

PZ's Gospel Preview

For the week of 10/11 – 10/17

Text: Mark 10: 35-45

I. Opening Questions:

- A. What makes someone great? Think of “great” people you have met in your life or admired from afar. What made them great? Why do you appreciate them so much?
- B. If you had the opportunity to ask Jesus for one thing, what would you ask for? What do you ask for in prayer?

II. Read the Text.

- A. Ask your group to open their Bibles to Mark 10: 35-45. Either you or a volunteer read the passage aloud.
- B. Ask your group these questions. What did you hear? What jumps out to you? What tickles your mind or spirit about this passage?

III. PZ's Text Note

A. One of my favorite passages from Mark! And one of the most humorous verses from Mark! First, the humor. It cracks me up to think of Jesus' initial thoughts here. I mean, James and John seek him out for a special conversation. It's like, “Pastor, can we talk with you after service?” You never know what will come up, but you imagine it could be heavy. So, Jesus is ready for something heavy. Here come James and John. What do they say? *“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever you ask of you.”* Can you imagine Jesus? All that buildup, and basically they are asking him to be Santa Claus and give them what they want. I can imagine Jesus fought a huge eye-roll here.

B. Now, joking aside, the response of Jesus is very interesting. *“What is it you want me to do for you?”* When I lived in St. Louis I took 24 hours toward a Master's of Counseling degree from Missouri Baptist University. I did not finish the degree, but I learned much. I remember one of my professors saying that Jesus was a great “person-centered therapist.” Person-centered therapy, made popular by Carl Rogers, basically states that the client knows best what they really need. The client can probably heal themselves much more effectively than the counselor can. The counselor's main job is to ask questions and help bring out the client's inner solution. Rogerian therapists ask a lot of questions and repeat what the client says. Eventually, the client can have a breakthrough and realize what they've needed all this time. Jesus does seem like a good person-centered therapist here. Rather than laugh off James and John, he asks them a question to help them clarify what it is they are really asking.

Sometimes I think that's why God seems quiet when we pray . . . It's like God is listening and gently nudging us to help us realize for ourselves what we are really asking.

C. James and John finally make their request known—to sit “one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory” (10:37). James and John want the seats of honor. Jesus eventually tells them no, that “but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared” (10:40).

Whom is Jesus talking about? PZ believes, as many scholars have noted, that Jesus is speaking of the two criminals who will later be crucified with him. In Mark, the two criminals do not talk, but they are mentioned. Mark 14:27 states, “And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.” I think these are the two Jesus is referring to. James and John seek glory and human appreciation; Jesus is telling them that true glory, God's glory, is seen in the crucifixion as God reveals the extent of God's love for us in the death and resurrection of Christ.

D. Finally, we can't end this session without mentioning vs. 43 and following. The concept of being “great” comes up again here in Mark 10. Jesus speaks some very memorable words, “But whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” As MLK said, “Anyone can be great because anyone can serve.” What servant leaders have you met in your life?

IV. Bad News/Good News

A. What's the bad news this week? Perhaps we could say the bad news is we have different ideas of “glory.” To us, glory is about healthy, wealthy, wise. For Jesus, true glory is found in a costly demonstration of love . . . the cross. We don't usually want to associate suffering and cost with human glory.

B. But, the good news is that Jesus promises we are never alone in the costly suffering we undertake for others or for the Kingdom of God. Christ too is a servant, and Christ continues to serve us. Even in the toughest times, even in the darkest tombs, we find Jesus there by our side calling us to resurrection and new life.

Watch for the sermon this weekend . . . these bad news and good news ideas may show up!!!