



## [Suffering and Service Mark 10:35-45]

Welcome to Bethel! Today we continue sermon series in the Gospel of Mark entitled “Quotation Marks.” Our goal in this series is to see the life and words of Jesus Christ as told by the life of Christ.

I remember several times in my life driving on vacation and seeing a building that looked as if a tornado ripped it from its foundation and placed the edifice upside down. This fascinated me as a young man because the image is completely out of place.

I later researched and found that these topsy turvey buildings are Wonder Works family theme parks located throughout the USA: Pigeon Forge, Orlando, Branson etc. These buildings are strikingly, in a brilliant marketing maneuver, **out of place: upside down in a right-side up world.**

Today we are reminded by the Messiah that the Kingdom of heaven is not like anything you have ever seen. The Kingdom of God is a building, which appears upside down in a right-side up world. The truth is, **the kingdom of Heaven is a right-side up kingdom in upside down world.**

**An Upside-Down Kingdom: Suffering, Sacrifice and Serving**

**Read [Mark 10:35-45]**

### **An Upside-Down Kingdom: Suffering and Sacrifice (10:35-40)**

**Ask** In Mark 10, we find the age old question: God, I want you to do whatever I ask of you. *How often do we approach the Holy One with similar motivations?* Here is our optimism, this morning, this imposition emanates from one of the inner circle: the disciples. They were asking Jesus for a blank check. Maybe you have not asked Jesus for a blank check? However, our true desires are betrayed by the way we pray: Lord, I will \_\_\_\_\_ if you do this for me (stop sinning, go to church, give, live obediently, etc).

This me-first approach to Jesus, self-centered righteousness, implies that you have some claim on Jesus because **He owes you**. The intrinsic understanding is that if we live a faithful life in obedience to the Messiah, then we have the right to ask whatever **we** wish. However, the call of Christ is **an upside down call- Him first. It is a not my will but yours life.**

The question of James and John is a reminder that **we are often quick to claim the benefits of God's kingdom but slow to hear the costs of participating.** What are you asking of God today? What do your prayers say about your commitment, your faith, and your participating

in the kingdom of the Lord? **If all of yours were answered in an instant whose kingdom would be gloried? His of yours?** Are you praying and asking as if it matters in eternity?

**Inverted Kingdom** Remarkably Jesus encourages their bold request. They, presumably both brothers, ask to see seated at the right and left. This is a request of status and honor. The right was always considered the place of honor and the next best position was the left, even though bad news, unwelcomed events and even ill omens emanated from the left position. The Latin word for sinister literally means “left.” **The brothers hoped to honor Jesus while honoring themselves.** Who are you honoring?

**Jesus Said** you don’t know what you are asking. **Anyone wishing to share the glory of Jesus Christ must be willing to first share the sufferings.** The cup is a symbolic reference to the cup of the new covenant and a reminder of God’s wrath poured out on sin (Ps. 75:8; Isa 51:17; Lam. 4:21). Baptism is an image of being overwhelmed by disaster or danger (1 Pet. 3).

**I Drink** The use of the present tense “I am drinking” is dramatic: it speaks of an experience already begun (Mann, 412). **We have forgotten how to sacrifice.**

On a September day in 1939 German troops invaded Bielsko Poland. For the next three years Gerda and her family lived in a Jewish Ghetto. That changed when Gerda’s parents were sent to the death camps. Gerda would spend three years in a Nazi concentration camp, followed by a 350-mile death march that she somehow survived. When she was liberated by American troops, Gerda was a sixty-eight-pound skeleton. And in what must rank as one of the most improbable love stories ever, Gerda married the soldier who found her, Lieutenant Kurt Klein.

Today you will find six glass towers at the Holocaust Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts, representing the six extermination camps where six million Jews lost their lives. Five towers tell the story of unconscionable cruelty and unimaginable suffering, but the sixth tower stands as a testimony to hope. Inscribed on it is a story titled "One Raspberry," written by Gerda Weissman Klein.

*Ilse, a childhood friend of mine, once found a raspberry in the camp and carried it in her pocket all day to present to me that night on a leaf. Imagine a world in which your entire possession is one raspberry and you gave it to your friend.*

What would cause a hungry child to give up a prized source of nourishment? Because her friend shared in her sufferings. **Upside-down living. How precious is “Good News” in a concentration camp.** *Oh that we would be like Ilse. **The way of the cross is the way of sacrifice.***

The presence of Jesus Christ does not prevent His own from suffering. Even more, His presence **prepares us to suffer.** Without Christ, you are not prepared. The Gospel is about the way of the cross, as an expression of Christology and discipleship.

The way of the cross is the denial of self for the sake of the Savior. Radical upside-down living rejects me-first approaches to Jesus.

1Pet. 4:13 Instead, rejoice as you **share in the sufferings** of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.

