

## **SLIDE 1. Series: Who Is this Man?: A Study of the Gospel of Mark**

Teaching: *A 3<sup>rd</sup> Prediction. 2 Want Power. 1 Price to Pay.*

Sunday May 11, 2025

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

*They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid... (Mark 10:32).*

This was the end for Jesus. Jerusalem is where Jesus would die. He had made this known (twice already!) to his disciples. Each foretelling growing more and more grim.

**SLIDE 2.** At first – in Mk. 8:31 – it was simply an announcement: ***He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.***

**SLIDE 3.** Then – in a second prediction – in Mk. 9:31 - there was a clear indication of betrayal: ***The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days.***

**SLIDE 4.** And now – in Mk. 10vv. 32-34 - a 3<sup>rd</sup> prediction: ***Again he took the twelve aside and told them what was going to happen. "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."***

Jesus led the way. They were on the road, and he was out ahead of them – **alone**. His disciples were "astonished", and the crowd was "afraid."

What could either party have offered Jesus?

The disciples would likely have tried (again) to stop him, and the crowd would likely have (again) followed to see what would happen.

Jesus led the way. They were on the road, and he was out ahead of them – **alone**. Knowing he was heading towards his death.

What extraordinary courage!

Jesus was heading towards what he knew would happen – that he would suffer and be rejected, that he would be betrayed, that he would be mocked and spat upon, flogged and then killed.

The picture of which became clearer and clearer in his mind as he moved closer and closer to his end in Jerusalem – towards the brutal cost of redemption.

He *led the way* towards THAT!

**SLIDE 5. There are 2 ways we might think about *courage*:**

**1. As something required in the moment.**

**2. As something required for something ahead.**

There is a courage that is a kind of instinctive reaction – almost a reflex – to act in the moment without much time to think about it.

It might be to stand up for what you believe. It might be to stand up for someone who is being bullied or unfairly treated. It might be asking for help. It might be - helping *someone else*. It might be saying sorry. It might be saying NO.

And then there is the courage it takes to go towards that grim thing approaching – when there is plenty of time to turn back – when there is a choice to be made – when courage is required to move forward.

It might be to make a change. It might be to resist temptation. It might be to have that difficult conversation. It might be to forgive someone who has hurt you – the more deeply they have hurt you – the more courage it will take to forgive.

There is no doubt which is the higher form of courage – it is the latter – this deliberate facing of the future.

This is the courage Jesus showed. Ahead of his disciples and the crowd – **alone**.

There are certain things we must face alone, aren't there? Certain choices we need to make on our own. Certain roads that we must walk by ourselves – in awful loneliness of soul.

And yet we would do well to remember and to remind each other – that even – **alone** – our God is for us, not against us, Jesus is our example, and the Spirit of God lives in his disciples to strengthen us and to give us wisdom.

I wonder – on that lonely road to Jerusalem that day – if Jesus had these kinds of things on his mind.

What seems to be clear – otherwise – is that the disciples didn't know what was going on. They were sure Jesus was the Messiah, but they were equally certain that he was going to die! How was that going to work?!

They were understandably "astonished" – and yet they followed!

It was all going sideways – but they held to the one thing they knew to be true – that they *loved* Jesus – and however much they may have wanted to – they couldn't leave him.

They were steeped in that great essential of faith – that even though they didn't know what was going on – they accepted what they could not understand because they were compelled by love!

And then as if to prove they didn't really know what was going on, two of his disciples caught up to Jesus to ask him a favor.

*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him, "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."*

*"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.*

*They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other in your left in glory."*

*"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 with?"*

*"We can," they answered.*

*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" (Mk. 10:35-40).*

Boys! Boys! Boys!

James and John were ambitious lads. Aiming for seats of power alongside Jesus. And perhaps for a few reasons.

Jesus had (more than once) made them part of his inner circle of three (Peter, James, and John). And more than Peter – for sure – they were a little better off - were those boys – and maybe more than any of the disciples.

