



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Greatest Public Servant

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MARK 10:35-45

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One of the terms that is often used to describe legislators, elected officials, and others who work in government is “Public Servant”. This is an important description to help remind those who work in the capitol that their job is to serve others as they make and administer laws and provide government services.

However, in the world of politics it is easy to get caught up in the pursuit of positions of power, influence, and authority. Pride and ambition are temptations particularly common to life in the capitol

The Bible has a lot to say about what it means to genuinely serve others. As a matter of fact, God’s Word gives us the greatest example of servanthood. As you work in the world of politics where it is easy to get caught up in the pursuit of positions of power and influence, you can learn what it means to genuinely serve others by considering the example of the “Greatest Public Servant”, Jesus Christ.

³⁵ James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³⁷ They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory.” ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. ⁴⁰ But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹ Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. ⁴² Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:35-45

We find in this passage an account that is particularly appropriate for those working in politics. We have two brothers, James and John who are angling and maneuvering for positions of power and authority in Jesus’ coming kingdom. This caused anger and division among the rest of the twelve disciples. Their disagreement is amazing in light of how in recent days, Jesus has been sharing with them that He is about to suffer and die (Mark 8:31; Mark 9:31; Mark 10:33). As a matter of fact, their request seems to take place immediately following His informing them He was about to be condemned to death. In His response, Jesus gives them a stark contrast between worldly and godly leadership, and a dramatic example of sacrificial service.

THE STARK CONTRAST BETWEEN WORLDLY AND GODLY LEADERSHIP (VS. 42-44)

In this passage Jesus gives us a stark contrast between worldly leadership practiced by those who do not follow Him and the godly leadership that should be exhibited by those who believe in Him. The “rulers of the Gentiles” simply refers to those who are not believers and do not follow Christ. Jesus teaches that worldly leaders “lord it over them” and “exercise authority over them”. Worldly leaders seek to gain positions of power and authority through political power plays, audacious ambition, dominant dictatorship, and charismatic control.² This is a perfect description even of our own political system. The party in power makes the rules and calls the shots. Those in positions of leadership make the decisions. There is nothing inherently wicked or sinful about this; it is simply the way the world works. But Jesus makes a strong statement to His followers, “...**But it is not this way among you**”.

Jesus challenges His followers that if they want to great in His kingdom, they do so by sacrificially serving others. He says we are to be *servants* of others, even *slaves* of others. We find that this is the most common description of believers – that of servants. If we are truly followers of Jesus Christ, then we will seek to serve Him by serving others.

In verses 38-39 Jesus talks about the “cup” He was to drink and the “baptism” He was to experience. This refers to the suffering and persecution He was about to experience. Indeed, James and John as

BIBLE STUDIES

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well as the rest of the disciples were going to experience great persecution, even death because of their faith. Jesus is teaching them that the way to true greatness is through sacrificial service to others and through the suffering this will bring about. (2 Corinthians 4:17) Jesus goes on to share His own life and death as a dramatic example for the disciples to follow.

JESUS' DRAMATIC EXAMPLE OF SACRIFICIAL SERVICE (VS. 45)

The verse we want to pay particular attention to is verse 45, *"...The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"*. This verse succinctly lays out the purpose of Mark's gospel – to demonstrate that Jesus Christ was the Suffering Servant. It gives us an outline for the whole book, showing how Jesus came to serve (chapters 1-10), and how He came to suffer and give His life (chapters 11-16).

Jesus deserved to be in the highest position of authority and glory. "The Son of Man" is a title for Jesus taken from Daniel 7:13 often used for Christ in the New Testament. It speaks of God coming to earth in human flesh. Jesus did not come with pomp and fanfare. He did not come to be served. Rather He came to serve others. And not only did He come to serve; He came to *give His life*. We have already noted how Jesus was preparing His disciples for the time when He would be arrested, tried and put to death.

The most amazing truth of this verse is that Jesus came to give His life *a ransom for many*. This is the first time in Scripture we see the truth that Jesus died as a substitute in our place. Jesus did not just die as a good example; He died in our place to pay for our sin. "Ransom" referred to price to buy the release of a slave. Each and every one of us are slaves to sin. We are slaves to the pride and ambition which are so common in life in the capitol. We are slaves to the selfishness which damages and destroys our relationships. We are slaves to the lust which can dominate our thoughts and our actions. We are not only slaves to sin but each of us is under the condemnation of God's righteous judgment upon our sin. Jesus came to serve and to take our punishment upon Himself and pay the ransom for us when He suffered and died on the cross. Peter shared how Christ came to suffer for us as an example (1 Peter 2:21). He goes on to write that Christ **"bore our sins in His body on the**

cross" (vs. 24). Jesus died to pay the ransom and take the punishment for our sin. This is central truth of gospel, indeed, of the whole Bible. When we turn to Christ in repentance and faith, then we are saved and our hearts and lives are changed. We no longer seek to serve ourselves but seek to serve Christ by serving others. Christ indeed gave us the example of the "Greatest Public Servant".

Paul expanded on Jesus' teaching in Philippians 2:

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11

- **JESUS CAME TO SERVE AND DIE AS A RANSOM FOR YOU AND TAKE YOUR SIN UPON HIMSELF. HAVE YOU TURNED TO HIM AND TRUSTED HIM AS THE SAVIOR FROM YOUR SIN?**
- **AS A BELIEVER, ARE YOU SEEKING TO SERVE OTHERS, EVEN THOSE (ESPECIALLY THOSE) ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AISLE OR THE ISSUE?**
- **LIFE IN THE CAPITOL IS PARTICULARLY TEMPTING TOWARDS PRIDE AND AMBITION. ONE PASTOR RIGHTLY SAID YOU CAN TELL IF A PERSON IS SERVANT OR NOT BY HOW THEY ACT WHEN TREATED LIKE ONE.**
- **THE GREATEST WAY WE CAN GENUINELY SERVE OTHERS IS BY SEEKING TO LOVE THEM AND SHARE THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL WITH THEM.**

¹ You can find the parallel records of this account in Matthew 20 and Luke 22.

² MacArthur, John. *How to Be Great in the Kingdom, Pt. 2.* www.gty.org