Peter, the Apostle, was famously martyred for his faith on a cross. When given the sentence he requested that the cross be placed upside down—for he did not count himself worthy to die as his Lord. **Are you living upside down?**

## An Upside-Down Kingdom: Serving (10:41-45)

**Not so among you** Jesus rejects the current traditional model of greatness. The **Greek** verbage is remarkable and is present tense (10:43). What Jesus describes is not an admonition to **behave** in a certain way as much as he is **describing the way things are** in the Kingdom.

When you submit to Jesus as King, you commit to a life a service in the Kingdom. This is the way things are. **The Kingdom of the cross is the way of service.**

### Service

At no place to the ethics of the kingdom of God clash more vigorously with the ethics of the world that in the matters of power and service (Edwards, 325). In a radical departure from cultural teachings, Jesus ignores the greatness of power, prestige, and celebrity and dialogues concerning the greatness of service. **The kingdom of God is built upon service to God.**

**Upside Down Kingdom mindsets** Jesus shows us that our idea of “**greatness**” is not always rooted in the gospel. We are still prone to stinking thinking. Whoever wants to become great must be your servant. **Great (Megas)- a large quantity, or status — ‘much, big, great, extensive. Men think Status, Disciples think service.** James and John had the **mega-man complex**. They wanted to be big.

**Kingdom impact and greatness is not about you but Jesus. Greatness in the community of heaven is not defined by title or talent but humility and servanthood.**

**How do you serve in the Kingdom?** Jesus subtly reminds us that we do not set the parameters of how we serve. The Savior shows us the way.

Two sheriff’s deputies thought they were responding to a routine call, but when they arrived, the situation required more than what they’d initially thought.

The call mentioned a traffic hazard in the middle of the road, in the form of a wheelchair. When the deputies arrived on the scene, they did indeed find a wheelchair—and an elderly woman inside of it. The battery in her electric wheelchair was dead, leaving her without power to even finish crossing the road.

They initially offered her a ride, but the wheelchair was too heavy to fit inside their patrol cruiser, and its battery pack meant that folding it up was a non-starter. The only thing left to do was to offer to push her chair the mile long journey home. Which is exactly what Deputy Montanez did, while his partner Deputy Chapman followed closely behind.

**Upside down living. Servants answer the call, to pursue the Kingdom. Are you ready to answer the call today?**

## Conclusion

**Upside down kingdom: Self-Denial and Suffering.** We have forgotten how to sacrifice. Even worse, we assume that Jesus doesn't require, or will never ask us to sacrifice for the one who gave it all.

"I bless you, Lord, because you have deemed me worthy of this day and hour, to take my part in the number of martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, for "resurrection of eternal life," among whom may I be received in your presence this day as a rich and acceptable sacrifice –Polycarp as he was dying for his faith.

**Are you willing to give it all today?**

**Upside down kingdom: To serve and give his life as a ransom**

**Ransom:** an idiom, literally 'to give one's life' to die willingly, with the implication of it being for some purpose — to pay your price/grant your release.

*Jesus' death on the cross bought and paid for your salvation. Your life-debt was paid in full. Will you today run to Jesus? He is the only way, the only truth and the only life. What is this world coming to? It's coming to Jesus!*

# Notes

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**Mark 10:35** James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, “Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask you.” **Mark 10:36** “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked them.

## Want

These brothers could be seen as classic examples of blind ambition. They “masked their request.” The form of question implies that those who asked thought they had some claim on Jesus (BWIII, 286).

They were asking Jesus to sign a blank check. It is self-serving, callous toward Jesus, and an offense to their comrades (Edwards, 321).

They are quick to claim the benefits of God’s kingdom, but slow to hear the costs of participating in it (Edwards, 322).

**Mark 10:37** They answered him, “Allow us to sit at your right and at your left in your glory.”

## Right

The principal place of honor was always considered to be at the right hand, and next in honor the place at the left, even though bad news, unwelcome events, and even ill omens were thought to come from the left. In latin sinister = “left” (Mann, 412).

The brothers hope to honor Jesus while honoring themselves (Edwards, 322).

**Mark 10:38** Jesus said to them, “You don’t know what you’re asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink or to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

Anyone wishing to share the glory of Jesus Christ must be willing to first share in the sufferings.

## Cup

As a synonym for suffering, the expression is found in 14:36. In the OT the word is used both of joy (Ps 23:5) and suffering (Ps 75:9, Isa 51:17-22) (Mann, 412).

The cup is surely a reference to the cup of God’s wrath poured out on sin (Ps. 75:8; Isa 51:17; Lam. 4:21).

## **I Drink**

The use of the present tense “I am drinking” is dramatic: it speaks of an experience already begun (Mann, 412).

## **Baptism**

Although the word is not found in the OT as meaning suffering, the idea of water as symbolizing disaster is often found (Ps. 42:7; Isa 43:2).

Baptism is an image of being overwhelmed by disaster or danger (1 Pet. 3). John’s baptism was of course associated with God’s wrath and repentance but in a different way (BWIII, 287).

