FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN

Mark 10:32-52

Key Verse 10:45 “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.”

Last week we studied the characteristics of the kingdom of God. Jesus taught us that the kingdom of God is given to those whose hearts are pure and humble like children. The kingdom of God is given to those who simply trust in God and obey him. Jesus also taught a rich ruler how to inherit eternal life. The young man looked perfect in the eyes of people, yet still he lacked one thing which was treasure in heaven. Treasure in heaven is eternal life. Treasure in heaven is Jesus Christ our Lord. We are happy when we possess treasure in heaven. Priscilla is always joyful because she has the treasure Jesus Christ in her heart. In today’s passage Jesus again predicted his death and resurrection on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus also taught his disciples how to be great in the sight of God.

First, Jesus predicts his death and resurrection again. (32-34) Look at verse 32a. “***They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid***…” Jesus and his disciples were on their way up to Jerusalem. It was the last trip to Jerusalem for Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem as the Lamb of God to die for the sins of the world. Imagine how Jesus felt on the way to Jerusalem. Might fear, anxiety, and sorrow have caused his each footstep to be heavy and hesitant? Did he really regret his decision to take up the cross? No! It is amazing that Jesus was leading the way. The way was the way of the cross. The way was the way of suffering and death on the cross. Nevertheless, Jesus was leading the way like a triumphant general who is willing to fight and destroy his enemy. Jesus was not daunted or withdrawn by the power of death. He was leading the way to destroy the power of death. It is true when he said, “I am the resurrection and the life…” (11:25) There is no retreat in Jesus. There is no regret in Jesus. There is no defeat in Jesus. Praise Jesus who was leading the way to Jerusalem to conquer the power of death and to give us final victory over death. Amen.

Jesus’ disciples were astonished by Jesus’ determination and his spirit. Those who followed him were afraid without any reason. They felt something significant would happen to Jesus. As they assumed, Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. Look at verse 33. “***We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.***” In chapter 8 after Peter’s confession of faith, Jesus predicted his death and resurrection to his disciples for the first time. (8:31) And, in chapter 9 after his transfiguration, Jesus again predicted his death and resurrection to them. Now it was the third time. But, this time he described more in detail how he would be betrayed and would suffer and die. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the Lord of creation. But, he humbled himself by calling himself, “the Son of Man”. Jesus would be betrayed by his creatures. They would condemn him to death and would hand him over to the Gentiles, who would mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. But three days later he would rise again.

Why does the Lord of creation, the Son of God and the good shepherd Jesus have to suffer and die in this way? It is because of our sins. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed in his book, “*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrow, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*” (Is 53:3-5)

Second, James and John’s political ambition (35-40) No sooner had Jesus predicted again his death and resurrection than James and John came to Jesus and asked, ***“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”*** (35) James and John were the sons of Zebedee, who was known as the husband of Salome, the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. James and John might have sensed that it was the only chance left to request their desire from Jesus their cousin. They might have suffered whenever the hegemony among the Twelve was taken from their rival Peter. They might have thought that Jesus would grant his cousins’ request this time. How did Jesus respond to them? In verse 36 Jesus asked, “***What do you want me to do for you?”***  Jesus was not upset about their selfish request. He did not rebuke them by saying, “You guys. Repent of your selfish ambition and take time out for ten minutes.” Instead, Jesus was willing to serve them and answer them as much as he could. James and John replied, “***Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory***.” (37) The seats on the right and left sides of Jesus were the very important and prestigious positions. When the president of the US makes an important speech in the White House or on Capitol Hill, important and high officials are seated at his left and right side. James and John might have sensed that finally the day of Jesus’ earthly messianic kingdom had come. They thought that the day of Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem was the day that their dream would come true.

How did Jesus respond to their request? Look at verse 38. “***You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said, “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized?***” Generally in the Jewish mind, drinking from the same cup is known to be sharing the same fate. The cup which Jesus would drink is the cup of suffering. The cup which Jesus would drink is the cup of death on the cross. However, James and John were badly misinformed. They thought that the cup which Jesus mentioned was the cup of champagne which they might share with Jesus at the banquet table in Herod’s palace. So they answered, ‘***We can***,” (39) They might have said, “Not only one cup, but several cups, Lord!” James and John revealed their hidden, but fierce political ambition and earthly messianic dream before Jesus who was on the way to Jerusalem resolutely.

