

Matthew 20:17-34

The Gospel: Servants of God

Section 1: Walking to the Cross

Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem. It wasn't that Jesus didn't know what was waiting for Him, He knew exactly what was going to happen. He even describes in detail what will happen to Him. Jesus came to the earth for one purpose, *"to save His people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21 CSB). Jesus' determination to walk to the cross was prophesied in Isaiah and affirmed in Luke 9:

Isaiah 50:7 - *"The Lord God will help me; therefore I have not been humiliated; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame."* (CSB)

Luke 9:51 - *"⁵¹ When the days were coming to a close for him to be taken up, he determined to journey to Jerusalem."* (CSB)

The word translated "determined" in Luke 9 is literally "set his face" in the original Greek. Which is a direct quotation of Isaiah 50:7. No one or anything was going to stop Jesus from walking to that cross. We should try to have that same determination in glorifying God with our lives.

Application

Purpose in your heart to glorify God. Work hard to make sure that nothing can stop you. Remove barriers and build strong holds in your life.

Barriers to our Faith	Strong Holds of Faith
Repeated sin	Repentance
Lack of prayer and Bible study	Consistent Daily prayer and bible study
Lack of Christian fellowship	Live out your calling within the church

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How thankful should we be that Jesus was determined to walk to the cross?
- ❖ How determined are you to glorify God with your life?
- ❖ How do your actions show that you are determined to glorify God?

Section 2: Desire to be a Servant

The sons of Zebedee (James and John) have made an unprecedented request. James and John wanted to sit at Jesus' right and left hand. Unknowingly, they are asking for positions that have been predetermined by God. They are trying to use their family and influence to "advance" in the Kingdom of God. Jesus quickly addresses this improper request.

He starts by asking if they are willing to "drink the cup that I am about to drink". This unique phrase "drink the cup" has roots in the OT. This particular phrase is associated with suffering. Jesus is reminding them that He is about to suffer greatly and they too will experience suffering in this life.

Jesus also explains that the greatest among believers are those that serve. Therefore, we should be out serving each other. Service is also good in that it keeps us humble. When we think we "deserve" to be served, pride has taken root. No matter your age or position, you are always to be serving others.

Application

The church is different than a cooperation. There are certain principals that should guide us. For example:

- (1) We do not seek positions.
 - a. Playing “politics” to advance one’s position is common in our culture. We use relationships to advance and get jobs. This is normal and acceptable in our world. Within the church we are not to leverage our relationship for personal gain and positions. The church is different. We seek a calling from God, not a position from man. We ask God where we are to serve and we go serve.
- (2) We must endure hardship.
 - a. Serving God isn’t easy in a world that is hostile to Christianity. While we have non-physical persecution in the United States, we have seen an increase in verbal conflict. While it’s difficult to imagine an America where Christians are physically persecuted, certainly we are never more than one moment away from that becoming reality. We can clearly see that temptation to abandon the Word of God has always and will always be present in our culture. Without physical persecution we already see Christians putting aside the Word of God to appease the culture. For example:
 - i. Evolution
 - ii. Definition of Marriage
 - iii. Divorce
 - iv. Sexual Immorality
 - b. Seeking Christ above the pleasures of the world is our challenge today. Are we able to endure? How are you building your faith to endure the temptations of our culture?
- (3) We must be servants of all people.
 - a. Believers are to be the greatest at serving others. Our church should be a place where people are constantly out serving one another.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Are you seeking the calling God has on your life?
- ❖ Suffering for Christ will come in various ways at various times. How are you strengthening your faith today to face the suffering that will come?
- ❖ How are you serving others? How do you plan to serve others in the church?

Section 3: Compassion

In this story we see a contrast between the crowd and Jesus. The crowd wanted the two men silenced because they were annoying. Jesus called the men over because He had compassion. This contrast should exist between the world and the church. We should be the most compassionate people.

Compassion isn’t ignoring truth and accepting sin. Biblical compassion is believing that all people should be offered an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel: to be offered repentance. Showing biblical love is the greatest way to show compassion. We should look upon people’s spiritual condition and have enough compassion to share the gospel with them. The challenge is not looking at someone and condemning them based upon their physical circumstances (sinful lifestyle, poverty, drugs, morality, etc.). We should understand that all sin is evil including our own sins, therefore, we must always be willing to offer restoration.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Do you see people through the lens of compassion or judgement?
- ❖ Why is it easier to condemn someone rather than show compassion?
- ❖ How are you actively loving others that aren’t your family?