

The Gospel of Mark

(Mid-Week Bible Study)

Week 15: The Servant King on the Road to Jerusalem -- Mark 10:32–52

Picture the road going up to Jerusalem. Mark gives us one of his most vivid sentences. “And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid” (10:32). Jesus is walking out in front. The disciples are trailing behind, sensing something is about to happen, not sure they want to know what. It is the picture of every disciple eventually. The Lord goes ahead. We follow at a distance, afraid and amazed.

Jesus pulls the Twelve aside and tells them, for the third time and most explicitly, what is coming. The Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn Him to death. They will hand Him over to the Gentiles. He will be mocked, spit on, flogged, killed, and after three days will rise (10:33–34). It is one of the most precise passion predictions in any of the Gospels. He names the actors. He names the actions. He names the outcome.

The very next sentence in Mark is one of the most painfully ironic in the New Testament. James and John walk up to Jesus and ask Him for a favor. They want to sit at His right hand and at His left in His glory. He has just told them He is going to be killed, and they are asking for thrones. The other ten get angry, probably because they wish they had asked first. Jesus stops everything and teaches them, with a clarity that should ring in the ears of every disciple, what greatness in His kingdom actually looks like.

“Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:43–45). This is the single clearest statement in Mark of the purpose of Christ’s coming. And then, on the way out of Jericho, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus refuses to be silenced and cries out to the Servant King. Mark 10:32–52 takes us inside the heart of the gospel itself: the Servant King going up to give His life as a ransom for many, and a blind beggar who finally sees and follows Him on the way. This week we walk that road with Him.

Group Discussion: Jesus told the Twelve plainly what was going to happen in Jerusalem. James and John responded by asking for thrones. The other ten responded with indignation. Bartimaeus responded by crying out for mercy and then following Jesus on the way. In which of those four reactions (avoidance, ambition, resentment, faith) do you most often see yourself, and what does the passage call you toward instead?

Personal Reflection: Jesus stopped on a dusty road, asked a blind man, “What do you want me to do for you?” and received the simple, honest answer, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight”

(10:51). If Jesus stood in front of you this evening and asked the same question, what would the most honest answer of your heart actually be, and how would your week change if you brought that request to Him as openly as Bartimaeus did?

Read Mark 10:32–52

Study Questions

1. In verses 33–34 Jesus gives the most detailed of the three passion predictions in Mark, naming exactly who will hand Him over, who will condemn Him, what they will do to Him, and what will happen on the third day. What is Christ revealing about the deliberate, knowing way He is walking to the cross, and why does Mark place this prediction immediately before the request of James and John?
2. The disciples were following Jesus to Jerusalem with both amazement and fear. Where in your own walk with Christ are you trailing behind Him with that same combination, sensing He is leading you somewhere that will cost you something you are not sure you want to pay, and what does honest discipleship look like in that moment?
3. James and John come to Jesus and ask, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory” (10:37). Jesus answers, “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?” (10:38). What is Jesus teaching about the difference between the kingdom His disciples were imagining and the kingdom He was actually establishing, and how does the “cup” and “baptism” language point toward the cross (compare Mark 14:36; Luke 12:50)?
4. Most of us would not phrase our ambition as bluntly as James and John, but the same instinct lives in us. We want the rewards of following Christ without the suffering of following Him. Where in your own life are you most prone to ask Christ for the “thrones” of His kingdom (security, recognition, comfort, position) without being willing to drink the cup He drank?
5. When the other ten become indignant at James and John, Jesus calls them all together and says, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you” (10:42–43). What is Jesus teaching about the difference between worldly and kingdom leadership, and how should this shape the way elders, deacons, teachers, parents, and every Christian who has influence over others lead in His church (compare 1 Peter 5:1–4; Philippians 2:1–11)?
6. Every Christian has some sphere of influence: a household, a workplace, a class, a friendship, a ministry. Where do you currently exercise influence in a way that drifts toward “lording it over” others, and what would Christ-shaped servant leadership actually look like in that specific setting?
7. Verse 45 contains the single clearest statement of the purpose of Christ’s coming in the Gospel of Mark: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Connecting this with Isaiah 53:10–12, 1 Timothy 2:5–6, Hebrews 9:11–15, and 1 Peter 1:18–19, what is Mark teaching about the substitutionary,

redeeming purpose of Christ's death, the kind of "ransom" He paid, and the central place of this saying in the gospel and in the believer's ongoing assurance?

8. Every Christian was bought with a price. Christ paid the ransom for 'many,' including each one of us who has responded to Him in faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Him. How does living daily in the conscious memory that you have been ransomed by His blood shape the way you spend your time, your money, your speech, and your loyalties?
9. On the way out of Jericho, blind Bartimaeus hears that Jesus is passing by and cries out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (10:47). When the crowd tries to silence him, he cries out all the more. Jesus stops, calls him, asks, "What do you want me to do for you?", and heals him in response to his faith. Connecting this with Isaiah 35:5, 42:6–7, and Romans 1:16, what is Mark teaching about Christ as the promised Son of David, the central role of faith in receiving His mercy, and the proper response of those whose eyes He has opened?
10. Mark records that the moment Bartimaeus could see, he "followed him on the way" (10:52). The Greek 'on the way' is the very road to Jerusalem and the cross. As you close this chapter, where is Christ asking you to follow Him on the way to a cross of your own (a costly obedience, a long surrender, a deliberate next step of discipleship), and what is one specific way you could begin walking that road this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Isaiah 53:10–12, the Servant whose soul is made an offering for many; Philippians 2:5–11, Christ's self-emptying as the mind we are to share; 1 Timothy 2:5–6, Christ as the one mediator and ransom for all; 1 Peter 1:18–21, our redemption with the precious blood of Christ; 1 Peter 5:1–4, the call to elders to shepherd by example, not by domineering.