Their dad was wealthy enough to hire servants (Mk. 1:20), for instance, so maybe they thought their socio-economic superiority made them the best candidates to sit at his left and right.

Speculation aside – what we know for sure is this – though they believed in Jesus - they desperately failed to *understand* Jesus. 3 X he predicted what his kingship and kingdom would be like – but his words seemed to be absolutely powerless to dismantle their notion of a Messiah of *earthly* power and glory.

In the end – only the Cross could do that!

Power and glory looked different *for* and *with* Jesus.

**SLIDE 6. Jesus uses 2 parallel metaphors in this passage of Scripture - a *cup* and *baptism* – to draw the distinction between *earthly* power and glory and *heavenly* power and glory.**

During the days of Jesus – it was customary for the king to hand his cup to the guests at a royal banquet. It was a symbol of his power and wealth.

But it was also a metaphor for the life and experience that God handed out to a man.

So, what was the cup that Jesus would drink?

In the OT – the cup of wine was a common metaphor for God’s wrath against human rebellion and sin. And so, the cup Jesus had to drink seems to refer to the divine judgment of sin that he bore in place of sinful humankind.

Jesus then speaks of the baptism with which he was baptized. The Greek word for baptism – as a verb – means “to dip.” Its past participle means “submerged” – and it is regularly used of being “submerged in any experience.”

Like a spender submerged in debt. Like a drunk submerged in beer. Like a grief-stricken person submerged in sorrow. Like a shipwreck submerged beneath the waves. You get the picture!

It is a word closely associated with expressions in the Psalms.

**SLIDE 7. *Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me*** (Ps. 42:7). ***If the Lord had not been on our side... the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us...*** (Ps. 124:4) Submerged!

All of which is to say that the expression Jesus used here has nothing to do with technical baptism, ie. water submersion upon confession of faith.

Jesus is saying, “Can you bear to go through the terrible experience handed to me which I choose to go through? Can you face being submerged in hatred and pain and death such as I will have to endure?” No!

He was telling these 2 disciples that there is no crown without the Cross, that there is no power without choosing to serve, and that there is no glory without suffering.

And yet – as Jesus suggests – they did go through the experience of their Master – even if in micro-senses: John suffered greatly for Christ during his life, and James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa for the sake of Christ.

Even still – even though the boys accepted the challenge of their Master – albeit – blindly – it was not Jesus’ prerogative to give them seats of authority to his right or left. As always – Jesus submitted his will to God-the-Father – who was in charge of such things.

*When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentile 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. For even the Son of Man did not come be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:41-45).*

Boys! Boys! Boys!

The other ten were annoyed with the two. A little steamed, perhaps, that James and John tried to leverage spots they perhaps thought might be for any of them!

This indignation doesn't take much imagination for me. When I recently visited my dad in T.O – he mentioned that my brother had made a request for 3 carvings of jazz musicians that are currently on display on a curio at the end of dad's main hallway.

I couldn't believe my brother's audacity! :) Maybe I'd like one! Maybe my sister would like one! Who was he to...?

Boys! Boys! Boys!

This scene sounds an awful lot like the "Who is the greatest?" conversation all 12 had amongst themselves just one chapter earlier! (Mk. 9:33-37).

This was serious, again. The fellowship of the apostolic band was at risk. So, Jesus took immediate action (just as he did a chapter earlier).

He called them to him to reinforce the distinction between *earthly* power and glory and *heavenly* power and glory.

Power in earthly kingdoms is always "power over" – to "lord over" and "to exercise authority over" - and that is to those "high officials" glory.

Or to put it differently – worldly power is measured by: How many people does a man control? How great a staff does he have at his beck and call? How many nations can he force to his table? On how many people can a man impose his will?

