

**MARK**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Mark chapter 10 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Let me share with you this summary of Mark Chapter 10. We are told,

Five people or groups of people came to Jesus in this chapter, each with a need, problem, or question. First, the Pharisees approach Christ, raising the issue of marriage and divorce in a foolish attempt to discredit Christ and His teachings if possible. Second, the disciples try to turn away a group of children brought to Christ by their parents, that He might touch them. The third incident is that of the rich young ruler, who, though outwardly righteous, clings covetously and selfishly to his riches. The fourth group includes James and John, who are aspiring to achieve the highest rank in the kingdom age. Last, blind Bartimaeus cries out for a blessing and is healed. These events transpire as Jesus travels from Perea, east of the Jordan River, to Jericho, en route to Jerusalem.

- James McGowan, The Gospel of Mark, p. 135

So we have a lot of ground to cover this evening. With that said, let's begin reading in Mark chapter 10, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**MARK 10****VERSE 1**

Jesus is moving from His Galilean ministry and He is heading towards Jerusalem, He is heading to the cross to pay the penalty for our sins! And as we have seen in our studies, nothing was going to stop Him from completing the work that the Father sent Him to do!

So as He leaves the Galilee area and is heading southward, He comes to an area called Perea, which was located on the east side of the Jordan River, a place that is called today Ammon, Jordan.

As the crowds gathered, Jesus began teaching them the things of God, as He routinely did. As the crowds grew the religious leaders arrived to try and discredit Jesus, put Him down, cause the crowds of followers to disperse. And we will see their plan as we read on.

**VERSE 2**

Please understand that these Pharisees did not come to Jesus with a question that they wanted clarification on, they are testing Jesus, trying to trap Him and discredit Him. And thus, they came up with this question about divorce, is it lawful to divorce for any reason as we read in Matthew 19:3, **“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”**

And again, it seemed like they have trapped Jesus on this one. No matter what He says, they have him. You see, if Jesus said anything against divorce, adultery, sexual promiscuity, Herod Antipas would have Him arrested as he had John the Baptist arrested and put to death for coming against his lifestyle.

The other side of the coin were the Jews. You see, if Jesus said anything contrary to what Moses taught, they would expose Him as a fraud, contradicting the Words of God that were spoken through Moses.

The Pharisees were testing Him to catch Him, to bring Him down and I am sure they were waiting with excitement to hear what He was going to say so that they could come down on Him and discredit Him among the people or let Herod know what He was saying about Herod's lifestyle! But listen to what Jesus said.

### VERSES 3-9

What is God's plan for marriage? We don't have to guess, Jesus tells us right here and we see that Jesus points them right back to the Scriptures for the answer to their question. And He is pointing us back to the Scriptures and not to how we feel. This is so important today as we have so much false teaching, false information about marriage. We need to look and see what God's Word has to say and not the wisdom of man or the traditions of the church! You see, we can be deceived but God's Word is truth and He puts this right back to these religious leaders, "**What did Moses command you?**"

And these religious leaders knew right where to go, or so they thought. They went back to Deuteronomy chapter 24 and basically said to Jesus, "*All you need to do is fill out the paper work! Once that is done, it is a done deal!*"

In Deuteronomy chapter 24 Moses says you could divorce your wife if you found any "**uncleanness**" in her. Now what does that mean?

Back then they held onto two schools of thought. Rabbi Shammai viewed the word "**uncleanness**" to mean sexual misconduct, he took the conservative view.

The other school of thought came from Rabbi Hillel who said you could divorce your wife for almost anything. It might be for burning the toast, putting that green stuff on her face at night, or if you found a prettier woman! In fact, the rabbis of that day had a saying, “If a man has a bad wife, it is a religious duty to divorce her.” Sounds like today!

So I think you can see which view was the most popular, the liberal view of Rabbi Hillel. And they tell Jesus what Moses said, “**Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.**”

That is interesting to me. They are using the Scriptures to justify their actions. And many do that today but they are wrong! No, the Scriptures are not wrong, but their interpretation of what the Scriptures are saying is wrong.

