

Mark 10:35

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[0 : 00] This we pray with thanksgiving in Jesus' name. Amen. Just to mention again, for those of you who missed the announcements, as you go out, there are things to sign up for for Holiday Bible Club.

So it's happening at the end of this month, different things that are needed. But also, Ballerina is going to be sitting at a table, we're hoping in September, to get going. The greeting, different people involved in that, and the welcome router, and creche and refreshments.

They are great opportunities to serve. And so some of you weren't even in the church when we were last doing these things. And we want to encourage you, if you can, if you want to ask more questions, ask Ballerina or myself, or others.

But we'd love as many of the church regulars to be signing up for that as possible. It doesn't need great skills. We'll find other people who can do the great skills.

But if you're willing, we would love it. None too young. Well, some too young on some things. But we do want you to please do think about whether you can volunteer for that.

[1 : 11] We're going to sing Psalm 62. Psalm 62. My soul finds rest in God alone. And during this hymn, we're going to take up an offering for the Lord's work.

So far, in God alone.

I will walk through my salvation. My voice is still against my bones. And I will not be shaken.

For it's made by sun-castled fingers. And rise like arrows beneath me. I'll fix my heart on righteousness.

I'll look to him who hears me. Oh, praise him. Hallelujah. My delight and my reward.

[2 : 22] Everlasting, ever-fading. My Redeemer, my God. I'll ask my soul in God alone.

Amid the lost temptations. When evil seems to take a hold. I'll come to my salvation.

The riches come and riches go. Don't set your heart upon them. The fields of hope in which I sow.

I'll be stead in heaven. Oh, praise him. Hallelujah. My delight and my reward.

Everlasting, ever-fading. I redeemer my grace. I redeemer my God. God set my pace on God alone.

[3 : 28] And trust in him completely. Will every day pour out my soul. And he will prove his mercy.

Though I'm without a beating breath, a sign to bring to measure, my King has crushed the curse of death, and I am His forever.

Oh, praise Him, hallelujah, my delight and my reward, everlasting, ever failing, my Redeemer, my Lord.

To sit. Turn, if you will, to Mark chapter 10. If you've not got a Bible, I think there's ones just as you come in there, but Mark chapter 10, verses 35 to 45.

It's August, and so Donald Smith, Donald, who worked with us for a couple of years, he's going to be down next week, and he's going to preach for us, I hope. And so I thought we'd do a couple of weeks on looking at some of the basics of the Christian life.

[4 : 41] Why did Jesus come? So with our Bibles open before us, Mark 10, 35 to 45, let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the privilege of being your people, of gathering around your word and your table, and we come as hungry and needy people.

Would you please strengthen us as we come to your word in each of the sacraments? Drink. I want to thank you for one another. We thank you for Tom and Mia and little Jonah.

Thank you for this little boy with us for the first time today. We pray that he would love you always, and he would follow you. Give Tom and Mia and all of us as parents great wisdom and help in this day.

And we ask that as we come to your word, your word might change us, that your Holy Spirit would take these familiar things that we'll look at this morning, that we might appreciate them in a new

way.

That we might see them from a different perspective. That you would give to us that gift of sight. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. When Jesus came into this world, he had no doubt about what he was going to give.

[6 : 06] He did not enter into this world unknowingly. When he left heaven, he knew what that would mean. He knew what he was going to give. So if you look at verse 45 of Mark chapter 10, The Son of Man, that's referring to himself, came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

And so, if you've not understood Christianity at all, you can understand the heart of Christianity this morning in this one short little verse. That Jesus came to give the ultimate gift.

The gift of himself for us. To lay down his life on the cross. And so, Jesus came into the world that first Easter.

That first Christmas. To give his life that first Easter. Didn't he? He came into this world that first Christmas to give his life that first Easter.

He came to give his life. And so I think as we begin to reflect on that this morning, Can you see how special God's people must be to God?

[7 : 19] Can you see how special you must be to God? We are sinners, aren't we? None of us are denying that this morning. We all joined in that prayer of confession because we are unworthy.

And so, how special we must be to God that Jesus, his one and only son, would give his life for us. Richard Dawkins, famous, isn't he? Atheist. And you'll remember that he caused a stir earlier this year. A woman asked him, what should she do if she was pregnant?

And she discovered that the child she was carrying had Down syndrome. You might remember the reply. Dawkins tweeted, abort it and try again. Quite shocking, isn't it?

And Dawkins went out to point out that his argument was perfectly rational response from an atheist perspective. And as much as I don't like it, I have to accept that what he said is right.

[8 : 26] It's perfectly rational response from an atheist perspective. If there is no God, and we are just naked apes, we are chemical machines, then we have, you have, I have, no ultimate value.

None of us, whether we have disabilities or not. And of course, the Bible's view could not be more different, could it? The Bible screams at you this morning that you are not just a bag of chemicals in skin.