**SLIDE 8. "Not so with you,"** says Jesus. Not so for the disciples of Jesus Christ!

Kingdom of God power is always "power under" – to be great is to serve – to be first is to be the last – the servant of all – and that – that posture – that way - is to the glory of God.

**SLIDE 9.** Once again – I will turn to one of my favorite bible commentators, William Barclay, for his observation: **"The basic trouble in the human situation is that men wish to do as little as possible and to get as much as possible..."**

Point of fact – this is exactly what my nephew told his dad was his career goal. I just think he was honest enough to say it!

**"... It is only when they (men) are filled with the desire to put into life more than they take out, that life for themselves and for others will be happy and prosperous"** (The Daily Bible Study, The Gospel of Mark, William Barclay, p. 257).

The world needs people whose ideal is – service – the commonsense way of Jesus.

Jesus anchored his urgent pep talk to his own example.

With his power – Jesus could have arranged life entirely to suit himself – but he spent his life and all his powers in service of others. He came – as he says here – *to give his life as a ransom for many* (Mk. 10:45).

Meaning what?

Well – we have made some guesses over time...

1. The early Christian scholar, Origen of Alexandria, suggested that the life of Jesus was paid as a ransom to the devil to release men from the bondage in which he held them – but that the devil found – in demanding and accepting that ransom – he had – so to speak – bitten off more than he could chew.

2. Another early Christian scholar, Gregory of Nyssa, rejected Origen's thought on the basis that it gives the devil too much credit – as if the devil is on equal footing with God – and so God has to bargain with him. Rubbish!

So, Gregory offered this idea: that God played a trick on the devil – which went like this: the devil was tricked by the seeming weakness of Jesus. He mistook the incarnation of God for a mere man. So when the devil tried to exert his authority over Jesus – he lost!

Which is its own odd idea: that God should conquer the devil by a trick!

3. A bunch of years later – Italian scholastic theologian, Peter Lombard, took a crack at it - with this stupendous metaphor: the cross was a mousetrap to catch the devil – baited with the blood of Christ.

All of which is to say this – that maybe there's a simpler way to think about what Jesus meant when he said that he came *to give his life as a ransom for many*.

And it might be this – to focus on what *Christ* paid – not *to whom* the payment was made.

It might just be that this saying of Jesus is a simple and pictorial way of saying that it cost the life of Jesus to bring men back from their sin into the love of God – back from their waywardness into restoration with the Creator.

### **SLIDE 10. Applications Qs**

**1. When have you been alone – staring down a difficult future. How did you show courage? How did you get through?**

**2. What does power and glory look like for you?**

**SLIDE 11. Homework. Read Mark 10:46-52: the story of a blind man who receives his sight!**

Before I close – I'd like to say – again – HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

And I'd like to offer a prayer that is (hopefully) both thankful and sensitive.

And so, Almighty God, on this Mother's day – we lift our hearts and minds to you – and to your Word.

With the Prophet Isaiah (66:13) we delight:

*Like a mother comforts her child, you promise to comfort us.*

With the Prophet Hosea (13:8) we tremble:

*Like a mother bear you defend your cubs from harm.*

You – Lord – lead your people. We also remember the mother-like compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 23:37):

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.*

Let these images of love and compassion in your Scriptures move us today, Lord. Help us to see in the best moments of motherhood something of your very nature.

In this spirit: I want to praise and thank you for mothers of all kinds – for those who have raised children from their own flesh, for those who have welcomed, adopted, or fostered children, for those who have been spiritual mothers or disciple-makers.

At the same time: We also make room to lament. We weep with those without mothers, for those estranged from mothers, for those struggling as mothers, for those longing to be mothers who can't, for those who have carried children in their bodies who did not survive.

Today, Lord, we rejoice, and we weep together. We celebrate motherhood for all its goodness. We lament all its wounds and difficulties.

Almighty God, we pray, that in our grief – you would extend your mother-like comfort, and that in our fear – you would protect us like a bear with cubs.

Gather us your children to you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.