today's reading, Jesus says: "*We are going up to Jerusalem, [...] 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*" ([10:33-34](#)). Jesus has to say the same exact thing *three* times!

**Mark 10:35-45**

<sup>35</sup> Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

<sup>36</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

<sup>37</sup> They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

<sup>38</sup> "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

<sup>39</sup> "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup> 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."

<sup>41</sup> When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> 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. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

<sup>45</sup> 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."

Why? How much clearer can Jesus get about what the future holds? Jewish leaders will reject him as God's teacher. They will arrest him. They will beat him, whip his back to shreds, mock and spit on him. Then they will kill him! He predicts all of this— but revealing the future is not the baffling part. What is perhaps the most baffling, mind-boggling, head-scratching matter about all of this is that Jesus even has to repeat himself in the first place! Why does Jesus repeat to his disciples *three* times that he must suffer, die, and rise again?

Because, the words might be easy to understand, but difficult to accept. Because the thoughts of Jesus do not always match the thoughts of us who live in this world.

Today Jesus turns everything upside down from the way that we by nature are inclined to look at things. You see **THE SON OF MAN SERVES YOU!** *giving his life as your ransom, motivating you to serve.*

On the surface, that truth is quite easy to understand. We know what happened on Good Friday and Easter Sunday; we know that Jesus died and then rose again. We know that heaven is our home; eternal life is ours. The Holy Spirit has created that faith in our hearts to trust this fact.

Yet, do we always grasp what lengths Jesus went through to obtain such priceless treasures? You see how the disciples react. Jesus says quite clearly that he will suffer and die, but he will rise again and Peter tells Jesus to stop talking about such bad things ([Mark 8:32](#)). Later on, Jesus repeats that truth and the disciples argue as to who is the greatest in their group ([9:33-34](#)). After the third time— well, Mark tells us.

**Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."**

**"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."**

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**<sup>39</sup> "We can," they answered.**

Once again Jesus reveals God's selfless plan to save the world, but what are the disciples fixated on? What is on their minds? The opposite of suffering! They want Jesus to be a great worldly king! There is no room for suffering in that! Instead, there can only be glory and praise and honor and respect and authority. Whenever Jesus finally sits on a throne, James and John want powerful leadership positions in his government. Even if their upcoming power grab fails and Jesus is arrested— James and John are willing to die as rebels with him.

What makes it so difficult for the disciples to simply accept the fact that their Teacher would be humiliated before the eyes of the world? I mean, Jesus make it explicitly clear (at least *three* times) he would suffer everything we just sang in Psalm 22. Instead of ruling he will be ruled. Instead of speaking, he will be silent. Instead of ordering subjects, subjects will order him. Instead of sentencing punishment, punishment will be sentenced

on him. What makes it difficult to accept such horrific events? Could it be that personal desires are taking the place of God's wants?

After all, by nature, how are people inclined to look at things? Most thinking revolves around what is best for you yourself! You see it all around you. Many are more loyal to a paycheck than being loyal employees who use their God-given talents as a blessing for their company. People speed up right behind you, then aggressively swerve around you— just because they feel you are wasting their precious time! Family life suffers when spouses care only about their own feelings, when parents pamper themselves ahead of their children, and when children ignore their parents. It does not take much to find that the “me-first” mentality is alive and well.

Has that worldly thinking infiltrated your life? That you act only when it benefits you, when it is convenient? Do you stop serving your fellow believers because you feel that the time you have already spent serving has been long enough— and now someone else must step up and do their fair share? (Is that the reason?) Do you almost believe that your years spent in this congregation gives you some kind of seniority, some privilege which means people must ask your permission before any action is ever done? At home— are you slow to admit when you are wrong, slow to apologize, slow to mend relationships— just because the world calls that “weak?”

