

April 28, 2019

Mark 10:35-45

Serves

The Request (Mark 10:35-39). The passage for this week's lesson begins with an unusual request. Two disciples, James and John, said to Jesus, "Allow us to sit at your right and at your left in your glory" (Mark 10:37). Wow! At first glance, this seems like an arrogant request, especially to believers today. Study of the culture of that day reveals, however, that boasting or thinking of oneself was not uncommon. In fact, as an example, on more than one occasion as recorded in the Gospels, you find the disciples discussing who is the greatest among themselves. So, boasting was simply part of the cultural fabric.

What is somewhat strange about this request, though, is the timing. Jesus had just finished telling the disciples, for the third time, that the Son of Man was going to have to suffer when they arrived in Jerusalem. Jesus explained that "they will hand him over to the Gentiles, and they will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days" (Mark 10:33-34). Right after this prediction, Mark tells us that James and John made their request. One wonders if they fully understood what they were requesting from Jesus. Even Jesus Himself 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?" (Mark 10:38). They claim they are able! (Mark 10:39).

The Reaction (Mark 10:39-41). After hearing their response, Jesus affirmed that James and John would indeed drink the cup that He would drink and that they would be baptized with the baptism that He would be baptized with (Mark 10:39). What did this mean for James and John, though? In the context of the passage, it indicates that James and John would suffer for their faith as Jesus Himself was going to suffer in Jerusalem. In reality, church history indicates that both men did suffer for their faith. Acts 12 describes the fact that James was martyred by King Herod. Decades later, John was exiled to an island called Patmos because of his faith. So, they both suffered for their faith. With respect to their petition to be seated with Jesus when He came in His glory, however, Jesus told them that it was not up to Him to determine. The privilege of being seated in those seats, Jesus explained, goes "for whom it has been prepared" (Mark 10:40).

When the other disciples heard what James and John had asked of Jesus, Mark stated that "they began to be indignant" (Mark 10:41). The Greek term translated "indignant" here is a word that reflects their anger at James and John. As the following context suggests, though, their anger was not over James and John's selfish request, but over the fact that James and John made the request before they could! The attitude of the disciples prompted Jesus to take this moment to teach them about having a servant's heart.

The Ransom (Mark 10:42-45). What should the mindset of the disciples be? According to Jesus, they should not treat people as the Gentiles leaders do. These rulers "lord it over them" and "act as tyrants over them" (Mark 10:42). The practice of the disciples was to be just the opposite. The one who desired to become great needed to become the servant; and, the one who wanted to be first needed to be the slave to all (Mark 10:44). Instead of the Gentiles, the pattern

for the disciples to follow was Jesus Himself. Jesus explained that He “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). That perspective certainly would set the followers of Jesus apart from the normal individual of that day. Likewise, in our day, it continues to set followers of Jesus apart. Jesus came to serve; we should likewise serve.