Jesus spoke to James and John like a mother who gently counsels her children. Look at verse 39b. “…***Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared***.” Soon Jesus would drink the cup which God the Father provided. The cup which Jesus would drink was God’s wrath and punishment for man’s sin. The cup which Jesus would drink contains all human beings’ sin, curses, condemnation, misery, and evilness. Jesus would drink the cup. In this verse baptism means martyrdom. Those who drink the cup of Jesus and are baptized with him will be martyred. They will follow the way Jesus went. Jesus foretold his destiny and the true meaning of the cup and the baptism to James and John. Jesus believed that they would follow him later. In fact, James became the first martyr among the Twelve (Ac 12:2) and John was persecuted and finally ended his life at the Island of Patmos ( Rev1:9)

In verse 40 Jesus said that to sit at his right or left is not for him to grant, but belong to those for whom they have been prepared. Jesus meant that God the Father is the one appoints those who sit at his right and left. Jesus did not usurp the Father’s authority. He was willing to submit himself to the Father to the point of death.

Third, even the Son of Man (41-45). When the ten heard about this they became indignant with James and John. The ten disciples thought that James and John were presumptuous and mischievous. In this way the ten also revealed the same hidden desire for important positions in Jesus’ kingdom. How did Jesus help them? Look at verses 42-44. “***Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all***.” Jesus taught the disciples how to become great and who is the greatest in the sight of God. Those who want to become great must be servants of all and those who want to be first must be slaves to all. It sounds paradoxical and contradictory to the worldly consensus. In this world, people have the tendency to enjoy authority as much as possible, whether it is small or big. One day Dr. Oleg came back from DMV very upset because he felt offended by an officer who seemed to exercise her authority over him while he was applying for his drivers’ license. Whenever I take a plane at the airport, I often encounter the authority of the TSA. We understand Jesus’ disciples who eagerly wanted to be free from the occupation of the Roman Empire and to rule the world with authority and power. But, Jesus said, “Not so with you.” Besides, Jesus taught them that they should serve others as slaves do.

Then Jesus taught his disciples in verse 45 why he came to this world and how to serve people. This verse is known as the key verse of Mark’s gospel. Let us read 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.”*** Jesus is worthy to be praised, worshiped and served because he is the Lord of Creation and the Son of God. But, he did not come to this world to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Here ransom is the price paid for the release of slaves or prisoners. At a slave market, in order to free slaves, people had to pay the price, which is called the ‘ransom payment.’ Jesus said in John 8:34, *“I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*” In the beginning, Satan tempted men to think that they would be like God if they ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But, men became slaves to sin instead of becoming like God. They suffer much from guilt and shame because they do what they should not do, and they do not do what they should do. Those who become slaves to sin are totally miserable and helpless. But, God had mercy on those who became slaves to sin and sent Jesus Christ to die for their sins. God paid the price for their sins by Jesus’ precious blood on the cross. As we know, the price of sin is death. But, Jesus, through his sacrificial death on the cross, paid the price for our sins. Praise Jesus!

When we study the Bible carefully, we learn how Jesus served all kinds of people one by one. Jesus served a paralytic until he rose, walked and praised God. Jesus served a demon-possessed man until the man became a new creation. Jesus served five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish until they were all fed and satisfied. He also served his erring and unruly disciples by washing one by one their dirty feet. In the course of serving others, he had no place to lay his head. In serving others he became a man of sorrow and familiar with suffering. One woman missionary serves her Bible students with the word of God until late at night. Another woman missionary sacrifices her whole day off for Bible studies. I was encouraged by Missionary Barnabas Kim who serves the teenage boy Sergio with the word of God every Saturday very faithfully. I have more examples than these. Missionary Sarah Barry, who is now 79 years old, still serves young students by teaching the Bible in Chicago. She did not even marry in order to serve Korean students long time ago. But all these people live such a sacrificial life because they all want to follow the life of Jesus, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Fourth, Jesus gave sight to Bartimaeus (46-52) In these verses, we learn how Jesus served a blind man to the end. While Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a blind man, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging. (46) ***When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!”*** (47) Here son of David indicates the Promised Messiah. We wonder how this blind man knew that Jesus was the son of David. But many who were around him rebuked the blind man, thinking that he was useless and bothersome. So they said, “Be quiet, blind beggar!” Then, how did the blind man respond to their threatening? He was not daunted or dispirited at all, rather he shouted all the more, “***Son of David, have mercy on me!”*** (48) Jesus stopped and called him. When the blind man was called to Jesus, he jumped to his feet. ***Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see***.”(51) The blind man knew what he really needed. He needed to see. So he said, “I want to see.” On the contrary, James and John did not know what they really needed. ***Jesus said to the blind, “Go, your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.*** He became a cheerleader for Jesus’ company since then.

In today’s passage, Jesus gave us a good example of how he served sinners with the compassion of God to the end, even on the way to Jerusalem. Let us learn his servantship so that we may also grow as good and faithful servants of God and serve all kinds of sinners in this generation. Amen.