

## Servant Leadership- Nigeria

Thank you all for coming this morning, it's good to see you here. My goal is to speak to the things you need to hear and having your questions help me to understand what you need to hear and think about. This morning I want to talk about what it means to be a servant leader and specifically I want to go through Mark 10:35-45, so if you have your Bible's please turn to Mark 10:35. In this, Jesus Christ is saying what the difference is in leaders between the Jews and the Christians. If you go to the Sermon on the Mount, He talks about what the Jewish leaders are like, they stand on the corner, raising their hands praying to God. Not to be heard by God, but to be seen by men. When they decide to kill Jesus Christ, because it is the leaders of the Jews who first decide to kill Jesus Christ, they do it because they are jealous, they do it because they are envious, they do it because they want to get a name for themselves rather than to bring glory to the name of God. This is what everybody thought was righteous in religious practices, what you were supposed to do. You were supposed to serve God so you would have the best seat on the stage, that if you went to a feast everyone made sure you got the best portion. They made the worship of God about themselves. Even the disciples were like this, which is what we see in verse 35, "Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.'" I want you to ask yourselves the question, why do you follow Christ? Is it so you can get whatever you ask? Is it so you get what you desire? Or do you serve God so that He gets what He desires? We know what He desires, He tells us in the New Testament exactly what He desires. He desires a people that are holy, He desires a people who worship in spirit and in truth. When you come to Christ do you say, 'God what do you desire?' or are you like James and John saying, 'Give us what we desire.' This is what it looks like to be an Old Testament saint, where you are a Jew trying to faithfully follow God, where you are a Jew that believes Jehovah is God, but you don't have any power to glorify God instead of yourself. Yesterday I was preaching and I preached on Ezekiel 36 because it tells us why God sent the Holy Spirit. He says, I didn't send the Holy Spirit for you, I sent the Holy Spirit for Me, I sent the Holy Spirit so there would be a holy people for Me. The Old Testament saints, David committed adultery with Bathsheba, David murdered a man, even a man after God's own heart made it about Him. But Paul in 1 Corinthians 6, said in the new covenant there is nobody that is saved, that has the kingdom of God, is an adulterer, there is no one who is a murderer, no one who is a thief, because God sent power to His church. God fulfilled the promise that He promises in Ezekiel 36, that He will produce a people that are about giving a holy people to Him. James and John say, what do we get? That is a sin for a new covenant believer to say, they didn't understand who God was fully for them to say it because the greatest at this time according to Jesus is John the Baptist. What does he say? He must decrease so Christ increases. I must decrease so God increases. What does Christ continue to say about John the Baptist? The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is. John the Baptist is the greatest born among women, but the least who is born of the Holy Spirit, the least that has the Holy Spirit abiding in him, he's greater than John the Baptist. As we consider what James and John said, how they wanted themselves increased, in the rebuke that Christ gives them, understand how much more serious that rebuke is to us if we have the Holy Spirit. We do not make religion about us and that's the fundamental concept from which everything else flows. Verse 36, "And He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?'" Christ asked this and their response to Him was, "Grant us that we may sit, one at Your right hand and the