Look at what Jesus does. He tells them that they are missing the point. You see, God did not intend marriage to be like that but because of the hardness of man’s heart, He permitted it. And we are no different today. Listen to what John Adam and Nancy Williamson wrote in their book, “Divorce: How and When to Let Go.” They said,

Your marriage can wear out. People change their values and lifestyles. People want to experience new things. Change is a part of life. Change and personal growth are traits for you to be proud of, indicative of a vital searching mind. You must accept the reality that in today’s multifaceted world it is especially easy for two persons to grow apart. Letting go of your marriage – if it is no longer fulfilling – can be the most successful thing you have ever done. Getting a divorce can be positive, problem-solving, growth-oriented step. It can be a personal triumph.

- John Stott, Issues Facing Christians Today, p.260

What a sad commentary on marriage and yet, we see that happening today. People get tired and move on to other people and then to other people because it is all about them being happy! You would think that American's would be the happiest people around and yet, because they are not obeying the Lord, they don't have a relationship with Him, they are not happy and they continue to try to fill that God-shaped void in their heart with other things and it is not working!

And what goes on in the world we see going on in the church today, and at alarming rates. We have this idea of self-fulfillment is the most important thing in our life and that is not true. We are to die to self. We are to be holy for He is holy. And yet, we don't see that. Let me share this with you to show you what is going on in the church today regarding marriage and divorce. Lawrence Crabb wrote,

In the last decades or so, we have dignified the shallow appeal of "be happy, feel good" by substituting the more Christian-sounding invitation to find "a fulfilling life" and to become "self-actualized." The joy and peace available to the Christian have become confused with the similar sounding, but very different, idea of fulfillment. This has been seized upon by our sinful natures and translated into a priority on subjectively experiencing this deep joy and a secondary concern with whether the route to fulfillment conforms to God's holy character as revealed in Scripture. In some circles, people warmly speak of fulfillment in relationships to the point where adultery and divorce are acceptable if they enhance one's sense of meaning. "I must be happy, I must express who I am. Don't condemn me to a life of limited fulfillment. Don't box me in with your legalistic morality. Let me be Me. I must do what is best for Me. God wants me to become a whole person, and I cannot be whole within the boundaries of traditional morality."

We have become so conditioned to measuring the rightness of what we do by the quality of emotion it generates that a new version of relativistic ethics has developed that might be called the Morality of Fulfillment. “Fulfillment” has taken on a greater urgency and value than “obedience.”

- Lawrence J. Crabb Jr., *The Marriage Builder*, p. 10

How true that is in the church today and it is wrong. Jesus said the only reason God allowed divorce is because man’s heart is so hard that it refuses to obey God. And in the end, they lose. And you can see that as you look at the death and destruction that divorce brings to family and friends!

Let me share this with you and listen to what the problem is with the situation that is presented. We are told,

A popular Christian blogger recently announced that she’s getting divorced. She knows all the biblical reasons to stay married, and she understands the far-reaching repercussions when Christians divorce. On her personal blog she writes, “I can see why the Scriptures say God hates divorce. It’s not that he hates either of us (although at times, it’s easy to believe otherwise), but he hates what the brokenness of divorce does to the very souls of a man and his wife. He hates what it does to the people who love them. And even the people who maybe they’ve never met.” But, as she says, her marriage is broken beyond repair. ***“We, along with others in our lives, have tried desperately to fix it, to bring it back to life, to see a broken covenant redeemed. But the life is gone, and in order to preserve peace and love in our relationship, our marriage needed to end.”***

- <http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2011/march/when-christians-get-divorced.html>

This woman knows it is wrong, she knows that God hates divorce, she knows how destructive it is, and yet, instead of obedience to the Lord, she is doing what she feels is right! She is doing what will make her happy! And here is the point that I hope you saw in all this, besides not obeying the Lord.

She tried to fix her marriage. Her friends tried to help her fix her marriage, desperately they tried! The life that was there was gone and there was no hope for them to bring back life to this marriage!

