

Intro

This morning we'll see a king who serves. This is shocking. Kings use their authority to get what they want. They don't lay down their lives for their people. Christianity is an odd religion. A king, a God who dies for those under his rule. A king, a God who suffers the punishment reserved for law breakers.

The king I speak of is Jesus. God the Son from all eternity who took on human flesh. Who came to die for sinners. Why? To purchase our forgiveness by dying in our place. To model sacrificial service. To unite a people through allegiance to him. To scatter these people throughout the globe proclaiming the good news of his death and resurrection. To make disciples through their proclamation.

What hinders this mission? When Jesus' followers are only looking out for themselves. Let's learn from Jesus as we look to Matthew's gospel.

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Passage Focus

FCF: desire for prominence...causes anger in the community

Grace given: substitute provided for our sin of selfish ambition...Jesus paid the ransom for the sin he exposes...and a model to follow

Point 1: Jesus the substitute (20:28)

20:17-19

Jesus is heading to Jerusalem. Heading to the cross. The divine plan renders these events certain. He knows the details:

- 1) Delivered to the chief priests and scribes = religious authorities, the Sanhedrin
 - 2) Condemned to death = will be put on trial and declared guilty
 - 3) Delivered to the Gentiles = being under Roman occupation the religious leaders weren't permitted to put Jesus to death...they needed Roman sanction
- Given Messianic expectations this should have been shocking. How can it be that the Jewish Messiah would suffer at the hands of Gentiles? Wasn't the Messiah supposed to wipe out the Gentiles and restore Israel to prominence?
- 4) Mocked, flogged, crucified = public shame and suffering at the hands of Gentiles

▪ how could this be?

5) Raised on the third day = victory over the grave...the Messiah would exercise power over death and vindicate his claims

20:20-28

On the way, Jesus receives a request from James and John (sons of Zebedee) and their mother Salome (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40):

"Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." – 20:21

In 19:28, the 12 apostles were promised that they would sit on 12 thrones:

Jesus said to them, *"Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* – 19:28

When Jesus returns to establish his eternal kingdom, the apostles would judge unbelieving Israel. From 1 Corinthians 6:2 we gather that the saints in general (that's us!) will judge the world. Presumably the final judgment. Apparently the apostles have a prominent place in that judgment. Salome desires that her sons receive the most prominent seats among the apostles. Like a little kid asking for the best piece of garlic bread. Being the first in line to make sure the best goes to them. Looking over the options and selecting the best for themselves.

Jesus responds, *"You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink"* (20:22)?

There's something that James and John don't understand. Jesus connects their request to the cross. Jesus' cup is the suffering he'll experience at the hands of the Gentiles. At Gethsemane, prior to being turned over to the religious authorities Jesus speaks of his cup:

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." – Matt 26:39

Perhaps they're thinking in terms of Jewish expectations whereby the Messiah will triumph immediately over Rome and establish the kingdom right away? They don't understand that their future honor is connected to the suffering they'll endure. Like Jesus' exaltation was tied to his obedience on the cross (Phil 2:8-11). Jesus' logic is something like, "If you want the prominent seats of honor, you need to endure suffering like me."

"We are able" = brash confidence that fails to count the cost.

Jesus responds, *"You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father"* (20:23). Suffering is certain, but I can't guarantee the seats you desire. Jesus, as is the case throughout his time on earth, submits to the Father's will. As for their cup, Herod had James put to death by the sword

(Acts 12:1-2) and John was exiled to Patmos (Rev 1:9-11) and died a natural death according to the early Christian writers (see John 21:23).

The apostles catch wind and they're indignant. Like the anger of children when they learn that a sibling or classmate is angling for the best piece of cake or best seat for the movie. Self-seeking in the Christian community breeds division.

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them." – 20:25

Jesus uses the dispute to explain the nature of kingdom greatness. In the world, rulers use their position of power to get what they want (lord it over, exercise authority). Citizens within the Roman Empire were compelled by Roman force to comply with the emperor's mandates. On March 18, 2020 Governor Mills used her authority to issue an executive order whereby gatherings greater than ten people were prohibited. This is how authority is exercised in the world. Appealing to his own example, Jesus says not so in the church.

"It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." – 20:26-28

Earthly rulers use their authority to get what they want. Jesus is a king of a different character. He came to die for those who rebelled against his authority. This isn't what kings do. For now, let's draw our attention to the fact that *"the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Why did Jesus take on human flesh and come to earth? One of the many reasons was to die *"as a ransom for many."*

Ransom

What is meant by ransom?

- 1) Ransom = the price it costs to purchase a slave's freedom
 - 2) Jesus' life is the ransom = his life is the price paid
- as sinners who've broken God's law we owe a debt to God...
 - we can't pay the debt so we face God's punishment = hell = a place to be avoided at all costs
- 3) The price necessary to purchase our forgiveness is Jesus' death on the cross
- Jesus' payment is a ransom acceptable to God
- 4) For many = substitutionary atonement = a substitute suffers in the place of others
 - 5) The price is paid to God
- God's justice demands that sin be punished
 - The Father's wrath is satisfied by Jesus dying in our place as our substitute

Summary: in going to cross, Jesus served many by being their substitute...paying the price necessary by giving his life to rescue them from the debt they owed to God because of their sins

Personal application

If we understand Jesus' death correctly, we understand his death as a substitution. If we believe, we trust that Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment our sins deserved. He suffered so we wouldn't have to. Our punishment came upon him. Substitutionary atonement is essential to the gospel.

