

Mark 10:35-45

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”

36 And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?”

37 And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at 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 be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

39 They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized;

40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

41 When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John.

42 So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.

43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,

44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.

45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

35 *James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”*

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- In Matthew 20:10, this request was made by Salome, “the mother of Zebedee's children.”
- Jesus doesn't disparage their first request. After all, Jesus is the one who encourages us with “*Ask and it shall be given!*”
- They had heard Jesus speak of trials and persecutions to come, but the thought of glory eclipsed all concerns.
- James and John certainly were key disciples. It may have made sense to them in their limited understanding to ask for key positions, which would include responsibilities as well as privileges.
- St. John Chrysostom excuses the imperfection of their faith. He says, “*The mystery of the cross was not yet accomplished; nor yet was the grace of the Holy Spirit poured into their hearts. Wherefore, if you desire to know the strength of their faith, consider what they became after they had been endued with power from on high.*”
- Coffman differs with Chrysostom by pointing out the error of their ways,
 - (1) *It showed a lack of faith in what Jesus had just said regarding his being raised "after three days."*
 - (2) *It was founded in human vanity and conceit.*
 - (3) *It represented an effort on their part to gain ascendancy over the other apostles.*
 - (4) *It showed a fundamental misconception of what God's kingdom would be.*
 - (5) *It was a selfish maneuver prompted by the Lord's repeated announcement of his forthcoming death and resurrection in which they appeared as desiring the chief places in the presumed absence of the Lord.*
 - (6) *It was a request founded in ignorance (Mark 10:38).*

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 be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”*

- To “drink a cup” is Old Testament imagery for receiving your fill of something—either good or evil. Here, Jesus is referring to the cup of suffering.
- How often we find ourselves out of our depth! How limited are we in perceiving or projecting the Lord’s full plans and purposes!
- James and John rather remind me of children who wish they were adults! All they see are what they imagine are privileges, but they are most often oblivious to the responsibilities and obligations.
- Instead of ridiculing James and John, Jesus uses this as a teaching moment. As Gill points out, even the best of men may be ignorant petitioners at the throne of grace!

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- Boldly they proclaim their willingness to walk with the Lord, yet in a short time they will all scatter.
- I do take heart, however, in their confident determination. While it’s true that they will fall short, I would rather temper the enthusiasm of a believer than try to buoy someone of timid faith.
- The Cambridge Commentary suggests that their words were written in heaven, as James became the first disciple to be martyred, and John grieved the deaths of the other disciples and was trapped for many years in lonely exile.

41 *When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John.*

- Were they angry because of their more complete understanding of Jesus’ call and claim, or because they did not think of it first?!
- James and John already came from higher social position than the others, so this request was probably especially galling.
- If they had known what was coming, perhaps, instead, they would say to James and John, “Go ahead! You take the cup first!”

42 *So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.*

43 *But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,*

44 *and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.*

- The pattern of the world is that people invariably abuse position and power.
- Jesus turns convention upside down by lifting up the ideals of humility and servanthood.
- Simple obedience will grant us a seat at the right hand of Christ—not because we’ve earned it, and not because we actively sought after it,
- Can you imagine the disciples now arguing over which is the humblest servant?

45 *For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

- Our model for Christian behavior is a Lord who emptied himself of power and authority that undeserving sinners might be forgiven and live.