That is true folk's, we can't bring life to the dead! But the problem here is that they tried to do it and that will never work. God can bring life to something that is dead, like a marriage relationship, He brought our dead spiritual lives back to life, I think He can handle our marriages!

And here's the thing. The problem is not with God; it is with us! Let me illustrate it like this. Picture in your mind a triangle. At one corner of the bottom part of the triangle is the husband and the other is the wife. Look at how far apart they are!

Now, at the point of the triangle, at the top, is God. When a couple is far from God they are far from each other but as they draw close to God then they draw close to each other. That is exactly what Paul said in Ephesians 5:21, "**submitting to one another in the fear of God.**"

In other words, when you draw close to God you will submit to one another, relationships will be restored. What happens when relationships are struggling is we blame the other person or we pray for God to change them. Maybe we need to pray for our heart in this situation! Maybe we need to draw close to God and God will deal with our spouse or that relationship.

This woman gave up on her marriage relationship. Let me ask you this. Does God ever give up on you? No He doesn't! May we truly seek God's direction in our marriages and do as He commands, not what we want!

And this is always troubling to me. I have heard things like this from Christians, "God just wants me to be happy!" And thus, they get a divorce. The reality is, God wants you to be holy and to drive home that point Jesus takes these religious leaders back to the very beginning, to the book of Genesis to show the first marriage between Adam and Eve and just as God brought Adam and Eve together, He brings couples together!

Here is the example we are to follow, God joined Adam and Eve together to be husband and wife, it was a covenant relationship. Also, it was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve! There is no room for homosexuality, divorce, polygamy for the words used in Genesis and Mark for "**male**" and "**female**" are in the singular, not the plural. God intended these relationships to be for a lifetime!

In fact, the word "**joined**" has the idea of gluing two things together, or as Jesus said that the man is "**joined to his wife.**" Trapp put it like this, "Be glued to her . . . A husband ought to be as firm to his wife as to himself."

This can also speak of being yoked together. I like that. It is like two animals yoked together and they must work together to complete the task before them. When they go in separate directions they are pulling against each other and when you do that, over time, that yoke will be broken and so will their lives!



In Matthew 19:9 Jesus tells us what that provision for divorce is, and it is not a command to divorce in this situation, God is in the business of restoration. Jesus said, “**And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.**”

Adultery is one of the provisions for divorce and if that does occur, reconciliation should be tried before any papers are signed for divorce, as I have said. Now if your spouse leaves you, there is not much you can do about that. But don't make their life so miserable that they leave! Also, if you are married to an unbelieving spouse and they leave you, there is nothing you can do about that. But by staying together that spouse may come to know the Lord. (I Corinthians 7:12-16) I am blessed when I see the love and patience that I see in some marriages where there is an unbelieving spouse. Now Jesus will expound on this a little more as we read on.

#### VERSES 10-12

The Pharisees have been silenced, and now that the disciples have Jesus alone they ask Him once again about divorce. As I have said, there are a couple of reasons why God allows, not commands for a divorce. But if you don't have Biblical grounds for a divorce you are committing adultery! Don't get mad at me, Jesus said it.

Why is this such a big deal? Because this was a promise that you made before God, before your spouse, and before the world! It is a binding promise. Now that does not mean that God doesn't forgive, He does. But Jesus wants us to understand the seriousness of the marriage commitment.

And yes, it may not always be easy but we made a commitment and we need to stick to that commitment that we made. And God will honor it. Marriage is a big deal because for Christians, it is a picture of Christ and His Church, His Bride.

#### VERSES 13-16

It was a common practice to bring your children to the Rabbis to be blessed by them, and I think that is what we see here. As word gets out that Jesus is in town, these parents bring their children to Him. I like that. I think parents have the responsibility to bring their children to Jesus, to show them His love for them just as these parents were doing.

Now keep in mind that Jesus has been busy with teaching, traveling, healing and I am sure He was tired and thus, the disciples, trying to protect Jesus, trying to give Him some time to rest, try to stop this from happening.

