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Leaders To Serve The Nation

Mark 10:35-45

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In Mark chapter 10, two of Jesus' disciples came to Jesus seeking positions of significant leadership in the kingdom of God. **Mark 10:35-37** says, "James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to (Jesus) and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'" What follows in the next few verses is one of the most significant lessons on leadership that you will ever find in or beyond the Bible.

Today I want to speak to you about four lessons on leadership that are found in our text. I want to speak to you about seeking leadership, suffering leadership, servant leadership, and saving leadership. First, I

want to say a word about seeking leadership. Clearly, James and John were seeking positions of significant leadership in the kingdom of God. They wanted to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus in his kingdom.

And as you must know, those two seats are the most important seats in any king's court or president's cabinet. They are reserved for the most important or most influential of people. They are reserved for leaders of influence and of prominence. So James and John were seeking positions of significant leadership in Jesus' kingdom. And Jesus didn't rebuke them for doing so even though the other disciples were angered by their request.

Mark 10:41 says, "When the ten heard this (request), they began to be angry with James and John." But Jesus wasn't angry.

Jesus didn't rebuke them. And Jesus didn't tell them that they shouldn't seek these seats. All of this leads me to believe that there's nothing wrong with seeking leadership.

Certainly, we can seek it in the wrong ways or for the wrong reasons, but there's nothing wrong, in and of itself, with seeking a position of significant leadership in order to do good through it and by it. That's why the apostle Paul said in **First Timothy 3:1**, "The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task." If there's nothing wrong with desiring a bishop's seat in the church, then there's certainly nothing wrong with desiring any seat of significant leadership in any God-ordained organization.

No, there's nothing wrong with seeking leadership. There's nothing wrong with seeking leadership because leadership is

essential to the successful operation of any organization, and good leaders are always a great blessing.

We see this truth articulated in the 72nd **Psalm. Psalm 72** is a prayer for the king which says, "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness...May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more." (**Psalm. 72:1-3, 6-7**) You see, when the king rules rightly, when he exercises good leadership, then the people prosper, the righteous flourish, and peace abounds.

When the king rules rightly, when he

exercises good leadership, then his reign is like rain that waters the earth, causing it to thrive. No, there's nothing wrong with seeking leadership because leadership is essential and good leaders are a great blessing. So don't be ashamed to seek the seats of leadership so long as you seek them in the right way and for the right reasons; so long as you don't step on anyone to get to them and so long as you want them to do good through them.

But be advised, leadership will cost you something. I've said a word about seeking leadership; let me say a word about suffering leadership. Notice **Mark 10:38-40**. After James and John submitted their request, "Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'

They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 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.'" Here Jesus uses the metaphors of a cup and a baptism to describe the suffering that he himself would soon go through and the suffering that James and John would go through as well.

Just as Jesus would drink from a cup of suffering on the cruel cross at Calvary, they would drink from a cup of suffering too. Just as Jesus would be baptized or immersed in suffering at his crucifixion, they would be immersed in suffering as well.

And it turned out just as Jesus predicted. James was the first of the disciples to be martyred. John lived a long life but was exiled

at the end to a penal colony on the Isle of Patmos located off in the Aegean Sea. Were they leaders in the early church? Yes, they were! But with that leadership came suffering and sacrifice. No wonder Jesus asked them, "Are you able?"

Mark 10:41-45. When the other ten disciples heard James and John's request, Mark says, "...they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become 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 (that's Jesus) came not to be served but to serve..." With those words, Jesus

reminded his disciples that service is the essence of authentic leadership. If you want to be a great leader, then you must be a great servant. "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant."

The English word "servant" translates the Greek word "diakonos." "Diakonos" is the word from which we derive the English word "deacon." In the ancient world this word was used of waiters and table servers. If you want to be a great leader, then you must be a great waiter or table server dedicated to the task of providing for the needs of those you serve.

Are you taking care of the people you lead? Are you taking care of the people you serve? If you want to be great leader, then you must be great servant. For Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to become

great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all." Well, I've said something about seeking leadership, suffering leadership, and servant leadership.

I want to close by saying a word about saving leadership. It's not enough to simply lead people on earth. We need to lead people to heaven. Jesus said that he, "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) Here Jesus held himself up as an example of suffering servant leadership. And he said that he didn't come merely to lead us on earth, but he came to lead us to heaven too. He said the Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many.

A ransom is a price paid to save someone from a cruel captivity. There's a great deal of theology behind those

words – far more than I have time to tell. Suffice it to say that the Bible teaches that we are all born captive to sin and Satan and if we die in that captivity, we will remain captive in Satan's prison house forever. But Jesus paid the price to set us free. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus made it possible for all who believe in him to be freed from their spiritual captivity.

Hebrews 2:14-15 puts it this way: "Since, therefore, the children (you and me) share flesh and blood, (Christ) likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death." You see, Jesus is our saving leader. He came to lead us on earth and lead us to heaven.

While on earth he was a suffering, serving, saving leader who gave his life to free us from the Devil so we might enjoy the blessings of eternal life with God. And he calls us to be saving leaders, too; not that we can give our lives a ransom for others, but we can point others to Christ who gave his life to set them free. This doesn't mean that we hunt people down who have no faith or whose faith differs from our own.

Thank God we live in a free country where no one will haunt us down because we have faith in Jesus Christ. But it does mean that we speak a good word for Jesus whenever the opportunity presents itself – and that always with dignity and respect. As the apostle Peter says, "Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you;

yet do it with gentleness and reverence." (1 Peter 3:15-16) My friend, if you're a Christian, you are called to seek leadership, not for yourself, but for the sake of others.

You are called to suffering, serving, saving leadership where you give your life for the good of others and point others to the Christ who gave his life for their eternal good. Yes, all of us are leaders in our sphere. What kind of leader are you? If you want to be a great leader, a spiritual leader, then you must earn your MBA and your GED. You must have a Mop Bucket Attitude and a "Go Evangelize Degree." You think about that. Amen.

Welcome to the Month of March 2024.



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