

Horribly Wrong - Wonderfully Right

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[0 : 00] We turn to Mark chapter 10, passage that we read, and we turn to God's Word for a few minutes together.

Now, there are situations in life when you are perhaps going to the doctors, shall we say, and they say to you, what can I do for you?

Or you go into one of these old-fashioned shops, if any of you remember these old-fashioned shops where there was a gentleman or lady behind the counter, and as you went in, they would ask you, what can I do for you?

How can I help you? And it's a situation that's a common occurrence in our lives, and we're quite familiar with it. It's somebody putting themselves at your disposal.

Imagine you were in an audience with the Queen to receive some honor or for some purpose or whatever. And as the Queen often does, as Her Majesty often does, if you've ever seen her at these public events, she often has a very quiet word one-to-one with the person that she's speaking with.

[1 : 24] And it's not to be overheard. And it's private between Her Majesty and the person concerned. Imagine you're there and the Queen comes over to you and says, well, what would you like me to do for you?

What can I do for you? And you think, well, that's rather a reversal of roles, because someone so exalted is asking me, what can I do for you?

And that's exactly the situation we have here in the passage of our text. This morning, if you look at Mark chapter 10, verse 36, you will see these words that Jesus himself, the Lord of glory, asks of these two disciples.

He says to them, what do you want me to do for you? He asked. And I wonder what would run through your mind if the Queen herself were to ask you, what can I do for you?

And I wonder what would run through your mind if you were in this situation that these two disciples here find themselves in, James and John, the brothers who have brought about this situation, as we'll see in a moment, what do you want me to do for you?

[2 : 50] What endless possibilities might race through your mind, confronted with the Lord of glory himself saying to you, what do you want me to do for you?

Now, James and John, these two disciples that have brought about this situation, were brothers, of course, two of Jesus' closest disciples.

They had spent up to possibly three years with Jesus, and they knew him well, I'm sure. They'd heard his amazing teaching, Sermon on the Mount, and his parables.

They'd seen firsthand and witnessed his power and authority over sickness. Healing those that were sick.

They'd seen him stilling the storm on the sea, his power over nature and over death itself, raising the dead to life.

[3 : 57] They were firsthand witnesses of that. They'd heard also Jesus saying, I'm going to suffer and to die.

And they'd heard him saying that at least twice before, that's recorded for us in the pages of Mark's gospel. And now here in chapter 10, Jesus tells them again for the third time, at least the third time. And he says plainly, at the beginning of this passage where we began in verse 32, what's going to happen. He's got what he's going to do for them.

He's going to be mocked. He's going to be spat upon. He's going to be flogged. He's going to be killed. And James and John have heard that.

But it seems to have gone in one ear and out the other. Because then they come with this request that we read of in verse 35.

[5 : 04] We want you to do for us whatever we ask. Now I ask you, what kind of prayer is that to make to God Almighty?

It seems to me it's one of the most inappropriate ways of approaching our God imaginable. We want you to do whatever we ask.

And it seems to suggest to me that they haven't really been listening to what Jesus has been saying.

They get it, in fact, horribly wrong. They come before this response that Jesus gives in our text, verse 36, what do you want me to do for you?

And they just get it as horribly wrong as is possible to imagine. They have this amazing opportunity. But they didn't ask for some small favor.

[6 : 09] No, they, I think, had grasped something of what Jesus was saying, but certainly not all of it. They knew that Jesus was going up to Jerusalem.

He was on his way up to Jerusalem. In some way or another, he's going to be exalted. And they don't understand how. They thought, I think, that he was going up to Jerusalem to take up power, to establish his kingdom.

And so they think, well, we're on our way. Here's our chance. This is our moment. We want you to do whatever we ask.

And what do they ask for? Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.

There are two important positions, at least up for grabs, they think.

There are these opportunities. Because if Jesus is going to establish his kingdom, he's going to need his right-hand man and his left-hand man there to help him, to advise him, to carry out his orders, to do his bidding.