I wonder in our zeal for the Lord if we ever push people away? How do we do that? By rules and regulations many times. Be sensitive to people so you can draw them to Jesus instead of pushing them away from Him.

And Jesus rebukes His men for trying to keep the children from coming to Him and He tells them, **“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”**

Now please understand that Jesus is not saying that to get to heaven you have to be childish. Not at all. He is saying that you have to have the faith of a child, you have to learn to trust in Jesus completely as a child trusts their parents!

And what I love about this is that children felt comfortable coming to Jesus. What a wonderful Lord we have!

### VERSES 17-18

As Jesus continues toward Jerusalem a rich young ruler runs up to Him, falls at His feet and asks how he can obtain eternal life. That is a great question. This question is in the aorist tense or it is an open-ended question speaking about something he could do to make his life complete. He expected Jesus to give him some deed for his life that would settle things with God.

That tells me, in spite of all he had, he knew he did not have that kind of relationship with God that he wanted. You see, he had youth, he had money, he had power and yet he still was not complete, he still was not yet satisfied. He was aware of his problem and that is good, and he saw in Jesus what he desired, that joy, peace, abundant life. He is very sincere with his question, not like the religious leaders, but will he be willing to follow through with what Jesus tells him?

We will see the answer to that in a minute. There is one more thing I would like to focus on here and that is what he called Jesus, “**Good Teacher.**” And the response of Jesus is correct, He said, “**Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.**”

Absolutely. In fact, the rabbis believed, and correctly so, that only God was good. So this was something that was well known. One writer put it like this, “There is no instance in the whole Talmud of a rabbi being addressed as ‘Good Master.’” (Plummer, cited in Geldenhuys)

Why did Jesus ask this rich, young ruler this question? I believe that Jesus wants him to think about what he is saying, to draw out his faith. Only God is good and thus, He wanted this young man to think about that. Is he calling Jesus God or are those words just to flatter? This guy is close to getting saved at this point, the angels may have been getting ready to shout and do a heavenly wave. That is how close he was!

But as we will see, you have to get rid of those false gods in your life before you will receive Jesus as God in your life!

#### VERSES 19-22

First of all, we are told in Matthew that when Jesus said that he needed to “**keep the commandments**” and this young man asked “**Which ones?**” he was asking which ones of what the religious leader’s laws does he have to keep, not just the Laws of God. He is speaking of the oral laws or the traditions and not necessarily the Word of God!

And Jesus ignores that and takes him to the second table of the Law dealing with man’s relationship with man. The thing is you can’t have a right relationship with man; a good relationship that is, in which God will accept, without first having a right relationship with God and Jesus shows him that. Self will get in the way of treating others the way God desires!

Now when this rich, young ruler says that “**I have observed [these] from my youth.**” I don’t think he was boasting but he did live a good life, helping others, treating people fairly, a hard worker. In his own eyes he was doing good. It is as Proverbs 30:12 tells us, “**There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness.**” That is man working his way into heaven, clean in his own eyes and yet filthy before God!

Now the reason I say that he did the best he could, is that Jesus doesn't come against his words saying "No you're not!" He did his best but the problem was he wasn't perfect, no matter how good he was, he still missed the mark of perfection! We all do in our own righteousness.

And in Matthew 19:20 we see this man say, "... 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?'" You see, he recognized he still was missing something and he wanted it. He was still lacking something.

And listen again to what Jesus says to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

I am sure at first this man was excited, there was just one thing he was lacking to obtain this eternal life. He was almost there.

And then Jesus hits him where it hurt, his wealth, his riches. Jesus put His finger on the thing that hindered this man having eternal life, it was his god – riches! In Luke 16:13 Jesus said, "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

And Jesus does the same with us, He exposes those things that get in our way of drawing close to Him, and that thing is usually ourselves! He wants what is best for our life if we would only listen and obey.

