

What Makes for Great Leadership in the Kingdom of God?

Devotional #20, Mark 10:32-52

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up 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 do 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 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 And they said to him, "We are able." And 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 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

⁴⁶ And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." ⁵⁰ And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." ⁵² And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

- Mark 10:32-52, ESV

Why does it seem like we are so often not paying attention when God is trying to teach us the most important lessons? The disciples certainly had this problem. Jesus told them in Mark 10:33-34 about how He would be betrayed, unjustly condemned, beaten and killed. James and John missed the whole rejection and suffering lesson and instead asked Jesus if they could sit on His right and left hand sides in glory. Jesus' mind is on the coming cross and they are thinking about glory and positions of power for themselves.

So Jesus, ever the patient teacher, takes the opportunity of James and John's misguided request to teach the disciples about what makes for great leadership in His kingdom. The disciples

obviously had not been paying attention to the way Jesus was serving the people - healing, blessing, teaching, casting out demons. They still thought of leadership in terms of position, power, and prestige and not in terms of humility and service.

Jesus actually says that the first place among His followers would belong to the one who was a slave to all. For free Jews living under Roman occupation, the idea of voluntarily making themselves like slaves was horrible to consider. They wanted more freedom, not less, They wanted a higher position, not a lower one.

But in leadership, as in all of life, Jesus Himself must be our model. "*The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*" We would have no hope, no life, and no salvation if Jesus had thought of position, power, and prestige instead of serving and meeting the needs of His people. Those of us called to leadership - in our homes, in our communities, in our workplaces, or in the church - must have the same mindset as Christ and ask, "How can I serve?" instead of "How can I be served?"