other on Your left, in Your glory.'" Where's their focus? It's on receiving part of God's glory. They didn't ask how they could glorify Him, they said the kingdom of God is like every kingdom in the world. You're going through an election now and everyone is lobbying for which position they can get, what power they can get and Jesus Christ says that's not how it's supposed to be. That's not how the leaders of My kingdom behave. Then He explains what it takes to sit at His right hand and left hand. Verse 38, "But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'" This is how you get glory in God's kingdom, you make the same sacrifices Christ made. In 1 Peter 3, it says when you are abused by the government you submit to the government anyways because that's what Christ did. Then you are drinking the cup He drank. If you want to have true glory in the kingdom of God, you bring glory to Christ by doing what Christ did, that's how you sit on His right hand and left hand. Not trying to get the applause of man, but doing what's pleasing to God the Father. We know what is perfectly pleasing to God the Father because God has given us what happened to Jesus Christ, He's given us how He walked in holiness and faithfulness, He's given us how He walked with God, He's given us that even though He knew God's perfect will He would still pray to the Father. We know that when people reviled Him He would not revile in return, we know that He loved His enemies, He wept over Jerusalem the night before they killed Him and He knew they were going to kill Him. You want to be great in the kingdom of heaven, important in the kingdom of heaven? Don't seek the applause of men, be pleasing to God the Father. Suffer punishment so God's name is glorified. Every single Christian has to lay down his life, that is what's required to be saved. He who loses his life will save it, you must be born again to enter heaven. Every single Christian needs to do this which means every single Christian needs to make their life about God rather than themselves, every single Christian needs to give up their desires to do what God desires. He who does not lay down their life will lose it. In the last day they will stand in judgement and God will say, "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." But I'm not talking to every Christian, I'm talking to people who God has given authority in the church. He has given authority over His precious bride, the one that He came to earth to die to save. If this is what He requires of every Christian, how much more do you think He requires it of someone He has given leadership, a position of authority? How much more do they have to lay down their lives? How much more do they need to demonstrate that it's not about them, it's about God. Verse 39, "They said to Him, 'We are able.' So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized.'" We know what happens to James, we know what happens to John; at least we have a lot of ideas. In Acts it talks about how James was killed, by the Jews for the same reason Jesus was killed by the Jews, because James was causing people to glorify God that Father and the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted the glory for themselves. What is your ministry about? Is it about your glory? Because you want people to say you are a man of God, there's the Reverend Father, there's the pastor? Do you want them to glorify you or do you see your ministry as glorifying God? James and John did not do this until the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them, but the Holy Spirit raised up faithful leaders in the church, men who would indeed drink the cup Christ drank, who indeed were baptized with the baptism He was baptized with. God still does that with the true leaders of the church, He still makes them living sacrifices, but He mixes in that mix men that are wolves among the flock like it says in Acts 20. What is your desire? If the desire is for yourself rather than to strengthen the flock, rather than to glorify Christ, rather than you give to Him what He wants- a holy people that will worship Him in spirit and in truth- that's the difference

between a faithful elder and pastor and a wolf. Wolves are about themselves, that's what they are like. Wolves will even attack each other, they have no loyalty except to themselves, that's why God uses that as a picture of an elder, a false pastor, because all they are is about themselves rather than being about God and His will. Verse 40, "But to sit on My right hand and My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." Those who are great in the kingdom of heaven are not great because they are seeking a position of greatness in the kingdom of heaven. They are great in the kingdom of heaven because God chose to use them and drink the cup He drank, be baptized how He was baptized. God chooses who will be great, what we do is be faithful with what God has given us. Look at the other disciples in verse 41, "And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John." They all looked and said, 'how come they are able to talk to Christ and ask for this position?' All the other disciples were envious of James and John. I'm not sure they would have been so envious if they knew what Jesus said, they were going to be put to death too, they were going to suffer, they were going to drink the cup Christ drank. Instead, they said they wanted the position. Is there envy among your churches? 'I wish I had more members so the giving would be better', 'Their building is nicer', or 'I want to be the chairman of the DCC'. This is what the other disciples were like and this is not pleasing to Christ. Do you reject where God has you and think your position would be greater or with more honor? It is God that gives the position, it is your command to be faithful where you are, it is your command to be faithful to strengthen the sheep God has given you. God does tell us how it works that others get greater positions, in God's eyes greater position because in your eyes it may not look like a greater position. He says those that are faithful in little will be given much. Think of the chief shepherd, one who is wise and cares for his sheep. He splits his flock among under shepherds, who is he going to give more sheep to care for? The people faithfully caring for the sheep he has been given or the person who says he has been a great under shepherd so give me more sheep? Those who are great in the kingdom of heaven are those who truly care about God's sheep. Let me make sure you understand something here, He doesn't say to care for the goats around you, He cares for His bride and His sheep. If you spend all your time caring for people with no relationship with God, that's not being faithful with what God gave you. He cares for His sheep and let's be clear, every congregation that is a true church has a mixture of sheep and goats. Think of the parable of the virgins, there's ten of them and they all look holy, they all look like they are prepared for the coming of Christ. Every one of them have their wedding dress on. This is not the people in your congregation that look and act unsaved, these are the people who look and act saved. When Christ comes, 5 out of 10 have the Spirit of God. Understand that every congregation is a mixture of sheep and goats, but if you don't even care that the goats look like goats rather than sheep then you are not being a faithful servant because part of a faithful servant of God does what James and John did. He went to those who looked like goats and said they must repent and believe because the one who wants to be great in the kingdom of God, he wants to have a bigger flock. Not a flock of goats because it's not hard to get a flock of goats, tell them what they want to hear, tell them how great they are, never confront them about their sin and you can be great in the kingdom of goats, but you're nowhere in the kingdom of God. God came to save His people; He appoints shepherds to shepherd His people. It doesn't matter how many people are there on a Sunday morning, the question is, when Jesus Christ comes how many will He say to, "Well done My good and faithful servant."? That's what matters. Saying things in your pulpit that drives off goats is not displeasing to God. At the time of the Old Testament when you had a lamb, it was very hard to tell the difference between a lamb and a kid of a

