



Kingdom Preparation

The Suffering Servant's Greatness

Matthew 20:17-34

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-will-make-you-great>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/servant-leadership.html>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/stewarding-power>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 20:17-34

1. The Description of Servant-Greatness. Vv. 17-19
2. The Example of Servant-Greatness. Vv. 20-28
3. The Motivation of Servant-Greatness. Vv. 29-34

Matthew 20:17-34

Death, Resurrection Foretold

17 As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them,

18 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death,

19 and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."

Preferment Asked

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.

21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."

22 But Jesus answered, "You do

not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able."

23 He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

24 And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.

26 It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Sight for the Blind

- 29 As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him.
- 30 And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"
- 31 The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"
- 32 And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"
- 33 They said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened."
- 34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 20:17-34.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. Who do you think of when you think of greatness? What attributes make that person great in your mind, and how do those compare to the Bible's description of greatness?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. The Description of Servant-Greatness. Vv. 17-19

2. Why do you think Jesus chose to be so specific and transparent about the suffering He was about to face to accomplish His mission at this specific moment? What does this tell us about true greatness, and why was it necessary for Him to also mention His resurrection?

3. How does the term "Son of Man" and His description of suffering tie together Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah like that of Daniel 7:13-14 and Isaiah 53? How would this challenge the disciples' understanding about the Messiah?

4. How does Jesus' description of His suffering and the cross serve as a reality check for anyone following Him? If we truly believe that suffering is part of true greatness, how should that change our reaction when we face personal trials or sacrifices?

II. The Example of Servant-Greatness. Vv. 20-28

5. What does the request from James' and John's mother show about how the disciples responded to what Jesus had just taught them about being the first and the last? What areas of your life (work, family, church, etc.) do you find it most tempting to seek status over service?

6. What does Jesus' question and response to James and John teach us about the nature of following Christ and the status we are given in Christ? Why do you think the other disciples were angry at James and John?

7. In what way does Jesus serve people by giving His life as a ransom? What does His example of service show us about how to properly wield the authority and responsibility we have been given in our lives?

III. The Motivation of Servant-Greatness. Vv. 29-34

8. How did the crowd respond to the two blind men? Why are we often tempted to "silence" or ignore the needs of others when we are busy or focused on our own "important" goals? What does Jesus' response teach us about the value of "interruptions"?

9. Why did Jesus decide to serve the blind men even though He was on His way to the most important event in human history? How can we tell the difference between serving out of a sense of duty versus serving out of genuine compassion, and why does it matter?

10. After being healed, the men immediately followed Jesus. How have we experienced Jesus' compassion through the gospel, and how should that motivate the way we follow Him and serve the people around us?

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 20:17–19 the Son of Man will be delivered over. This is the third of four predictions of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. See note on 16:21; cf. 17:22–23 and 26:2. The reference to Jerusalem, the religious leaders, and the Gentiles heightens the drama; for the first time in the narrative, Jesus gives additional clues about his betrayal and who will carry out his arrest and crucifixion.

Matt. 20:20 Salome (cf. 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1) was not only the mother of the sons of Zebedee, she was also in all probability the sister of Mary, Jesus' mother (cf. John 19:25), so that James and John were in fact Jesus' cousins. She was among the women who stayed with Jesus at the cross and later witnessed the empty tomb with her sons. Mark 10:35–37 focuses on the sons themselves and reports her request as their words. Two solutions to this apparent inconsistency are possible: (1) Based on the principle that an agent of a person counts as the person himself (see note on John 3:17), Mark may be reporting the mother's words as the words of James and John, who had told her to ask this; or (2) Matthew and Mark may be reporting different aspects of a longer conversation, in which the mother first asked Jesus the question and then Jesus asked the brothers if that was actually what they wanted. In either case, beginning in Matt. 20:22, the plural "you" shows that Jesus is speaking directly to James and John, as well as to their mother. kneeling. Salome shows respect to Jesus as her messianic Master, but she also evidently hopes to use her and her sons' earthly kinship with Jesus to her sons' advantage.

Matt. 20:21 these two sons of mine are to sit. Salome's petition was likely inspired by Jesus' remarks in 19:28, where he had announced the Twelve's rulership with him in his future kingdom. right hand. A place of honor (1 Kings 2:19; Ps. 16:11; 110:1, 5; cf. Matt. 22:44).

Matt. 20:22–23 You. The plural pronoun indicates that Jesus addressed the mother and the brothers directly. The cup in Scripture is symbolic of one's divinely determined destiny, whether blessing (Ps. 16:5) or disaster (Jer. 25:15), salvation (Ps. 116:13) or wrath (Isa. 51:17). Here it refers to Jesus' forthcoming suffering (Matt. 26:39).

Matt. 20:23 You will drink my cup. James became the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2), and John suffered persecution and exile (Rev. 1:9). for whom it has been prepared by my Father. They must submit to the Father's will for their future, just as Jesus does.

Matt. 20:24 indignant. They were perhaps not as upset by the immodesty of the request as by the brothers' attempt to use their family relationship to Jesus to gain an unfair advantage in obtaining what they themselves also wanted.

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 20:26–27 A servant was a hired worker who maintained the master's household, and a slave was someone forced into service. These were two of the lowest positions in Jewish society, yet Jesus reverses their status in the community of disciples to indicate prominence and greatness.

Matt. 20:28 Son of Man. See note on 8:20. came not to be served but to serve. Jesus himself is the primary example of servanthood. Jesus will give his life as a ransom (Gk. *lutron*, the price of release, often used of the money paid to release slaves) for many. "For" (Gk. *anti*) means "in place of" and signifies the notion of the exchange and substitution of Jesus' life on the cross for all those who accept his payment for their sins (see notes on 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).

Matt. 20:29 Jericho. Not the ancient city of OT fame (e.g., Joshua 5–6), but the new Jericho nearby, about a mile (1.6 km) to the south. This new Jericho surrounded a huge palace complex first built by the Hasmoneans (2nd century B.C.), which Herod the Great expanded. Matthew says the healing of the blind men took place as they went out of Jericho (and Mark 10:46 agrees), but Luke 18:35 says it was "as he drew near to Jericho." It is possible that Matthew and Mark refer to the new Jericho, and Luke to the old Jericho nearby, or vice versa. Another possibility is that the blind men cried out to Jesus first as he was entering the city (Luke 18:35), but he did not respond and heal them until he was leaving the city. Since none of the accounts tells everything about the event, this may simply reflect the selection of different details about the event by the different Gospel writers. None of the accounts tells everything about the event.

Matt. 20:30–31 two blind men. Mark 10:46 and Luke 18:35 mention only one blind man, and Mark gives his name ("Bartimaeus"). This does not mean that Matthew's report of two blind men is inaccurate, only that Mark and Luke focused on the one. The blind men recognize Jesus as the Son of David (cf. note on Matt. 9:27).

Matt. 20:34 Jesus in pity touched their eyes. In the face of rejection by his own people, and impending betrayal as he enters Jerusalem, Jesus continues to show compassion for those in great need.