[7 : 29] James and John come to Jesus and say, we're your men. We're the ones to do that. Give us those positions.

Now, I suggest to you that reveals most clearly what was in their minds, in their hearts.

When asked, what do you want me to do for you? They answer with shocking inappropriateness.

They answer with greed for power.

They answer with selfishness. We want this for ourselves. And so this question that we have in verse 36, a very innocent-sounding question from Jesus, what do you want me to do for you, searches what kind of person James and John are.

And as we bring it before ourselves this morning, it searches you and your heart. What kind of person you are.

[8 : 41] Would you answer in similar terms? Well, Jesus uses this question, and immediately in the verses following, to teach them a little bit about what they apparently hadn't grasped.

To teach them a little bit about themselves, but also to teach them about the ethics of the kingdom that are so different from the ethics and values of this world.

He tells them afterwards why he can't grant their request. Can James and John do what Jesus is about to do? Can they die to save sinners?

They don't know what they're asking, as Jesus tells them. See, James and John want glory for themselves. But they haven't grasped the path of suffering that will lead Jesus to glory.

James and John want power and prestige. And they seem to have the mindset that is so common in the world, and dare I say it, even among the church, that it's all about me.

[10 : 06] Self-centeredness is a terrible and awful thing.

To grow up into adulthood, not to realize that what you thought as a child, that the world revolved around you, and all your concerns and all your needs, not to have matured beyond that.

It's about me, is what we see with James and John here. See, they're thinking, what can we get for ourselves? What's in it for us?

Jesus says, no, it's about, I'm going to give my life for you. I have told you, I have told you, that I will be crucified.

And on the third day, I will rise again. That's the nature of my glory, not the nature of the glory that you are thinking.

[11 : 12] So it's not about status and prestige, but about service. About what you can do. About what I can do for others.

Now we see the other disciples were quite indignant. Verse 41, they come and they're really annoyed. And I don't know where they're annoyed at the request that James and John made, but several commentators suggest that they were indignant because they hadn't thought of it first. And that is quite a possible interpretation of that verse. They had argued before, you see, in Mark chapter 9. They had argued before, which one of us is the greatest?

See how their minds were working? Which one of us is the greatest? They argued among themselves. And Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, brought a little child and put the child among them and said, unless you receive the kingdom of heaven like one of these, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus says, don't be like the world. And the word this morning to you says, don't be like the world around you. Look at the rulers, the bosses of the world today, we would say.

[12:32] They lord it over people. They push people around. They exercise their authority in authoritarian ways.

That's how they do it. And if you've been in a workplace, you've surely experienced that in some form or another. Look, Jesus says, that's how the world is.

They exercise authority by pushing people around. And then he says these magnificent words in verse 43.

Not so with you. Four words. Not so with you. They say that many presidents of the United States have a little motto on their desk in the White House says something like, the buck stops here.

Well, words to that effect. When I was privileged to work in Calico San Andres in Peru, I had many, many people coming to me.

[13:43] Staff, pupils, parents, education officials. And I had a little motto on my desk too. And it was these words from Mark 10, 43. Just to remind me.

And these words simply said, the motto on my desk, not so with you. And I think they're excellent words to remind us of the Christian ethic of service.

Not so with you. Not like that. Not like the world. But rather, look at what Jesus goes on to say as he finishes this paragraph, as it were, of our passage this morning.

He says, don't model yourself on what the rest of the world does. That's not the way in the kingdom of heaven. The way in the kingdom of heaven is modeling yourself on Jesus himself.

Verse 44. Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. Are you up for that?

[14:53] Are you ready for that? That's not an easy calling. And it'll take a lifetime of practice and failure. And then he tells us these magnificent words in verse 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. We think of the Christian life as about service.

Rightly so. But here Jesus tells us his life is about service. Coming to be a ransom for many.

To give his life as that ransom for you. If you put your trust in him this morning. For me. I put my trust in Jesus here in the city of Aberdeen 50 years ago.

