

SERMON FOR OCTOBER 17, 2021

TEXT: MARK 10:35-45

THEME: THE PATH TO GLORY

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." **36** And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" **37** And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." **38** Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" **39** And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, **40** but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." **41** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. **42** And Jesus called them to him 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. **43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

In the name of Jesus:

Has someone ever asked you: Will you say, "yes" to what I am going to ask? Whenever I was asked that question, I was always apprehensive about my answer. What am I saying yes to, exactly, is this going to be something that I will like, or dislike? I was always not really sure how to answer. It felt like I was being boxed in, or put into a Catch 22 no matter how I would answer.

This is the situation that James and John were putting Jesus in when they asked Him this question: “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” James and John most certainly had faith in Jesus and what we learn today is that both had a selfish ambition.

Ambition isn't all bad. It depends upon what you are ambitious about. If ambition is channeled in the wrong way, it can cause a lot of problems.

Ambition for many is the desire to get ahead and stay ahead. Ahead of what? Ahead of others. For many Americans, ambition means that you plot and plan on how to get ahead and stay ahead of others. And so you live your life trying to get ahead of others financially, politically, and work or at school, you do whatever you can to climb that ladder so that you can get on the top and stay there. You want to be number one, you desire to be physically stronger, smarter than everyone else, more advanced than the next person, and you will do whatever it takes to get there and stay there. It is called the pathway to success and for many it is considered the **PATHWAY TO GLORY**.

This is what James and John aspired to, and so they went to Jesus with a simple request, just say yes Jesus, and You can make it happen, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” These two wanted to be the top dogs, and they had it all figured out. Jesus would appoint one to sit on His left, the other would sit on His right, and they would be all set.

Forget the rest of the apostles. They would be left behind in the dust. Their ambition, though, was misplaced. Jesus responded: “You don’t know what you are asking for, are you able to travel the road that I am going to travel?” They enthusiastically said, YES! Here they were jockeying for positions of power, prestige, and glory, but they didn’t come to grips with who Jesus is and was. Yes, Jesus was and is a King, but He is a different kind of king. His Kingdom is not of this world. The Kingdom that Jesus brings is not one of selfish ambition, but of selflessness. But Jesus gives to them, and to us, a lesson on the true PATH TO GLORY. For the PATH TO GLORY comes not by power and might, but through humility and sacrifice.

This is why Jesus says: “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Sadly many reject believing in God because God hasn’t granted their every whim and wish. You probably have heard people give justification for their lack of faith because they prayed to God and God didn’t answer their prayer in the exact time, manner, and circumstance as they requested. They

essentially went to Jesus and said, “Jesus, here is my request, and you better not say no.” Jesus isn’t some type of magic genie in a bottle, some deity that you turn to only when you need him, Jesus and His kingdom is a different kind of kingdom. Power and might does not make right. Jesus’ kingdom and reign is the exact opposite of what one might expect then, and now. For Jesus, as King, rules in humility. He gives honor to those who are considered the least. The PATHWAY TO GLORY is marked by humility, by denying yourself, your self, your selfish ambition, taking up your cross, and following Jesus. For Jesus has come, not to meet your every wish, whim, and need. Rather, Jesus has come to bring sinners to a right relationship with the Father, and Jesus did this by not seeking to be served, but living His life in service for all.

This is what the Bible means when it says: “ Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus came down from heaven, in humility and meekness, living His life in accordance with the will of His Father, His life for your sinful life, His damnable death for the death you deserve to die, all so that by the power of His resurrection He

would be able to give to you a new heart, a new ambition, and new reason for living, that you would live your life to the glory of Him.

That is why the Apostle Paul says that we are to “have the same mind as Christ.” We are called to live our lives humbly, as the Holy Spirit has given to each of us a new ambition and new life to live for God. Jesus has brought us back to the Father, by His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Christ has forgiven you of all of your selfish ambitions and self centered goals. You have been renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit given to you in the waters of your Baptism, so that you can live for Jesus.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12: 1-3).

Ebenezer Scrooge in the story called “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens shows the transformation that the Bible describes. Here is a man portrayed by selfish ambition. He values money over people and profit over generosity. He changes his life as a result of a nightmare that he has, a nightmare that exposes himself to be the miserable person that he is. He awakes from this nightmare the next morning by receiving that day as a gift

from God, and lives a transformed life which is shown through compassion and generosity.

Through Baptism you too have been transformed. You are now a person with a new ambition, to serve Jesus through serving others. As Paul says so eloquently, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Just as Jesus put us ahead of Himself, He now enables you to put others in front of your own self. And this is the PATH TO GLORY, that we might not seek our own glory and praise in our lives, but that we would live our lives to give Jesus the glory and praise that He deserves.

Amen