## **Are you?**

With Christian hindsight we may assume that Jesus’ question in v.38 was intended to be rhetorical: of course no one else could share his unique role of redemptive suffering. But at the time the cup and the baptism would not appear in that light. For James and John they represent a regrettable but necessary hurdle on the way to glory (NIGTC, 417).

Jesus’ response is surprising and seems to undermine the point of his previous question: even if they fulfill the conditions he has set down, their request still cannot be granted (NIGTC, 417).

**Mark 10:39** “We are able,” they told him. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.

**40** But to sit at my right or left is not mine to give; instead, it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

## **We are able**

Disciples of Jesus do not decide to accept or reject hardships on the basis of the future rewards accruing from them. They accept suffering on the sole basis that it is the way of Jesus (Edwards, 323).

## **Death**

While the death of James is recorded in Acts 12:2, we have no certain information about the fate of John. The testimony of Papias can be summarized as follows:

1. Papias in the second book says that John the Theologian and James his brother were killed by the Jews.
2. Two calendars both use Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> as the commemoration of the martyrdom of James and John the apostles at Jerusalem.

**Mark 10:41** When the ten disciples heard this, they began to be indignant with James and John. **42** Jesus called them over and said to them, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. **43** But it is not so among you. On the

contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

### Not so among you

A New model. Jesus rejects the Gentile model. The Greek verb is remarkable in this statement. The best evidence suggests that it is the present of the verb “to be” not the future. It is not an admonition to behave in a certain way as much as a description of the way things actually are in the kingdom of God, and even among disciples of the kingdom (Edwards, 325).

To fail in being a servant is not simply to fall short of an ideal condition but to stand outside of an existing condition that corresponds to the kingdom of God (Edwards, 325).

### Service

At no place to the ethics of the kingdom of God clash more vigorously with the ethics of the world than in the matters of power and service (Edwards, 325).

In a radical departure from cultural teachings, Jesus ignores the greatness of power, prestige, and celebrity and dialogues concerning the greatness of service.

**Matt. 20:24** When the ten disciples heard this, they became indignant with the two brothers. 25 Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. 26 It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**Great (Megas)-** 59.22 μεγαζα, μεγαλη, μεγα: a large quantity, involving extent — ‘much, big, great, extensive.’

**Servant- 1249.** διακονος diakonos; of unc. or.; a servant, minister: —deacons(3), minister(7), servant(10), servants(9).

Greatness is not defined by who you are but who you serve.

Greatness is not defined by who you are but how you serve.

**To Serve- 1247.** διακονεω diakoneo; from 1249; to serve, minister: —administered(1), administration(1), cared for(m)(1), contributing to the support(1), deacons(2), do the serving (1), employ in serving(1), minister(3), ministered(2), ministering(3), servant(1), serve(5), served(3), serves(5), services he rendered(1), serving(3), take care(m)(1), wait on(1), waited on(m)(3).

**Several** days later (John 13) Jesus powerfully modeled servanthood when he washed the disciples feet at the last supper. It was a breathtaking deed. The Midrash taught that no Hebrew, even a slave, could be commanded to wash feet (Hughes).

# Illustrations

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## Foxes Book of Martyrs

The Actes and Monuments, popularly known as Foxe's Book of Martyrs, is a work of Protestant history and martyrology by John Foxe, first published in English in 1563 by John Day.

Foxe's own title for the first edition (as scripted and spelled), is *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, Touching Matters of the Church*.

In March 1563, Foxe published the first English edition of The Actes and Monuments from the press of John Day. Day's epitaph reads: "He set a Foxe to write how martyrs run/By death to life. Foxe ventured pains and health/To give them light: Daye spent in print his wealth,/And God with gain restored his wealth again,/ And gave to him as he gave to the poor." [28] It was a "gigantic folio volume" of about 1800 pages, about three times the length of the 1559 Latin book. [29] As is typical for the period, the full title was a paragraph long and is abbreviated by scholars as Acts and Monuments. Publication of the book made Foxe famous; the book sold for more than ten shillings, three weeks' pay for a skilled craftsman, but with no royalty to the author. [26]

Each of the six towers represents a major Nazi death camp: Majdanek, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka, Belzec, and Auschwitz-Birkenau ...

On September 3, 1939, German troops invaded Bielsko, Poland. A fifteen year-old girl, Gerda Weissman, and her family survived in a Jewish ghetto until June of 1942. That's when Gerda was torn from her mother, kicking and screaming. Her mother, Helene, was sent to a death camp. Gerda would spend three years in a Nazi concentration camp, followed by a 350-mile death march that she somehow survived. By the time she was liberated by American troops, Gerda was a sixty-eight-pound skeleton. And in what must rank as one of the most improbable love stories ever, Gerda actually married the soldier who found her, Lieutenant Kurt Klein.

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In the dashcam footage of the event, Chapman is heard teasing his partner. "You can pick it up, you're only going like one mile an hour."

## Application

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The presence of Jesus Christ does not prevent His own from suffering. Even more, His presence prepares us to suffer.

Without Christ, you are not prepared.

The Gospel is about the way of the cross, as an expression of Christology and discipleship.