You know, “me-first” thinking is not frowned upon just for the sake of being bad or because it hurts people's feelings. The disciples repeatedly pushed for positions of power. They were even willing to prevent Jesus from suffering and dying— from freeing you and me from hell— just so they could sit on thrones! That same selfishness can move us to elevate ourselves. That selfishness can compel us to listen to no other voice— the Savior's voice included!

No wonder Jesus has to repeat himself *three* times! By nature we do not want to associate with someone who looks so weak in the world's eyes! Yet, you know, thanks be to God that Jesus is not ashamed to associate with us!

**THE SON OF MAN SERVES YOU!** He is the One through whom the universe is made ([1 Corinthians 8:6](#)). He sits on heaven's throne, receiving the praises of angels, ruling over all things in heaven and on earth with you in mind ([Matthew 28:20](#); [Romans 8:28](#)). Still, he willingly lays aside all power, all glory, all authority so that he can free you from hell.

While on earth, **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.** He tends to those who sick, listening to their cries for help and healing them. When thousands stay into dinner time, Jesus willingly feeds them ([Mark 6:30-44](#)). Even hours before his death, the God-man puts a towel around the waist, kneeling down to wash the feet of his disciples— those he knit together in the womb ([John 13:1-17](#)).

Then he humbles himself even lower than that. He serves you— by handing over his body to be punished for your sins. He serves you by enduring God's hatred over sin. He serves you by being forsaken by his God. He does all that to pay your ransom for sin.

God demands that we love him with all our heart, mind, and soul. Those who do not will spend eternity in hell. So, Jesus loves his heavenly Father above any other thing! On the cross, he pays for your sins. He gives what the Father demands so that you do not have

to go to hell. He pays your way out of hell, thereby also paying for our entrance into heaven.

**THE SON OF MAN SERVES YOU!** *giving his life as your ransom, motivating you to serve.* You do not find your identity, your value in how others consider you. Instead, you know that your identity is “child of God.” God has given you everything. You have eternal riches in heaven. You have the peace of knowing that your sins are forgiven. You have the certainty that God has marked you as his child. What more do you need? What more glory? honor? praise? You already have the Creator of the world professing his love for you!

If that is how God sees you now, how do you act now? Such selfless love on the cross *motivates you to serve*— something you already do.

You care for your fellow believers. You take time out of your personal schedule so that you can come here and clean this house of worship. You are giving someone else a clean place to sit or clean facilities in which to worship. You sincerely care about each other’s lives. When someone is sick, you write cards and call them. When someone is troubled, you cheer them up. When someone struggles, you tell them to remember Jesus’ love. Your offerings meet necessary expenses— like lighting and heating and upkeep. Some of your offerings go to congregations you might never visit— but you still gladly give your best so that other people might meet your Savior. You give your time and talents to spruce up flower beds, decorate this building, to maintaining the property. You do all of this because **THE SON OF MAN SERVES YOU!** *motivating you to serve.*

Yes, the temptation is always there to think that serving others is inconvenient to you. You might feel that you have contributed so much time and effort already and that after all these years that it is now time for someone else to step in and take over. Yet, you still serve, not to see what is in it for you, but because you are serving your God.

Think of how you stand out when you serve the needs of others. You stand out when you hold doors for others. Think of how people marvel when you apologize to your family members for harsh words. Consider how drivers who speed by you on the road react when you let them go by. Your selflessness is a powerful testimony to the faith at work inside you and to the Savior who won that faith for you.

When you work, see Jesus in what you do. You see, being a disciple means that you follow in the steps of Jesus. Following him means that you begin seeing things in the same way that he does. You recognize that greatness is not found in the world’s eyes; you do not value greatness according to the standards of the world. Instead, you call “Great” what Jesus has done for you— he has made you great; you are therefore able to do things that are “great” in his eyes.

Jesus has turned everything upside down from the way that we by nature are inclined to look at things. You see **THE SON OF MAN SERVES YOU!** *giving his life as your ransom, motivating you to serve.*