

Not To Be Served, But To Serve.

Text: Mark 10:32-45

1) Jesus served

Suggested Hymns:

2) Jesus teaches service

344, 354, 361, 283, 376

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 10:32-45, ³² *Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him:*

³³ *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; ³⁴ and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”*

³⁵ *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³⁷ They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.” 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?”*

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; ⁴⁰ but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.”*

⁴¹ *And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. 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. ⁴³ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ And whoever of you desires to be first 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.” (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem,” that is the solemn announcement on this Sunday morning. We are standing on the threshold of the Lenten season. That is the season of the church year when Christians everywhere will again in spirit go up to Jerusalem to see the suffering, dying Son of God, redeeming mankind.

We learn what Paul writes of Jesus in Philippians 2:5–8, ***5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.***

Many people will come to faith, or will be strengthened in their faith as they hear this message anew. Many people will also — and this is the point in our text — become minded like Christ, that is, willing to render service. Let us note that service is uppermost in the mind of Christ. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Jesus Served

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He knows exactly what awaits Him and tells His disciples, ***33 “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; 34 and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.*** All this Jesus must face, and so He tells His disciples.

While the disciples are dismayed and while the crowd following Him are afraid, Jesus takes the lead and resolutely proceeds to carry out His Father’s will. He had come into the world to perform the definite work of redeeming the world. The time to complete this work was now at hand. Nothing can turn Him from His course.

Although He fully appreciates the tremendous cost, the Saviour enters the final conflict willingly and confidently. We read in John 10:18, ¹⁸ *No one takes [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*

Jesus explains the matter to His disciples in our text, *the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.* Jesus proved this throughout His life on earth. He *“went about doing good.”*¹ He healed the sick, the lame, the blind, He fed the hungry, and He comforted the sorrowing.

Even in the hours preceding His death Jesus continued to serve. On the night of His betrayal He washes the disciples’ feet — an example of humble service. He heals the ear of Malchus. He defends His disciples against the mob: *“if you seek Me, let these go their way.”*²

He looks at Peter, who had denied Him, and with that look reclaims His erring disciple. He prays for His tormentors. He provides for His mother. He comforts the criminal on the cross with the certain prospect of paradise. Truly, Jesus *“came to serve.”*

But Christ’s service goes much further: *“The Son of Man ... came to give His life a ransom for many.”* He came not only to alleviate evil, but to “take away” the cause of all trouble — sin.

That required service which only Jesus, the Son of God and Mary’s Son, could render. We read in Psalm 49:7–8, ⁷ *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him —* ⁸ *For the redemption of their souls is costly.*

The Saviour Himself declares: *“You have burdened Me with your sins.”*³ He must drink the “cup,” submit to a “baptism” of blood. To redeem mankind *“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*⁴

Christ took upon Himself the form of a servant and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to redeem men. His life He gave a *“ransom for many,”* very many indeed — all the people who ever lived. As Paul states it: *“Who gave Himself a ransom for all.”*⁵ And the success of giving His life as a

ransom is attested by His resurrection: “[Christ] was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.”⁶

In view of what has been said, how can people still speak of Christ’s death as an example or a pattern only? His death was not merely a pattern for noble dying, but the price of life. “By His stripes we are healed.”⁷ Do you believe that?

Can you confess with Luther: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death”?

Jesus always served unselfishly, and perfectly. He served to redeem us, to atone for our sins, and to obtain life and salvation for us.

2. Jesus Teaches Service

Now, Christ’s followers should be like Him. True, ours is not the work of redemption, but we can and must show that we have accepted Christ’s redemption.

Out of gratitude, we can and must follow His example of service. Our work is sanctified by faith in Him. We serve the Lord with gladness, like children, not slaves. This is the Christian way, the way Jesus trod, the way we must follow so that we might enter into glory with Him. The life of Christ’s followers, too, must be one of unselfish service. A difficult lesson, indeed! Patiently Jesus teaches it.

The Redeemer had been speaking about His unselfish service, and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, make their unreasonable and selfish request. “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.”

With minds still set on a worldly kingdom, they sought political recognition. One wonders that there was no quarrel between them as to who should have the right and who the left seat of honour. They did not consider whether these places might not with greater propriety be given to someone else. Nor were the other

ten disciples without guilt. ⁴¹ *And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.*

You see, they, too, were ambitious. The Lord, however, wanted them to understand that positions of honour do not come as a gift, but must be deserved.