You are so special that Jesus came into this world to give his life for you. But how does Jesus giving his life for you actually help you?

If you're down on the south coast, and you're walking on the cliffs at Beachy Head, and a stranger comes up to you and says to you, I'm going to show you how special you are to me.

And with those words, the stranger runs and throws himself off the cliff and down to his death. Well, I think you'd be a bit puzzled, wouldn't you, to say the least? How does him giving his life help me at all?

[9 : 44] But Jesus says he came to give his life, can you see it, as a ransom? And so by this time in Mark's gospel, he's predicted three times that he's going to die in Jerusalem.

Three times he says he will give his life as a ransom for many. So what is a ransom? A ransom is a payment to set people free. So let's think about it for a moment.

It's not that difficult to think of, is it? Think about hostages in a terrorist organization. That have been taken by a terrorist organization. And as we hear about the hostages that have been taken, our hearts go out to them, don't they?

Our hearts go out to their families. It's an awful situation to have been taken hostage. And we are thankful. We are thankful that we're not in that situation.

But the Bible's teaching is that we actually are. That as human beings, spiritually, we've been taken captive. The Bible's teaching is that spiritually we are hostages.

[10 : 56] We've been held captive by sin and guilt and death and judgment and the devil. We are bound by the kingdom of darkness.

We're held captive to our passions and our lusts and our desires. We long to break free of them.

But we can't. And the message of why Jesus has come is Jesus has come to the rescue.

And so, God hasn't sent in the special forces, has he, to take life. But God has sent his son to give his life as a ransom payment to secure our release.

He paid the ransom payment that was ours for going our own way instead of God's way. Occasionally, you read of a prisoner exchange program.

Not so much anymore. But let's just imagine there's some kind of CIA official that's been taken hostage. He's been taken captive. And the terrorist organization, they say, we will release that CIA official in exchange for five of our imprisoned terrorists.

[12 : 17] But the other side has imprisoned. And so you look at it and you read in your newspaper and you think this one guy, this one CIA kind of head honcho, he will be released in exchange for five others being released.

And you think, well, how can one man be exchanged for five men? Well, it's a really obvious answer, isn't it? It's because of how important he is.

It's because of the value that he has. He's an important CIA official. He's worth a lot. And so his one life can be exchanged for five others.

He's worth five others. And so how many do you think the Son of God is worth? How many do you think the Son of God might be worth?

Through giving his life, how many is he worth? He is worth an infinite number. Jesus said in verse 45, he came to give his life as a ransom for many. This countless multitude that no human being, no man, no woman, no boy, no girl can ever count.

[13 : 30] To those who will receive him, he gave the right to become the children of God. And so verse 35, here's the question. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Are you one of the many? Have you received the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ? Because the Lord Jesus Christ, he came into this world.

He entered into our captivity to set us free. To set you free from your sin and from your guilt and from death. To set you free from the punishment.

To set you free from the kingdom of darkness. But to be set free, we must receive the gift. First, on birthday present, after Claire and I got married.

My birthday is a month after our wedding anniversary. 21 years ago, after we got married, Claire bought me a drill. I will never forget it. And I suspect neither will she.

[14 : 34] Neither her nor I have ever got any benefit from that drill. All right? It's my fault. It's not hers. To my shame.

I still can't use a drill. The drill was lent to someone who thought, well, they'll never give it back. And that was absolutely fine with me. It's unused. I never even opened it.

It was still in that plastic bag. You know, those kind of thick plastic bags that the kind of power tools come in. I never even opened it. And for a gift, it needs receiving, doesn't it?

A gift needs to be opened if we're going to receive any benefit from it. And Jesus Christ came to give his life for sinful men and women. And we need to receive him.

We need to open the gift. We need to use it. We need to say thank you for giving your life for me to set me free. You know the tragedy of Stockholm Syndrome?

[15 : 40] I don't know very much about it. But it seems that those who've been hostages for a length of time, they grow accustomed and gain feelings for those who've taken them hostage. And so, in the end, even though these people have taken them hostage against their will, they make peace with that.

And they're content with that. And they're reluctant to be rescued. And they sometimes wish when they've been rescued that they were back where they were. And you see, that's what often happens with people.

You can make peace with your sin, can't you? And make peace with your guilt and make peace with living life your way, staying in the darkness. But Jesus Christ has come as a ransom.

Now, for many of us this morning, wonderfully, we've accepted that gift of the Lord Jesus. And we know why he came. But what does life look like then? Once you've done that, some of you have done that recently, haven't you?

What will life look like from now on? And so, having received his life, we are to live his life. That's the point. Having received his life, we are to live his life.

[16 : 57] And so, he came to give his life as a ransom. But in giving his life, he came to serve. And we are to be like him. So, look at verse 44. Look at verse 44.

And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. Must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus, came not to be served, but to serve.