And he's been faithful ever since. That's the surprise of the gospel. That our God.

[15:57] The king. The monarch. The king of kings. Serves us. What can I do for you? I think in the light of what Jesus goes on to say here.

James and John. Their request looks pretty shabby. It's pretty awful. Woefully weak. Horribly wrong. But that's not the end.

Because then in the final paragraph of this chapter. We see blind Bartimaeus. Jesus and the disciples are leaving Jericho. On their way to Jerusalem.

And here's this blind beggar. You know the story I think. Whom everyone tries to silence. Be quiet. Be quiet. And he's shouting out. And look.

At verse 51. When Jesus says. Bring him over. Bring him over here. Come on. Call him. Verse 51. What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked.

[17:02] Now our text was verse 36. Here it is again. In verse 51. Exactly the same words. What do you want me to do for you? And very briefly.

We see a very different outcome. Because while the James and John got it horribly wrong.

Bartimaeus gets it wonderfully right. And that's how we're going to finish in a few moments.

With this echoing in our minds. Because why such a different response? Jesus' response to Bartimaeus' requests displays his grace.

Because he says. Go. Your faith has healed you. Now Luke. In another account of the same incident. Tells us as well. He went away praising God.

His heart. Was right with God. Why such a different response? Let me tell you again. It's what's in his heart.

[18 : 03] And when Jesus asked. What do you want me to do for you? Here. What's in Bartimaeus' heart. Is quite different. From what was in. Our disciples. Hearts.

Because if we look at what he'd been shouting. While they were trying to silence him. As Jesus is passing by. He's shouting out. Jesus.

Son of David. Have mercy on me. Be quiet. Be quiet. Be quiet. Son of David. Have mercy on me. They can't shut him up.

He recognized. Jesus. He recognized. Jesus. Is the king. The son of David.

He recognized. Who Jesus is. And more than that. He's not saying. Yes. You're the king. And I want to share in your glory.

[18 : 58] As we saw in our earlier example. Rather. Hear when Jesus says to him. What do you want me to do for you? He's crying out. Have mercy on me. Now we don't get any further detail.

Than that. But it shows. What's. In. His. Heart. He saw. His own need. It's very easy for us.

Not to see our own need. We think we're successful. And maybe we are successful. In one. Way of measuring success. We see everything going well.

In our lives. And maybe things are going well. In your lives. But unless you see. Your need of mercy. From the king.

From the son of David. From the Lord Jesus himself. Unless you see that. Need of mercy. Things are not going well. In your life. At all.

[20 : 03] What does he do. When Jesus says. Bring him forward. Come on. Bring him over. He throws aside. His cloak. In verse 50.

He's a beggar. That's probably all he's got. He's got. Probably his one possession. That he needs. To keep him warm. In the chill nights. He throws it aside. And I think that's. That's a little parable. Of exactly his priorities.

The things I own. In this world. He says. I only own a cloak. They don't matter. I throw it aside. Because I want to get to Jesus.

And that's it. Isn't it? I don't need to spell that out anymore. For you. I don't think. What do you want me to do for you? What do you want me to do? Do for you?

[21 : 07] Bartimaeus sees. Have mercy on me. I've got nothing to offer you Jesus. And that's the place. He had come to.

And it's the place you must come to. The inability to. Do anything. Yourself. It's what the publican had cried. Do you remember in the.

Parable that Jesus told. Of the Pharisee and the publican. Have mercy on me. A sinner. And it's what King David had cried. When Nathan the prophet had come to him.

And exposed his sin of adultery. With Bathsheba. Have mercy. On me. Oh Lord. Psalm 51. And so I say to you.

Is that your cry. This morning. It must be. It must be your response. To the question. And. We've asked twice.

[22 : 04] In our text. Verses 36 and 51. What do you want me to do for you? Asked by the Lord Jesus. It must be your answer. Have mercy.

Upon me. Because that's all. That we can ask. May he bless his word to us.

This morning. We're going to close our service. We're going to close our service. Let's go.