And yet, what a common desire to want the position without the work, the honour without the obligation! It is like a boy who would like to be the manager of a bank without beginning as an office boy. Another person would like to be a great pianist without practising scales. Many a youth imagines that he can be a hero without undergoing the hardships of battle.

Desiring to gain the prize without the cost, that, says Jesus, is the attitude of the world. Who are accounted great on earth? Those who rule, or “lord it” over others. Domineering over others and exploiting others for one’s own selfish ends is a worldly objective.

Might, cunning, and deceit the world regards as right. *“The spoils to the fit”* is its slogan. This spirit breeds race and labour problems, develops the superman or super-race conceit. It breeds dictators who dream of world dominion and enforce insane orders through their secret police. Of the Gentiles Christ says in our text, *“You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.”*

⁴³ *Yet it shall not be so among you,*” continues Jesus. A different rule prevails in our Redeemer’s kingdom. It calls for a “cup,” a “baptism,” a humble service that may cost much. What tragedies might have been avoided in the world and in the Church had people always heeded Christ’s warning!

People lust for power, position, honour, and wealth — and millions are killed, millions starve, millions of homes are destroyed; heartache, misery, and woe engulf the world.

Nor can we forget the havoc wrought in the Church, too, by worldly greed, arrogance, and ambition. When would-be followers of Christ no longer obey their Master, but usurp His place and selfishly seek only their own glorification, they become tyrants who oppress the Church instead of serving it.

“Adopt My standard of greatness,” Jesus would say, *“not that of the Gentiles.”* *“Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.*

44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. How different from the world's standard is this doctrine of seeking not empty acclaim, but opportunity to serve!

Jesus teaches greatness through humble service. We read in John 13:14, ***14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*** And in Luke 9:48, ***“Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; For he who is least among you all will be great.”***

Do you ask, *“How shall we serve?”* Like Jesus we, too, are to take into account the material welfare of our fellow men. The opportunity to help and befriend others is always there. How tremendous is that opportunity today, there being millions impoverished, stricken with disease, and crippled by war!

Such service is not always accounted great by worldly standards. It may be rendered in the form of an encouraging word, a cup of cold water, a crust of bread, a widow's mite. As one preacher stated it: *“Make the world better. Heal a wounded heart. Dry a tear. Give someone a full unearned measure of love. Teach someone how to love and serve.”*

Our main concern, however, is the spiritual well-being of our neighbour. Christ does not call us to idleness but to work in His vineyard. We are to go out into all the world and make disciples of all nations by baptising and teaching. We are to bring forgiveness of sins, life and salvation to others.

Alas, how much potential service lies dormant in the Church! How few church members really testify of the hope that is in them! How few are willing to work! How few give as God has prospered them! How few reflect God's glory in their lives!

Are we ready and willing to serve? Jesus says in Matthew 25:40, ***‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’***

The Apostles learned to serve unselfishly and to sacrifice. They became fearless witnesses, and heroic martyrs for Christ.

Peter, who once had advised against service,⁸ now could write: ***“Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”***⁹

Paul referred to himself as “the servant of Christ” and “your servant for Christ’s sake”; ***“I have made myself a servant to all”*** he says.¹⁰

The Lord seeks your service, too. He has work for you to do, whoever you are and whatever you do. Do you say, *“Such service is difficult”*? It certainly is!

But recall how resolutely your Saviour faced Calvary, never losing sight of ultimate victory, so follow in His steps. Loving Him, who died to set you free, you cannot deny Him your service. Always tell yourself, *“He suffered and died in my stead that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.”*

And though your service here below remains imperfect, let this fact comfort and encourage you that you will, at last, render Him perfect service in heaven.

Let us conclude with the words of the hymnist,¹¹

Jesus, master, whose I am,
Purchased Thine alone to be,
By Thy blood, O spotless Lamb,
Shed so willingly for me,
Let my heart be all Thine own,
Let me live to Thee alone. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Acts 10:38

² John 18:8

³ Isa. 43:24

⁴ Gal. 4:4-5

⁵ 1 Tim. 2:6

⁶ Rom. 4:25

⁷ Isa. 53:5

⁸ Acts 10:9-16

⁹ 1 Peter 5:3

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 9:19

¹¹ Hymn 376