And so, we are to have the same commitment to the Master in being like him and serving like him. So, what will that involve? It will involve three things from this passage.

First of all, it will involve not glory-seeking, but humbly serving. Not glory-seeking, but humbly serving. Look at verse 36. James and John, they've come up to Jesus, haven't they, with a cheeky request.

And they say, it is, verse 35, a really shocking question they say to Jesus. They say, teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.

[18:05] If you came up to me after that, I'd tell you to clear after the service, and ask me that, I'd tell you to clear off. But they come to Jesus, and they say, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.

He said to them, well, what do you want me to do for you? It's a great question. They say to him, grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory. And so they know, don't they, they recognize that Jesus has come to establish a kingdom.

They reckon, and they understand that Jesus has come, and glory will follow the Lord Jesus. And so they put in an early bid for the key positions in the cabinet of the new government.

Can we be chancellor of the Exchequer and home secretary? They wanted to be the greatest. They wanted to be the top dogs.

They wanted to be the number one. They wanted to be the best. It is me first. And so when the other disciples hear about this, well, look at verse 41. It tells us how they felt.

[19:06] When the ten heard it, they began to be indignant with James and John. Why? Why were they all cheesed off with James and John?

Well, it's because they wanted to be first. They're angry that James and John have stolen a march on them. And who doesn't? Doesn't something of selfish ambition infect us all?

At the time of Jesus, there were copper coins in circulation. And they showed the head of Augustus, the emperor, who was reigning at that time. And it had his name, and it had an inscription, which said, He who deserves adoration.

And isn't there something in each one of us that wants those words to be over our own head? We want to be praised.

We want people to think well of us. We want our name, our reputation in the lights. But Jesus, the Son of Man, he came not to be served, but to serve.

[20:14] And if anybody deserved the glory, it was Jesus. The Son of Man is an Old Testament title. It was for a person, Daniel tells us, who God would appoint, who would come one day, and he would rule over everything and everyone.

And so Jesus is that Son of Man. And so if anyone deserved to be served, it was him that he came to serve. And you'll remember, at one time, he even got down on his hands and his knees, and he washed the feet of his disciples during the job of a slave.

Listen to what the Bible says elsewhere, Philippians 2. It says that though Jesus was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God something to be grasped.

But he made himself nothing. He took the form of a servant. He was born in the likeness of men and being found in human form. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

And so Jesus says, isn't he, verse 43, if you glance down there, but it shall not be so among you. Because whoever would be great among you must be your servant.

[21:34] And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. And so what would your workplace be like if everybody lived this out?

To serve one another, not jostle for position, promotion. To not seek glory for themselves.

But serving, what would that be like? Someone told me the other day about a colleague who'd done a really brilliant piece of work and analysis.

And their boss basically took the report that they had written, tweaked it a little, and then emailed it around the senior people as if the boss had written it. Selfish ambition, isn't it?

Glory seeking. And you can't change your company, but you can at least begin with yourself. What would your family be like?

[22 : 35] What would your family be like? If it took this into consideration. Secondly, it's not about power grabbing, but sacrificially serving.

It's not about power grabbing, but sacrificially serving. Look at verse 42. Jesus called them 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. But it shall not be so among you. It shall not be so among you because it wasn't so with him.

As the son of man, Jesus had unlimited power. But he came to serve. He never threw his weight around.

Instead, he let others throw him around and nail him to the cross. Instead of wielding power, he suffered in weakness. I read this week of a man called James.

[23 : 37] And the writer knew him in his college years. This is what he said about him. He said, before becoming a Christian, James was a notorious womanizer. James' pattern was basically to seduce a woman, to pursue the woman.

And once he'd gained her, once he'd slept with her, he'd lose interest in her and move on. James professed faith in Jesus Christ. And he quickly renounced this kind of sexual escapades.

And James became active in Christian ministry. But in every class or study, he was argumentative and domineering. In every meeting, he had to be the leader, even if he wasn't designated to be so. He was abrasive and harsh. And eventually, it became really clear that James' meaning and value was still based in having power over others.

That's what made him feel alive. That's what gave him kicks. You see, it was all about power for James. It always had been. He'd just swapped it from the women to church.

[24 : 46] That hadn't changed. The writer goes on to observe that this desire to exercise power is not only a problem for the powerful. He says you can pursue power in small, petty ways by becoming a local neighborhood bully or a low-level bureaucrat who bosses around a few people in their field of authority.

So do you recognize any of those traits in yourself? In your own social life? In your own family? In church life?

In work life? In your own heart? The tendency to use people rather than to serve people. And Jesus says, doesn't he, very, very clearly.

Can you see it at the start of verse 43? Just look down. But it shall not be so among you. The third thing we see about serving is it's not about kingdom comfort, but it's about sacrificial service.

