

Leadership Christ's Way

Text: Mark 10:32-45 (See also Matt. 20:17-28; Lk. 18:31-34)

Introduction:

1. There is much talk about leadership today, even amongst Bible believers. Leadership conferences have been a fad for a couple of decades now amongst some Independent Baptists. But what does leadership really look like from Christ's perspective? This passage reveals God's thoughts on what is true leadership. The central truth is this; servanthood equals true leadership.
2. It is vital that we frequently check our thinking on leadership against the principles set down by Christ in the Word of God as it is easy for the philosophies and ideals of the world to subtly creep in.
3. We will study this theme of servant leadership under 3 points:

I. THE EXAMPLE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP (VS. 32-34)

A. Christ's Direction towards the Cross (Vs. 32a)

1. "in the way going up to Jerusalem" = Christ and His disciples have resumed their journey towards Jerusalem.
2. "Jesus went before them" = Christ walked out in front of the disciples. His face was set like a flint (Is. 50:7) towards Jerusalem knowing fully what would befall him there. Christ was walking the Calvary road of self-denial and self-sacrifice. The disciples were walking the carnal road of self-seeking and self-promotion.
3. "they were amazed...afraid" = the disciples' response to Christ's determined stride towards Jerusalem was one of astonishment and fear. They were conscious of the dangers that would be present in Jerusalem and as yet had not entered into an understanding of the impending cross.
4. Swete: "The Lord walked in advance of the Twelve with a solemnity and determination which foreboded danger...His manner struck awe into the minds of the Twelve, who were beginning at length to anticipate an impending disaster."

B. Christ's Discussion about the Cross (Vs. 33-34)

This is the third and final announcement to the Twelve of his coming Passion since Peter's historic confession at Caesarea Philippi (See Mark 8:31; 9:31-32). This third is the fullest of the three. Christ would be:

1. Delivered (Vs. 33). The word 'delivered' means to be handed over to. Christ would be delivered to the religious leader who would then deliver Him to the Roman authorities
2. Condemned (Vs. 33). Christ would be condemned to death by the religious leaders of his own nation but the execution would be

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performed by the Gentile rulers. The Jews did not have the power to enact capital punishment at this time. Christ's prophecy was fulfilled exactly.

3. Mocked (Vs. 34). Christ was mocked by Herod, the Roman soldiers, the religious leaders and others.
4. Scourged (Vs. 34). Christ was brutally whipped and lashed.
5. Spat upon (Vs. 34). To spit upon someone is to show them the utmost contempt.
6. Killed (Vs. 34). Christ died for our sins!
7. Raised (Vs. 34). Christ would rise again the third day, victorious over death.
8. Note: Luke 18:34 reveals the disciples again did not understand what Christ said. Wrong thinking hinders our receptivity to the truth!

II. THE ERROR FROM SERVANT LEADERSHIP (VS. 35-41)

A. The Three's Request (Vs. 35-37)

1. The Error in their Approach (Vs. 35-36)
 - a. "whatsoever we shall desire" = they tried to get the Lord of glory to commit to giving them what they wanted before telling Him the specifics of their request. This is the first hint that what was motivating the hearts of James and John was not of God. "Perhaps because of an inner consciousness that their selfish request might properly be refused by Him, they sought to bind Him in advance." (Hiebert)
 - b. Challenge: Very often we approach the Lord in a similar way. We have already thought things through from our perspective and decided what we think is best and then we simply want the Lord to endorse and approve of our plans! When are we going to learn that it is not about us getting God to fulfill our plans but about us submitting to His will!
 - c. Christ did not make such a promise! (Vs. 36) "He was not about to write them a blank check so that they could fill it in for any amount they desired. They were too much out of tune with reality for that."
2. The Error in their Ambition (Vs. 37)
 1. "right and left" = in a royal court, they were the places of highest honour.
 2. Their quest was after position, prominence and power. While Christ's heart and mind was filled with thoughts of crucifixion, theirs was full of self-glorification. While He thought about the cross, they thought about the crown! "While He strode before the Twelve, absorbed in thoughts of the Cross to which He was

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pressing, they, as they followed...were thinking not of what He would suffer, but of what they might gain.” (Maclaren)

3. Matthew’s account reveals that their mother Salome also formed a part of the delegation. Whether the idea originated with their mother or with themselves, her natural motherly desire for her sons to excel lead her to support the idea. Parents, be careful that your desires and ambitions for your children are surrendered to the Lord lest you be a stumbling block to the will of God in your children’s lives.
4. Challenge: The spirit of self-ambition of James and John is in each one of us. Beware of the self-life and how it can so easily get tangled up in our service for the Lord. E.g. “what’s my position in the church?” Our naturally tendency is to gravitate towards positions of service where there is a degree of recognition involved. All involved in some form of up-the-front ministry need to do a regular evaluation of their heart motives. The most important form of recognition is not on earth but in heaven where even the smallest acts of service are noted and rewarded (Mk. 9:41; Mt. 10:42).
5. Jeremiah 45:5 ***“And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not:”***

B. The Lord’s Reply (Vs. 38-40)

Christ points out...