goat, they actually looked a lot alike so in Matthew 25, when Jesus talks about separating the sheep and the goats, now you drive down the street and it's easy to tell the difference because they breed for certain properties and they look very different. They did not look different then, they looked the same until they got older, then you could look and say that was a sheep or a goat. You never wean those who are in your flock. If you never take them from the milk of the Word to the meat of the Word like it talks about in Hebrews 5, if you just keep them as little babies, you won't know if they are sheep and goats because when you try to mature them by giving sound teaching, when you give them the difficult things in the Word of God, that's how they mature, that's how you are able to say that man is a goat or a sheep and that's how you build the kingdom of God. The problem with that is that your church might shrink, the visible people who come on a Sunday morning might be fewer, but God is not rescuing goats, that's not the purpose of the church of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the church of Jesus Christ is to rescue sheep and grow them and mature them. That's the job of elders and the pastors. If you just want a position, don't think you have a position in the kingdom of God. If you just want to serve, you might be surprised how great your position in the kingdom of God is. Who do you want to be pleasing to? Do you want to be pleasing to God or do you want to be pleasing to men? A true servant wants to be pleasing to God and not to men. Verse 42, "But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.'" Do you want to be an elder, do you want to be a pastor because it gives you authority, because it gives you power? Jesus Christ is drawing a distinct line between what the kingdom of God looks like and what the kingdom of the world looks like. The kingdom of the world wants power for power's sake, they want power because of the blessings of power. People pass you in the street and say, 'Oh Father', 'Oh pastor'. Instead of saying God has given me authority to build His kingdom. The question is, do you focus on the fact that you have authority for your own glory or are you filled with fear of God because He has given you that authority to do certain things for His bride who He loves? Think about a young man who is going to get married so he gives 50,000 naira to a representative of his to go buy all the clothes for her so he can get married. Instead, he takes that 50,000 naira and he spends it for his own pleasure. Is that groom going to be very pleased with him? If that groom has all the power, what should his servant expect? If God gives you power, He didn't give it to you for your sake, He gave it to you for the sake of His bride. The authority that He has given, He has not given it so you can be applauded or feel good about yourself when someone says you gave a wonderful sermon. He gave you that power and authority for the sake of His bride. If you think it's for your sake you should be terrified of the wrath of God. Last time I was here in July I spoke on Ezekiel 34, go read Ezekiel 34 and think about what God does to faithful servants, servants who He gave power to but they use it for themselves. This is a picture over and over in the gospels, He uses this with the Jews. There's a plot of land and God prepared it, He set His vineyard there and He says to Israel to come and produce fruit for His vineyard and they don't produce any fruit, they think the wine is for themselves. They don't give any of it to God, so God sends His servants to tell them they better give Him the crop. He says, 'If you don't give me the crop, I am going to kill all of you.' He does it again and again and then He sends His Son because He says, 'Surely they will give My Son what He is due.' And what do they do instead? They don't give the Son, the Heir the property either. God has given them a vineyard to produce fruit, they produced no fruit, they rebelled against God, and God says He will kill every one of them. He judged Israel for a reason, there's a reason the Jews are a byword and watchword through the nations because He is telling us this is what