In terms of personal application, we need to come to grips with the fact that sin is personal. Yes my thoughts, my words, my deeds are directed at people. But fundamentally my sin is against God. I am breaking his commands. I am rebelling against his authority. My sins incur God's judgment.

As sin is personal, so is substitution. We don't need to believe that God died for the world as a generic mass of people. You need to believe that Jesus died specifically for you. Specifically for the sins you've committed. In your place. Jesus as substitute is the hope of the gospel. I am guilty. I am powerless to free myself from God's sentence. Hell is infinitely awful because of who our sins are against: the infinitely wholly God. Jesus' death is infinitely worthy to cover our sins, because he's the infinitely holy Son of God. Jesus stepped in and took my place. Do you trust Jesus personally?

Believers, we follow him, we respond to his teaching, because we trust he's good. We know he's good because he's our substitute. The king taking the punishment due to those who rebel against his authority? This isn't what kings do!

Point 2: Jesus the servant (20:25-28)

Explanation

In the world, authorities use their power to get what they want. What about the church?

whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, – 20:27-28

Kingdom greatness is measured by serving others.

Servant (Greek word for deacon) = household servant; one who renders service to a superior (John 2:5, 9)

Slave = duty bound to a master

The preface to the 2016 ESV says this about *doulos*:

“a ‘bondservant’... someone in the Roman Empire officially bound under contract to serve his master for seven years (except for those in Caesar’s household in Rome who were contracted for fourteen years). When the contract expired, the person was freed, given his wage that had been saved by the master, and officially declared a freedman.”

As a household servant and a bondservant served their master’s wishes, so it should be among Jesus’ disciples. Greatness is measured by serving, not by authority. Jesus gave of himself, he gave his life, to serve us. Giving up his rights for our good. **The picture is a superior who does what’s best for his subjects instead of a superior who uses their power to get what they want.**

Instead of wanting the best seats in the house, the best piece of garlic bread, we should seek each other’s good. Seeking to see that others get a good piece of garlic bread. This is kingdom greatness.

Application: church leadership

1 Peter 5:1-3 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

- shepherd = care for
- exercising oversight = not for shameful gain but for the sheep’s good
- not domineering = leading by example instead of exerting force

Elders also teach. When we teach we implore you to treasure God’s promises and heed God’s threats. We implore you to obey God’s commands and learn godly wisdom. We appeal to God’s Word. We appeal to God’s authority. We to appeal to your reason as we interpret the Bible. We appeal to your heart. We don’t use force. We don’t establish your budget. We don’t plan your schedule. We don’t control your television. We don’t tell you where your kids need to go to school. We appeal to God’s Word. And we seek to provide an example to follow.

Fellow elders, we lead by example. We exist to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:11-12), not to do everything ourselves, but do we give of our time and talents and treasure? Are we on the elder board because we treasure power to get what we want? Or are we on the elder board so we can lead this church in the furtherance of God’s purposes? Are we on this elder board so we can serve the spiritual good of this people?

Application: congregation

The lesson for us is service over self-interest. Am I here only to consume? Or am I here to serve? In reality, we’re here to both consume and serve. We need to be equipped to do the work

of ministry = consume. The word “ministry” in Ephesians 4:12 is the service servants (Matt 20:26) do = serving. We consume to serve.

A consumer makes use of services available. The consumer asks, what can I get out of it? What’s in it for me? Why do I go to Burger King instead of McDonald’s? Because I find better value at Burger King or the burgers are better or because the staff is friendlier. A consumer evaluates the existing options and chooses which provider is best according to their individual needs and preferences. A consumer is all about services offered. We need to beware lest we treat the local church like a burger joint. As a mere provider of services. We need to beware lest we’re only after what we can get out of it.

But should we consume in the local church? Absolutely. The church should serve your spiritual good. Services that feed your soul. Sunday school classes that apply God’s truth. Small groups that provide community. Offering counseling. A church body that will help you through life’s trials. One of the reasons PCC exists is to serve your spiritual good.

So we consume to serve. Kingdom greatness, according to Jesus, is measured by serving. Jesus served us by giving his life as a substitute. He gave for our good. **We could say we’re served by the church to serve the mission of the church.** Giving of our time and resources. Not doing everything. But doing what we can do.

I’m not looking for guilt. Some of you are limited by age or health or specific family needs. Some of you are overextended in your serving already. I’m coming against the attitude, what’s in it for me? What happens if the church body is made up of 100 people whose mission is what’s in it for me? Answer: there’s no mission. In your quiet time, ask God, how would you like me to serve at PCC? That’s what I want. If this is our attitude, we’ll all be served because we’ll be looking out for each other instead of just ourselves.

Conclusion

Jesus came as a substitute for sinners. Taking our place on the cross. Jesus came as a servant. Taking our place on the cross. Let’s follow his lead.

PRAY

Let’s conclude by reading our church covenant. A document the elders approved and new members verbally agree to adhere to.