Also, this man wanted to do for God to enter into that eternal life and Jesus is showing him that doing good is not going to get you in, it will be the thing that gets in the way of entering into eternal life! There is that futility of finding fulfillment or salvation through doing good and yet, for this man, and for many, they refuse to see that eternal life is only found in Jesus – ***THE GOOD TEACHER – GOD!***

And think about this for a minute. This man came with great expectations and left sad because he refused to let go of his god, to let his self-life melt away and follow Jesus.

You see, his stuff was more important to him than eternal life. He left as he came except now he knew the truth and rejected it! We don't know if he ever came to Christ, but how sad because his stuff is all gone now and he has entered into eternal life, but apart from Christ if He didn't receive Him. He was so close! You see, it wasn't that he couldn't enter in, but he wouldn't!

Now Jesus is going to speak of the difficulty of riches, how things get in our way of having a relationship with Him.

#### VERSES 23-27

The disciples of Jesus must have looked like deer in the headlights and He blows them away even more. Jesus tells them it is very hard for a rich man, a person who trusts in his riches to make it into heaven. The problem for the disciples and the Jewish people themselves is they associated riches with the blessings of God. The richer you are the more you are blessed by God.

Now the point that Jesus is making is this, you can trust in riches so much that it gets in your way of salvation. Notice verse 23 speaks of “**those who HAVE riches**” and in verse 24 “**those who TRUST in riches.**” The idea is first you have riches and then you begin to trust in them instead of the Lord, there is no room for Him anymore.

And then Jesus says in verse 24, “**Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!**” I think the contrast here is the dependence of a child upon their parents to provide for them. They don't look to their own efforts to provide.

It is not that the toddler gets up at 6 in the morning, has his cup of coffee and goes to work to put food on the table for the family. The child depends on his parents to provide and they trust in them to provide for them. On the other hand, we see the independence of the rich man. He can provide for himself. He has done these things. He does not need anyone or anything to help him.

Do you see the contrast? The child is depending upon God, trusting in the Lord to provide a way to eternal life. On the other hand, the rich man is trying to work his way in. He is depending upon himself to get in. Thus, a child is more likely to get into heaven, someone with a child-like faith than a rich man.

And to drive that point home Jesus says to His men in verse 25, “**It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.**” Now some miss the point on this. They say that Jesus was speaking of the camel gate or a small gate into the city where it would be very difficult for a camel to get through. But if you pushed hard enough and worked long enough, you could do it.

Not so, that is not what Jesus is saying. He is speaking literally of getting a camel through the eye of a needle, which of course is impossible unless you puree him and pour him through!

You see, Jesus is saying that you can't work your way into heaven, by man's efforts it is impossible, but not with God. God can take the impossible and make it possible, He can bring it to pass! You see, without God none of us could be saved, but with God all things are possible! That means the rich can be saved, the poor can be saved, the educated can be saved, the uneducated can be saved, the tall and short can be saved, all people can be saved because Jesus made it possible!

In fact, remember what Jesus said in John 3:16-21, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”** God’s gift to sinful man, eternal life through Jesus.

In speaking of Jesus, Peter said in Acts 4:12, **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** It is impossible for man to save Himself and thus, God has saved sinful man by paying in full the penalty for our sins on the cross of Calvary. He took our sin and gave to us His righteousness and thus, we can have access to God the Father through Jesus!

#### VERSES 28-31

You have to love Peter here. As this rich young ruler refused to leave all and follow Jesus, Peter reminds Jesus that they have left all and followed Him! These men, including Peter, left their jobs, they left everything to follow Jesus. And most likely, they even lost friends.



So the question he and the other men have for Jesus is, “**Therefore, what shall we have?**” Matthew 19:27. In other words, we left all, now what are we going to get for that?

Here’s the thing. You can’t out give God. When you give to Him He will give back to you. Maybe you have noticed this, you can’t serve others without getting something back, some blessing that God has for you.

God blesses us abundantly above all we could ask or think. And yet, if God never gave us another thing for serving Him besides eternal life, what more do we need? There is nothing greater than that, spending eternity with Jesus. You will never lose when you put Jesus first, the problem comes when we don’t!

