

FRIENDSHIP COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

Pastor Bobby D. Hamilton, Th.M.

Dedicated to Discipleship Series

Sermon Notes

Part 4

“Be Careful What You Wish For”

Matthew 20:20-28

We are all familiar with the phrase “be careful what you wish for” and how it implies that you may not get what you had in mind. Nevertheless, there often remains in us a hesitancy to let go of what we think is better on the other side. Why do we live with this greener grass on the other side approach to life? Is it an escape from our situation? Is it an avoidance of accountability? Or is it a misconstrued trust within ourselves that leads us to foolishly believe that we can force the fulfillment of the future that we have in mind? Whatever the motivating factor may be, one thing remains certain – God is more concerned with achieving His glory than acquiescing to plans and plots that facilitate our glory.

Such is the case with James and John in this story. They hoped to rule and reign with Christ without fully comprehending what His kingdom reign and rulership was really about. They perceived that Jesus’ reign would parallel so many other dictatorial governments that had experienced before. Plus, they eagerly looked forward to sitting on their 12 thrones judging Israel as prophesied in Matthew 19:28. James and John perceived Jesus’ kingdom being one of payback, punishment, and putting the Gentiles out of office. In the theology of James and John, their paradigm for Messiah had no room for a cross, only a crown. Jesus set out to correct their theology and ours by reminding us, the cross must precede the crown.

I. Pain and promotion go together (v. 22-23)

After Jesus stated that they do not know what they are asking for, He revealed that they would drink His cup. A cup that meant far more than human rejection. Jesus’ cup meant the divine judgment He would have to undergo to pay for the sins of humanity accompanied by extreme suffering. (See Jeremiah 49:12, Isaiah 57:17-23)

Jesus was affirming that we can never sit in the seat until we’ve swallowed from His cup of suffering.

Next level living, next level leadership, next level success always has a price-tag. To move to the next level, we must all navigate the waters of pain, problems, and persecution. (See John 15:18-20)

Also, Jesus mentioned in verse 23 that the honorable positions was not His to give because they selection of seating was under the Sovereignty of the Father. Which begs the question, are you asking for something, accepting something, or diligently seeking to acquire something that is not authorized by the Father for you to have?

“A Place to Begin Again”

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II. **Put others before yourself (v.25- 27)**

Jesus proceeded to contrast greatness in the world's kingdom with greatness in His kingdom. Jesus knew that His disciples were raised in a culture where self-promotion and self-generated forces resulted in positions of leadership. So, he gave them 2 negative examples: 1. rulers of the Gentiles lord (Gr. katakyrieuo – subdue/overpower/bring into submission) over them. (i.e. it's an abusive non-relational domination that seeks to control through whatever means is necessary.)

2. their great man (Gr. megalos, their nobles, those in high standing) exercise authority over them. (Gr. kataexousiazo – to throw your weight around, the vaunting of one's power)

In each case, the scenario is the same – abusive, dictatorial, demeaning leadership that flows from top down.

Jesus says in verse 26 that this should not be our model for greatness. Instead true kingdom greatness service is reflected in us being servants and slaves. The Greek word for servant is “diakonos” from where we get our English word deacon. Which implied someone who was willing to serve by doing low menial tasks. The word for slave in Greek is “doulos” which implied one's who life is not their own.

Put Jesus' counter-cultural instructions together and they meant that we as born-again believers must have an attitude of not serving ourselves or seeking others to serve us but to have an attitude of serving others if it means menial tasks or the lowest of the lowest tasks.

The disciples were arguing, debating, and salivating for places of power of prestige but Jesus is trying to tell us here and show us in Joh 13:1-20, that in His kingdom, towels are more important than thrones. (See 1 Peter 5:5)

What about you, where are you consistently serving the body of Christ? Who are you serving within the body of Christ? How's your attitude in your service?

Dr. Warren Wiersbe said it best, “we all in the body of Christ say we want to be a servant until somebody treats us like one.”

III. **Praise the Master for picking up the tab. (v. 28)**

To prevent the disciples from being in the dark about what His upside-down kingdom looks like, Jesus concludes by giving them an example- a model to look at when He says... just as the Son of Man did not come to be “diakonos” but to “diakonos”. Jesus

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came the first time not as a lion but a lamb. Not as a fighter but one who forgives. Not one who conquers but one who was committed to the cross at Calvary.

He came not to give speeches or moments of morality, Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for many. The term ransom (Gr. lytron means to pay a purchase price to secure the release of a slave) This speaks to the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ. (See Isaiah 52:13-53:12, John 3:16, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 2:13-15, 1 Peter 3:18)

Only one would die, Jesus Christ, but many would benefit from His death and resurrection. Thus, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of a suffering servant.

In closing, so, where are you? What are you asking for? What are you aspiring to become or acquire? I ask this because we are all prone to be selfishly ambitious, even in serving the Lord. My prayer today is that you will humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and declare, *Not my will – but Thy will be done* today, tomorrow, and forever!