1. The ignorance of their request (Vs. 38)
 - a. “the cup” = description of Christ’s sufferings used by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (E.g. Matt. 26:39).
 - b. “the baptism” = another reference to Christ’s sufferings. He was going to be immersed in shame, agony and unspeakable sufferings.
2. The implications of their request (Vs. 39)
 - a. “We can” = what rash self-confidence and yet at the same time, such simple-hearted devotion.
 - b. “ye shall indeed” = James and John would experience suffering as followers of Christ. James was the first Apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:2). John would be a living martyr, enduring exile and reproach for the Name of Christ.
3. The impossibility of their request (Vs. 40)
 - a. The positions they requested could not be given to them as they were prepared for others by the Father (Matt. 20:23).
 - b. Morison: “He who goes nearest in time to Christ the crucified shall get nearest in eternity to Christ the glorified.”
 - c. Challenge: Be content to occupy the position God has for you and be faithful!

C. The Ten’s Reaction (Vs. 41)

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1. “much displeased” = Same word used of Christ in Vs. 14. It means to feel pain, to grieve, to be indignant. The report of James and John’s request stirred a spirit of jealousy in the rest of the disciples. The other disciples were not grieved in a spiritual way over a request so carnal and selfish but because they coveted the same position for themselves! “The ten betrayed their spiritual shallowness by being indignant at the spiritual shallowness of the two.” (Hiebert)
2. The unity of the Apostleship was now under threat by these carnal attitudes and disputations.
3. This spirit of carnality over position can rear its ugly head in many ways in a church:
 - Feeling threatened by new members coming into the church.
 - Feeling misplaced when more ministry workers start participating in the same ministry as you.
 - Feelings and thoughts about whether your service in the church is appreciated or recognized.
 - Pulling rank on the preacher or other church members based on how long you have been a part of the church.
 - Being quick to sign up for an up the front ministry but slow to join a prayer clock or a behind the scenes ministry such as cleaning, yard maintenance, helping the preacher etc...

III. THE EXHORTATION FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP (VS. 42-45)

“Our Lord shows the difference between that which is esteemed great in the Gentile world system, and the standard of greatness in the spiritual kingdom which he was inaugurating.” (Wuest)

A. Leadership the World’s Way (Vs. 42)

1. “ye know” = Christ begins with their knowledge of greatness as it operated in the Gentile world, the worldly principle of greatness.
2. “exercise lordship over them” = means to exercise dominion over, to bring under one’s power, to subdue, hold in subjection. “The compound verb is literally “lord it down on them.” It indicates the imposition of power from above; they use their lordship to their own advantage.” (Hiebert)
3. “exercise authority upon them” = to wield power over those under your control; “to impose authority from above, exploiting those beneath.” (Hiebert)
4. Note: Any position of authority can be misused in this way. It is vital that our authority be exercised in a Christ-like manner and within the boundaries set by God.

B. Leadership the Saviour’s Way (Vs. 43-45)

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This verse is the key verse in Mark's Gospel and contains the clearest statement as to the purpose of Christ's coming in the Gospels. "But this theological declaration was made to enforce a practical truth for everyday conduct." (Hiebert)

1. The Saviour's explanation of servanthood (Vs. 43-44)
 - a. "But so shall it not be among you" = "In the world, the higher men are, the more they are served; in Christ's kingdom, the higher men are, the more they serve." (Maclaren)
 - b. 'minister' = a helper, a servant. The root word is the same word translated 'deacon' elsewhere. The word is probably connected with the verb 'dioko,' to hasten after, pursue (perhaps originally said of a runner). The word 'deacon' is a compound word made up of 'through' and 'dust'. Picture = one who moves quickly to perform his duties and makes a trail of dust in his haste. Interestingly, the English word minister comes from the Latin word 'minus' meaning 'less'. So to be a minister is to be the lesser, the minimum!
 - c. 'servant' = a bond slave, one who forgoes his own rights in order to serve others for Christ's sake.
2. The Saviour's example of servanthood (Vs. 45)
 - a. "came not to be ministered unto" = Christ was served during his earthly ministry (e.g. Lk. 8:2-3) but that was not the **reason or purpose** for which He came. Christ spent Himself serving others rather than compelling others to serve Him.
 - b. "but to minister" = Christ came not to be served but to serve. This is the polar opposite to the thinking and philosophy of the world.
 - c. "to give his life a ransom" = Christ's service would take Him all the way to the cross. The word 'ransom' refers to the price paid to set slaves and captives free, the price of redemption (See 1 Peter 1:18-19). We are set free from sin today because of the servanthood and sacrifice of Christ the Servant of the Lord.
 - d. "for many" = the word 'for' means "instead of" and conveys the truth of substitution.
 - e. Challenge: If Christ, the Eternal Son of God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe could humble Himself as a servant even to the point of death, then we have NO excuse for not adopting the attitude and position of a servant in our lives.

Conclusion: Do you desire true greatness? Then be a servant like Christ!