Now let me also say this. When Jesus says, “**who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time – houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life**” many have taken this to unbiblical conclusions.

Let me give you an example to show you how bizarre this really is. Gloria Copeland in her book “God’s Will Is Prosperity” said,

“Give \$10 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000. I know that you can multiply, but I want you to see in black and white how tremendous the hundred-fold return is.” She goes on to say, just so you don’t miss her point, “Give one house and receive one hundred houses or one house worth one hundred times as much. Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane. Give one car and the return would furnish you a lifetime of cars. In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.”

- Gloria Copeland, God’s Will Is Prosperity, p. 54

Think about it for a minute. This is not to be taken literally, it wouldn't make sense. Jesus promised us one hundred mothers, brothers, sisters, children! Kind of crazy and why not one hundred persecutions? The health, wealth and prosperity teachers seem to leave that one out!

Think of it like this. When we come into the family of God we have family all over the world. Maybe that is the thought here. And when we come into the family of God we do see persecution with our family, with our friends, our co-workers and-so-on. I think that is the idea here.

And in verse 31 we see that Jesus concludes with a response to Peter's question, "*What do I get for giving up so much?*" The problem with that kind of thinking is it is coming from a wrong heart attitude. You don't give to get, you give out of love and God honors that kind of giving.

Too often today we see people looking at God as some kind of cosmic stock-market or genie in a bottle. That if you invest in Him He gives good returns. Or if you rub the magic lamp a certain way, you will get three wishes! That is the wrong heart attitude. I didn't marry my wife because of what I could get from her, but because I love her and I am blessed at how she does take care of me, not because she has to, but because she loves me.

We need to approach God that way, just giving to Him, serving Him out of love. You see, if you look at God in the way the rich young ruler did, you will walk away unchanged and unsatisfied. You need to serve the Lord freely with no strings attached and God will bless you. In fact, we all obtain salvation if we come to Jesus and the first will be last and the last first, I call that a tie!

I like the way Spurgeon summed this up. He wrote, “In the final account, it shall be found that no man has been a loser through giving up anything for the Lord Jesus Christ though he has his own method of deciding who are to be first and who are to be last.” And again, I think it is a tie!

As we read on we will see that Jesus continues towards Jerusalem, crossing over from the area of Perea on the east side of the Jordan River towards Jericho on the west side of the Jordan River and then on towards Jerusalem, to the cross of Calvary! That is what is ahead for Jesus!

#### VERSES 32-34

This is interesting to me. As they are traveling to Jerusalem we are told that the disciples of Jesus were not only amazed but they were also afraid! Why are the disciples of Jesus **“afraid,”** or paralyzed with fear?

Because Jesus was heading towards Jerusalem and they knew there was only trouble there as the religious leaders wanted Jesus dead. And if things got more out of control, they might come after them as well.

Also, remember that Jesus warned them before what was going to happen when they went to Jerusalem, and thus, they were afraid and yet, they still followed Jesus. What a great example for us as the Lord leads us. We may be afraid, but may we follow where He is leading!

Now as much as these men were afraid, Jesus is not moved by this, His face is set to go to Jerusalem and nothing was going to stop Him. It is as Isaiah 50:7 says, **“For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.”** You see, Jesus knew that salvation would not come without the shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary. Thus, nothing was going to stop Him from completing this work. And the disciples were **“amazed”** at His determination, how nothing was going to stop Him from going to Jerusalem, even the persecution and ultimate death that awaited Him there!

And to calm their fears I guess, Jesus tells them what is going to happen, just what they thought and caused them to fear in the first place! In Jerusalem, the religious leaders, the Sanhedrin would arrest Him, they would condemn Him to death, but since they lost the right of capital punishment, they would turn Jesus over to the Romans, the Gentiles, and they would mock Him, beat Him, and then put Him to death.

But, on the third day He was going to rise from the dead, but they didn't hear that part. In John 12:27 Jesus said **“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.”** Jesus was trying to comfort them, take away their fear by telling them the things that would take place, but they didn't hear Him.