He does to people who are not faithful. He says, I will give this vineyard to another, I will give it to the church because the church will produce fruit for the kingdom, it will produce righteousness, it will produce holiness. If you think you are taking what God has given you and instead of using it to produce holiness, to produce righteousness, joy, and peace, then you should be very afraid because God gave that vineyard to the church to produce specific things. Look at what God did to the Jews because they did not do it. 1 Corinthians 10 says it's all examples for us so that we can look and are filled with fear at the idea that God has given us authority and we are not using it for why He gave it to us. Gentiles want authority for authority's sake, but Jesus says it will be different among us. Verse 43, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant." Do you desire to be a servant? It works in this priority level, we desire to be a servant of God, we truly should desire to be a servant of God. Let's not use the language of the NKJV, if we use the Greek, the word would be "slave", that's the word that is actually in Greek. If we are a servant of God, we are not a slave of others. What's the purpose and thought of being a slave? It's not about me, it's about my master; I'm not here to seek my own wants, I'm here to do my master's will. Jesus Christ is saying if you want to be great in the kingdom of God, go be a slave, go suppress your desires, goals and aspirations and make it about building up other people. Think of Peter, Peter was the outspoken one; he was the one who, as much as James and John, made it about himself. He's the one that lied three times when Jesus Christ was being tried, but after the Holy Spirit came upon him, he became a slave of all. He was willing to go to prison in order for others to be saved. He is told by the Sanhedrin to not preach the gospel and he goes and preaches the gospel, not because He wanted to be killed by Christ, but because he wanted to produce fruit, because he was willing to lay down his life for others. Consider Paul, a mob surrounds Paul and wants to kill him. The Romans come in and decide they should protect him so they come in and drag him out and he says, 'whew, I got out of that'. No, what he says is, 'I need to go back and preach to these people. Even though they tried to kill me I need to go back and plead with them to come to Christ.' Those who are great in the kingdom of heaven, they consider the work of God greater than themselves, totally different than how the Gentiles are. The Gentiles want applause; the true faithful servants of God want healthy sheep. Which is a better description of you? Verse 44, "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all." Is that a description of your ministry? That's what it means to be a servant leader, that's what it means to be a faithful elder, a faithful pastor. Are you there to serve the people of God? Are you a Gentile who is there to serve yourself? Fear God. Those who are wolves lose, they may even look in this life like they win, they might look like they have all these people following them, but they have all these people who say they are a great man, but if they have been standing in front of people their entire lives saying this is what God says, they will spend an eternity in hell thinking how they knew the truth and what would set them free and they will spend eternity in absolute darkness, absolute pain where their flesh is being burned, where worms are eating their inside, pain greater than any of us can ever imagine with the absolute knowledge that it will never end. All the time they will be thinking, I knew the way of salvation but I didn't do anything about it, I lied to all these people and made them twice the sons of hell that I am. That's what their thoughts will be for eternity while they are experiencing greater pain than anyone can fathom on this earth. False shepherds will receive their wages, they will be great, but the greatness will be they will be the greatest at receiving judgement in hell. Those who are great in the kingdom of God are not like that, they are the slave of all, they follow in the steps of Christ. Verse 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.” Who deserves the greatest position? Maybe the One though whom the whole world was created? Don’t you think He deserves the greatest position? When He came to earth, He came riding a donkey, He came riding in as a King that everyone was supposed to bow down to Him for He was the Creator of every single one of those people. Instead of bowing down to Him they rose up against Him, instead of being a blessing to Him, they plotted to kill Him. Even as they plotted to kill Him, for three years He went from place to place and healed them, for three years He took the lame and made them whole, for three years He took the diseased and made them well, for three years He took those who were blind and made them see, for three years He took those who were dead and made them alive. He says you will do greater works than those. This is what an elder’s role is, to preach the gospel so we don’t take the physically dead and make them alive, but we take the spiritually dead and make them alive. We don’t just take those who are physically limping, pastor’s come alongside those who are spiritually limping and they heal them and strengthen them. God promises that His true shepherds will do greater works than He did on this earth because He didn’t come to be served. Even when they came and were going to kill Him and laying traps for Him so they could put Him to death, He still served, He still preached the gospel. He was a slave to all and He did it to give His life a ransom for many. Are you so concerned about the comfort of your life, the honor that you receive, or do you look at your life and say it’s been given a ransom for many? He poured out His life for His sheep. Do you think you are important or do you pour out your life for the sheep? This is what it means to be a servant, it means to follow in the footsteps of Christ. It doesn’t mean to pretend to follow in His footsteps, it means to actually follow. Are you using your life as a ransom for many? It’s hard, we have to care for people who don’t care for you, we have to confront people in their sin when they don’t want to hear it, you have to preach the Word when it’s out of season, but that’s what it means to be a servant, to be a leader in God’s church.

Let me pray, Oh Lord God, I do lift up these men that are here. I pray that You guide them to understand the things that I have said, not because of my words, but because of Your words. Let them understand the truths of Your Scripture. Convict all of us of where we fall short, convict all of us where we are selfish for we are short-sighted. Lord, You have been very gracious to everyone in this room in that You have given us a position in Your church. May we faithfully serve her; may we faithfully serve You. May we take the authority that You have given us and use it not to make ourselves great, but to make Your name great through the world. Lord, we have all failed in so many ways. Lord, I pray that You pour out conviction upon us today, let us see where we fall short and give us the strength to overcome, the strength to repent and do Your will and not our own. Make us like John the Baptist, where we constantly say our ministry is about us decreasing so You increase. We can only do this with Your strength Lord. We thank You that You have given us the Spirit of Power so we can overcome, we can do Your will. Lord, may Your Spirit work in us and change us and strengthen us. We ask this in Your precious Son’s name, amen.