

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Fifth Sunday After Epiphany, February 6, 2022

✝ ✝ ✝

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 242, 246:1, 380, 371, 371:1.

Lessons: Isaiah 53:4-7, 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13, Luke 18:31-43.

Sermon Text: Mark 10:35-45

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ:

Jesus was on his last journey to Jerusalem. Jesus again told his disciples, as he had twice before, that at Jerusalem he would be betrayed into the hands of the Jewish religious leaders. They would condemn him to death, deliver him over to the Gentiles, the Roman government officials, and he would be put to death. But on the third day he would rise again. All this would be done in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

What Jesus foretold to his disciples involved the deepest humiliation for him. He would be mocked, spit on, and flogged before suffering death as a common criminal. In view of this, it is surely surprising that two of his disciples would ask about positions of honor. Luke's Gospel helps us to understand when it tells us that Jesus' announcement of his suffering and death did not register with the disciples. It says: *"The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about."* Luke 18:34

This suggests to us the question: Do we understand the purpose of Jesus' suffering and death and resurrection? It is the work of the Holy Spirit to give us this spiritual understanding, and the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of people through the Gospel that we hear preached or we read. We see, then, the importance of church attendance.

May the Holy Spirit work in our hearts as we hear Jesus speaking about his purpose in coming to be our Savior:

TO SERVE, NOT TO BE SERVED.

- 1. Jesus taught his followers true greatness in the humility of serving others;**
- 2. Even Jesus, God's Son, in his humiliation came not to be served, but to serve;**
- 3. Jesus, above all, gave his life as payment for our redemption.**

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.'" Matthew's Gospel tells us that the mother of James and John was with them and made the request for them. Jesus agreed to hear their request. "They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in glory.'" They were asking for positions of honor in Jesus' kingdom of glory. In their minds it was as though Jesus were now to come out of obscurity and was about to ascend to his glorious throne. Luther says: "They suppose that He will begin a worldly kingdom, like other worldly lords." They had to be reminded that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. They were talking about glory and honor for themselves, while Jesus was talking about his humiliation.

Jesus then proceeded to instruct them in a very gentle way. *"'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 was talking about the bitter cup of suffering he would drink when he was betrayed, mocked, abused, and crucified. He was talking about the baptism of blood he would soon undergo. They were quick to answer that they were able to do what Jesus was talking about, without understanding what it was. Jesus told 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."* The two disciples

who asked for positions of honor did later on go through the suffering Jesus' followers experience. James was the first apostle who gave up his life for Jesus' sake. But places of honor in this life they would not experience. That would be given only in heaven to those for whom the Father has prepared it.

The request of James and John caused the other disciples to become indignant. So Jesus had to teach them all a lesson in humility. He did it by telling them that earthly rulers and officials lord it over others and exercise authority over them. But it isn't that way in the Church. Jesus says: ***"Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."*** Greatness in God's kingdom is measured by the amount of service rendered. There is a difference between church and state. In matters that concern earthly government the Lord speaks of the authority of the rulers and tells us: ***"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established."*** Romans 13:1 In the church there is no such authority to be exercised by men. There is to none of this in the church, that men lord it over others in positions of high honor.

On another occasion Jesus' disciples asked: ***"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"*** Jesus called a little child to stand among them and told them: ***"Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*** Matthew 18:1-4 Only one is our master and that is Christ. The rest of us, pastors and lay people, are just his servants. The things we do to serve the Lord and one another in a humble spirit, that is the measure of greatness in God's kingdom. Jesus wants us also to learn true humility. Pride and arrogance is of the Devil. We can show true humility best by our attitude toward the Word of God. It is not humility when we think what we want to do on a Sunday morning is more important than hearing and learning God's Word. Humility is to do like Mary of Bethany, to humbly sit at Jesus' feet to learn his teachings.

We can best learn humility from our Savior. Even he, God's Son, in his humiliation came not to be served, but to serve.

2

This is what Jesus says in our text: ***"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...."*** When Jesus was visibly among us on this earth, being born of the Virgin Mary, he lived in humiliation until his work of redemption was completed. Paul writes that Jesus ***"made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!"*** Philippians 2:7-8. The Book of Hebrews says: ***"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered...."*** 5:7-8 In perfect obedience Jesus was subject to the Law of God and kept it for us. He obediently submitted to terrible suffering and shame and death, because this was the Father's plan of salvation for sinners. He was God's Son from all eternity, rich with all the powers and abilities that God has, but ***"though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."*** 2 Corinthians 8:9 He became poor in that he did not always and fully use his divine power and show his divine glory which he had as God's Son, but he humbled himself in order to save us from our sins. So he lived like a servant. Jesus said: ***"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*** Matthew 8:20 In his humiliation Jesus told his disciples that places of honor were not his to give. As a boy, he was obedient to Joseph and Mary. All his earthly life in the state of humiliation Jesus devoted to serving others. He literally wore himself out in preaching and teaching long hours, and in healing all the sick who were brought to him. He spent long hours in prayer to his heavenly Father. He suffered the humiliation of being hated and persecuted by the leaders of the Jews, though he was their promised Messiah.

Above all, Jesus tells us in our text that he came to give his life as a ransom payment for our redemption.

3

Jesus says that he came to this earth ***"to give his life as a ransom for many."*** The many are the many sinners upon this earth. Jesus came for all sinful mankind. It is important that we understand the word "ransom." A ransom is the payment price made to redeem someone. As in a kidnapping the ransom is the price demanded for the release of the kidnapped person, so in God's plan of redemption, the ransom was the price that was paid to redeem mankind. We were, as all men are by nature, slaves of Satan, and in slavery under sin. Paul explains how all people are before conversion in these words to the believers at Rome: ***"You used to be slaves to sin. ..."***

you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness. ... When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death. For the wages of sin is death....” Romans 6:17,ff.

To be **“dead in transgressions and sins,”** (Ephesians 2:1), that is, spiritually dead, to be a slave of Satan in sinning, that is a terrible thing. If Christ had not redeemed us, that would be our condition still. Then, to suffer eternal death in hell as punishment for our sins, that would be our lot in eternity if Jesus had not come to redeem us. Let us ponder this carefully so that we know how urgent it was that we have a Savior from sin.

Jesus says that he paid the ransom price for our sins. It was not money he paid, but the most precious price one can imagine - his own life, the shedding of his own blood in dying on the cross. Peter writes: **“You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”** 1 Peter. 1:18-19 Paul wrote to Timothy: **“There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.”** 1 Timothy 2:5.6

This precious ransom Christ paid, and the Father has accepted it and therefore declared all men to be righteous in his sight. This is the righteousness that comes from God and is accepted by people through faith in Jesus. When we by God’s grace, without any merit on our part, believe the Gospel of Christ’s redemption, then the blessings are great indeed. Paul says: **“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”** Romans 5:1-2

The best thing we can do on this earth is to humbly hear this precious Gospel of how Christ paid the ransom price for our redemption, and then in faith humbly serve our Lord Jesus and our fellowmen. And when this life of service is done, we can rejoice forevermore in the glory God has prepared for us in heaven. Amen

Adapted from a Ministry By Mail Sermon for February 14, 1988.