Also, in Luke 18:31 we are told, **“Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.’”**

In other words, check out what the prophets said of the Messiah and if they did they would see that Jesus was the fulfillment of what they said, even His death and resurrection! He is trying to comfort them.

As we look at this world we can easily get discouraged and I think Jesus is trying to comfort us by giving to us the things that would transpire in the last days, how bad it would be, how dark it would get before He returns so we can have peace during these days we are living in. In other words, don't lose hope, you have been warned of these things!

#### VERSES 35-37

As they are coming to Jericho, some 15 miles from Jerusalem, James and John pull Jesus aside and ask if He would grant them whatever they wanted. That sounds like a loaded question and it truly was, but at least they realized Jesus had the power to do it.

Keep in mind that Jesus just spoke of His coming persecution in Jerusalem, His death and then resurrection and what are James and John thinking about? The Kingdom Age and their position in the Kingdom, they want to be the big shots, sitting on the Lord's right and left hand! They wanted the place of honor, and that was the seat on the right. The place of second honor was the seat on the left (I Kings 2:19, Psalm 110:1). They asked for the two most prestigious places in Jesus' administration. They still didn't get it!

And it is even worse than what we have read here for in Matthew chapter 20 we are told that they got their mama to help in this situation. Salome was the sister of Mary, so James and John were first cousins to Jesus. (Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, John 19:25). They thought they had the inside track because they were family. They missed the lesson Jesus tried to teach them so He is going to repeat it.

VERSES 38-41

Jesus gives them something to think about. You see, they had no idea what it meant to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Keep in mind that in verses 33 and 34 Jesus spoke of death! The cup He is speaking of here is God's judgment upon sin.

Thus, Christ was going to lay upon Himself the sins of the world, and receive the judgment or penalty for those sins. We can't do that. Also, to be baptized speaks of immersing. Jesus was totally given over to do the Father's will, immersed in the work, the mission He was on, moving towards the cross and Jesus is asking James and John if they could do those things.

And they feel that they could drink the cup, be baptized with what Jesus was baptized with. And, in a sense, they were. You see, Jesus tells them that as followers of Christ they will endure persecution just as He did.

It is as Jesus said in John 15:19, "**If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**" So don't be surprised when the world comes against you or tries to bring you down. Paul told Timothy "**Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**" II Timothy 3:12.

As these other ten apostles are listening and watching all that is going on, as they witness what James and John were doing, they became upset, angry, they too wanted positions of great honor and these guys beat them to the punch, even getting their mama to ask for them.

These were the ones that Jesus prayed all night before He picked them and they are now to carry on the work after Jesus is gone. That gives me great hope that God can use me, He used them!

As we read on we will see Jesus correct them about these positions of honor and lording over people. Listen to what Jesus said because we need to hear this as well.

#### VERSES 42-45

Here we see that Jesus, dealing with 10 angry men and 2 disappointed men gives them instructions on how they are to minister and it is vastly different than what the world is telling us. He shows them that in the world there is great emphasis on power, authority, positions, domination, but that is totally worldly, they were to be servants of all and not lord over the people!

If you want to be great in God's kingdom, if you want to be first in God's kingdom then you need to learn to be a servant of all! That is crazy, to be first I need to be last, I need to be a servant? That is exactly what Jesus is saying!

You see, the word "servant" in verse 43 is the Greek word DIAKONOS and it means a hired servant. And it came to mean in the church a deacon or a person who cared for the physical needs of the people.

Then, in verse 44 Mark speaks of a "slave" or in the Greek DOULOS, a bonds slave or someone who freely gives up his rights to serve others. Thus, true greatness, true power in the eyes of Jesus is serving others while dying to self.

Now for some, they may think, "That is not fair. That is not right! I'm in charge here and they need to listen to me. It is my way or the highway!" You may feel that way, but you are wrong.

Now I am not saying that God has not placed people in charge, we may be in charge over others. That is not the issue. The issue is this. Are you lording over them or are you being an example to them?