It's not about kingdom comfort, but sacrificial service. And so James and John, verse 37, they come to Jesus and say, grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory.

[26 : 09] And they want to sit on thrones. And they want to rule. Partly because they thought that it meant a life of privilege and comfort.

It meant a life of others serving them. One to sit at your right and the other to sit at your left. And so they would sit while others served them.

While others responded to their every need. The dictator of North Korea, Kim Jong-un. What's he, the 46th most powerful man in the world or something?

Somebody visited him and described the trip to his private island. Said it was like Hawaii or Ibiza. But he is the only one that lives there. Meanwhile, the poor people of North Korea are dying of starvation in their thousands.

His wife was photographed holding a handbag which is worth an average year's salary in that country. And that's a pretty extreme example, isn't it? Of ruling to feather your own nest.

[27 : 16] And it's a very, very long way from home. But the basic dynamic of others wanting to serve me is not so far from home.

But I need to say to you, that is not Christianity. Because even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve. And the word even is a really little, it's a really interesting word, isn't it?

It's really telling. Even as the Son of Man. Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And if anybody had the right to live in luxury, well surely it is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, isn't it?

If anybody had the right to live with other people kind of dropping grapes in their mouth, it was him. But we know, don't we, that Jesus wasn't born in a palace. He was born in a stable.

With animals. He didn't wear a crown and royal robes, but simple clothes. And in the end, a crown of thorns. He had nothing apart from the very clothes he was standing in.

[28 : 30] And so Jesus' life was not one of comfort with other people serving him. Jesus' life is one of sacrifice. With him serving others. And he calls you and I, as followers of the Lord Jesus, to follow in his footsteps.

Look at verse 39. He warns them, doesn't he? He warns them and he says, following me is going to involve cost. Not comfort.

He says, serving me will involve suffering. You will drink the cup of suffering. You will undergo the baptism of trials that I have to undergo. And so what would that service of others look like in our homes?

In our marriages? In our families? In our church? Putting the needs of others first.

Not waiting for others to come and serve me. But to take the initiative in serving them. I'm up early on a Sunday morning.

[29 : 40] And like usual this morning, I was up early in my study. And then I came in before everyone was up. And I saw that the dishes were all stacked and needed to be put away.

And the washing needed to be kind of folded up. And Phoebe would be up in a little bit. And I saw that a breakfast needed to be made. Now normally I wander in completely oblivious to that sort of thing.

I just don't see it. But because I finished preparing a sermon on serving. And we're all on a learning curve, aren't we? I left the warmth and the comfort of my study to enter into the kitchen and do the jobs.

What a hero. And now I'm boasting to you about it. That is not the ultimate example, is it? Of giving up comfort and costly service.

But the reason I tell you is it is a practical example. And I think that's the point. And so much of my preaching, I fear, doesn't actually hit the ground.

[30 : 46] In the nitty gritty of our everyday lives. So Christianity does affect, doesn't it? Who's going to put the bins out?

And Christianity does affect who will change the nappy. And Christianity does affect who is going to clear up the vomit. And following Jesus will affect this afternoon who is going to do the washing up. Because you see, if it doesn't begin there, well where will it begin? The kingdom.

The power. And the glory. Who do they belong to? Who does all the kingdom and all the power and all the glory belong to?

Jesus. All by rights. They all belong to Jesus, isn't it? But he came into this world not to be saved, but to serve. And he calls us to follow in his footsteps.

[31 : 54] I overheard an exchange the other day, and I won't tell you who it was. Could you pick that up for me? Do it yourself. Who do you think I am?

Your servant? Your skivvy? Have you ever said that yourself? Who do you think I am? Your servant? I've certainly said it.

The point of this passage is, isn't it? Why did Jesus come? He came to give his life as a ransom. He came to serve. And so as his people, we are servants. Of one another.

And if it wasn't beneath the Son of Man, it's not beneath you. And so when people see followers of Jesus, it should remind them of him.

When I lived in Camberwell in South London before coming to this church, you'd go to the Old Kent Road. And there was a great Old Kent Road.

[32 : 58] There's a Chinese restaurant with a Chinese Elvis. Have you ever seen it? It's absolutely amazing. Chinese Elvis. First time I went there, you think, oh, this guy's nothing like Elvis at all.

But gradually as you kind of go, you see more and more. He does remind me of Elvis a little bit. You look nothing like Jesus.

I don't know what he looked like, but you don't look anything like him. But when people see and observe the followers of Jesus, it should remind them of him. And so our humble sacrificial service of others will make the people who are looking at us think to themselves, you remind me of someone.

You remind me of someone. There is a distant echo. The law of God that's written in their heart will echo and they say, you remind me of someone. And so the Christian message is this.

It is all about giving. Jesus giving. God giving. And it's all about serving because Jesus came to give his life as a ransom for us. And that is the gift that you need to receive this morning.

