

Theme: Disciples must understand the upside-down nature of the kingdom of God, for God's Kingdom is established through the death of the King, and true greatness is found in being the servant of all.

I. Intro - A Major Shift In the Gospel of Mark

- A. Everything has happened in Galilee; a lot in Capernaum
- B. This is the last time Jesus is in Galilee & Capernaum until after the resurrection!
- C. Jesus is headed to Jerusalem where trouble awaits!
- D. He takes time to teach the disciples alone to prepare them for what is going to happen and for the future!
- E. We will take a couple of weeks to work through the lessons

II. Lessons for the Disciples: The King Must Die

- A. Jesus is staying hidden so He can train the disciples
They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were,
³¹because he was teaching his disciples. Mark 9:30-31
 - 1. He is in Galilee for the last time; crowds know Him
 - 2. Jesus is keeping their location hidden
 - 3. He is doing this to get uninterrupted time to teach the disciples.
 - 4. Things are about to change and they are not ready!
- B. Lessons for the Disciples: The King Must Die
He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." Mark 9:31
 - 1. The King is coming to His city but what will happen is unexpected!

- 2. This is the 2nd time Jesus predicts His rejection & death (see Mark 8:31) - one more will follow (10:33)
- 3. All three times have three basic components
 - a. As the Son of Man Jesus will be rejected
 - b. He will be put to death
 - c. He will be raised after three days
- 4. What is new in this 2nd passion prediction
 - a. It is not just the leaders who will condemn Jesus but all men
 - 1. The leaders do reject and condemn Jesus
 - 2. But all humans betray and condemn Jesus and are responsible for His death.
 - b. Jesus will be betrayed and handed over
 - 1. This word can mean betrayed - which is what Judas will do (also see Mark 3:19)
 - 2. But it often has the nuance of God being active in the process (a Divine passive)

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord **has laid** on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6
 - 3. This word was familiar in Judaism for Jewish martyrs
 - 4. No matter what happens - God is at work! Humans are responsible and take real action, but God is always working to bring about His will!
- 5. As they leave familiar territory and head to Jerusalem, Jesus will not be received as the Messianic King but rather will be rejected, betrayed, and killed. But God is at work and Jesus will be raised on the third day to bring salvation!

III. Lessons for the Disciples: True Greatness

A. The disciples still do not understand the King must die!

But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. Mark 9:32

1. They did not understand the 1st time and Peter rebuked Jesus - and got rebuked!
2. They still can not fathom what Jesus is teaching them - the kingdom is upside down from their expectations!
3. But no one is stepping out to ask Jesus!

B. An embarrassing conversation

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" ³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Mark 9:33-34

1. Back to "the house" in Capernaum (Peter's?)
2. "What were you arguing about on the way?"
 - a. Surely they were discussing what Jesus told them!!
 - b. They must be arguing over Old Testament texts that showed the Son of Man, the Servant, and the Messiah were the same person and must be put to death!
 - c. At least why must be arguing over who will ask Jesus what He meant!
3. The embarrassing reality: who is the greatest disciple?!!!
4. They still do not understand that discipleship is not about getting a throne but rather about taking up the cross!

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. Mark 8:34-35

- a. Jesus had taught this when they misunderstood the first prediction of His death - they should know it by now!
 - b. In the upside-down Kingdom, the King and His disciples bear a cross! But they are not thinking about the cross but rather getting crowns and thrones!
 - c. In the upside-down Kingdom, you find life by giving it away! But they are thinking about the power they are about to accrue!
5. What irony - while Jesus, God in the flesh, speaks of being humbled and willingly dying for our sins, the confused disciples, who have not understood His teachings and just failed at driving out a demon, are arguing over their own greatness!
 6. They still do not understand the upside-down nature of the Kingdom!

C. The Nature of True Greatness

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." ³⁶ He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." Mark 9:35-37

1. Sitting down - the posture of the teacher about to give a lesson.

2. Jesus knows what they were arguing about!
3. “To be first, you must be last - the servant of everyone!”
4. This is upside down to the common way of thinking! You want to be first, not last! The greatest sit while the lesser ones serve!
 - a. VIP’s don’t get sent to the back of the line!
 - b. Surely we know who is great by who is being honored and served!
 - c. But Jesus says true greatness is seen in serving others rather than in being served!
 - d. True greatness is seen in being willing to be the last!
5. True greatness: receiving those ignored by others
 - a. Jesus embraces a little child to teach by example
 - b. Children and women were overlooked and ignored - everything was about the men.
 - c. The point here is not to “be like a little child” but rather to receive, welcome, and care for those ignored by others.
 - d. We can see if we understand the nature of true greatness in the kingdom by how we respond to the ones others overlook.
 - e. Sadly many churches have been planted with the express purpose of giving preference to the “right” people - which is directly against Jesus’ teaching and example!
6. Disciples must understand the upside-down nature of the kingdom of God, for God’s Kingdom is established through the death of the King, and true greatness is found in being the servant of all.

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I understand the upside-down nature of the Kingdom?
 1. This concept is simple to grasp with my mind, but so hard to allow to restructure my thinking until it becomes how I see the world!
 2. This is the exact opposite of the way this whole world works!
 3. This requires constant meditation, prayer, and reminding until it rewires my brain and softens my heart!
 4. This is why many Christians fall into the way of the world, grasping for power and seeking primacy rather than servanthood.
 5. Which seems “upside-down” to me - the way of God’s Kingdom or the way of the world?
- B. Am I living as a servant to others?
 1. Jesus is not dispensing information - He is teaching me how I should act in daily life!
 2. This certainly convicts me of my sin and my need for Jesus, but it is also meant to concretely change the way I act each day!
 3. But this is very hard for disciples for 2 reasons:
 - a. It goes against my selfish sinful nature
 - b. It goes against the consumer spirit of this age, which has discipled me to expect everyone else to meet my needs rather than me serving them.
 4. The way to a changed heart in this area is to practice acts of service until they shape my soul!

- a. If I wait until I “feel” like a servant I will never become one!
 - b. It is engaging in serving others in action that my soul slowly begins to be shaped into the nature of a servant!
5. How can I grow in acts of service in this season?
- a. How can I build a habit of serving my family?
 - b. How can I serve in BRCC?
 - c. How can I serve a neighbor or coworker?
6. Ask God for opportunities to serve - and then act!
- C. The Table of Our Servant King
1. Corporate reading of Philippians 2:5-11
 2. Jesus is the Lord of all - but He humbly came to serve and save us!
 3. Jesus is the Lord of all - but He serves you at this Table!
 4. Come and receive from our Servant King

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Lessons for Disciples - The Upside-Down Kingdom

Mark 9:30-37

February 18, 2024

Communion

Genesis 12:2-3

Teaching keywords: Kingdom of God; discipleship; Christology; cross; service

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:2-3