Again, like it or not, Jesus drives the nail into the coffin of lording over people in verse 45 when He told them, and us, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

You see, Jesus is our ultimate example of what it means to be a servant. The word **“ransom”** is the Greek word LYTRON which means *“the price of release”* and it refers to a payment for the release of a slave or captive. It also carries with it the idea of a substitution.

In other words, Jesus exchanged His life, He took my place so that I may live. And the lesson that Jesus is giving to these guys who were so interested in power and positions, is you need to give your life to others if you want to be great in God’s kingdom!

The church is not to operate the way the world does and yet, when you look at churches today, they are like corporations and they are run that way! But Jesus is saying that we need to look at His example, the example of Almighty God who became a servant, willing to sacrifice His life for us, and we must do the same. A heavy lesson in a world that is focused so much on self, on power and Jesus is telling us to be a servant of all! May we listen and obey!

#### VERSES 46-52

Jesus is heading to Jerusalem, time is short, Passover was coming and the cross was clearly in view. And they were in Jericho and now they are departing this beautiful oasis in the desert to get to Jerusalem.



Keep in mind that Jericho was about 15 miles from Jerusalem located near the northern end of the Dead Sea, about 1,000 feet below sea level. That means this walk up to Jerusalem was difficult because Jerusalem was 2,500 feet above sea level and in that 15 miles you were going to climb some 3,500 feet. But nothing was going to stop Jesus from completing the work that He was sent to do!

In the crowds of people who were watching Jesus go by was blind Bartimaeus, a beggar, and upon hearing all the noise wanted to know what was going on. And as soon as he heard it was Jesus, he cries out at the top of his lungs for Jesus to have mercy on him and heal him. Now this man calls Him **“Son of David”** which is a Messianic title.

Think about this, those who could see were blind to this reality while blind Bartimaeus recognized the Messiah! And he is crying out for Jesus to help him, have mercy on him, he wants to see!

Now Mark and Luke only mention one blind man and they give to us his name, Bartimaeus. Matthew speaks of two men. I know what you are thinking, “Great, another contradiction?” Again, check it out. It may be as simple as this. Bartimaeus may have been the more vocal one, and thus, they just focused on him!

And think about this. As he cried out he was making such a commotion that the people tried to silence him, stop him from crying out to Jesus for help! May we never get in the way of people who are seeking Jesus by telling them to keep silent. May they ask those questions; may they seek those answers from Him.

For blind Bartimaeus, as the people tried to silence him he cried out even more. This man refused to be silenced for he knew that only Jesus could heal him, so he continued to cry out to Jesus for help!

Now think about this for a minute. Huge crowds lined up in the streets, lots of noise and Jesus hears the cry of someone in need! That is our Lord, He hears our hearts cry and He responds to our hearts cry! God will always hear our cry, no matter how loud the noise around us is. And we need to listen to what He is saying to us, not let His voice be drowned out by the crowds!

So as Jesus calls for this man to come to him, the crowds call for Bartimaeus to rise up and they bring him to Jesus. And as he rises up he tosses his garment aside. This cloth or garment was used to collect the money that people would give as he was begging. Why did he throw it away? Because he wasn't going to need it anymore!

What is interesting is that in verse 51 Jesus asked this blind man, “**What do you want Me to do for you?**” Now that is strange. I think I could guess that one, he is blind! Why did Jesus ask this man this question? Make no mistake about it, Jesus didn't need this information. But it was for this man to speak what was upon his heart, to stretch his faith and to ask the impossible from God. He desired to see.

And we see that not only was this man physically healed, he could see, but he was spiritually healed, his spiritual eyes were opened. After that he followed Jesus. Where was Jesus going? To the cross, and this man is there, following after Him. It is as Jesus said in Mark 8:34, “**... ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’**” That is the key, deny the flesh, die to self, and follow Jesus.

Think about this. Jesus was not going to pass through Jericho again, He never came that way again as now He is heading to Jerusalem, to the cross, to die for our sins! If Bartimaeus had not responded at that time, he would not have had another chance to be touched by Jesus, to be healed. Today is the day of salvation, don't pass it up!