

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – October 13, 2024

Theme: Living A Life of Sacrifice and Service Topic: Jesus Our Ultimate Example of Sacrifice and Service

Main Text: Mathew 20:20 - 28

Key verse: Mathew 20:27-28 *‘And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave-just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many’ (NKJV)*

INTRODUCTION: Immediately before our main text, Jesus took his disciples aside on their way to Jerusalem to tell them that he was about to be betrayed, condemned, insulted, tortured and crucified, after which He would rise again on the third day. It was as if they didn't hear him! While it is James and John, through the agency of their mother, who were seeking pre-eminence in our reading, all three synoptic gospels record several incidents of the disciples jostling for position. Just two chapters earlier in Matthew 18:1, we see them arguing about who would be the greatest. Jesus taught them that the way to greatness in the kingdom was humility, not ambition. Not long after, he had to repeat the lesson. It seems that the disciples were hard of hearing...not unlike us!

1. **Read Mathew 19:27-30 and 20:17-21 (a) Why do you think the disciples made no response to Jesus' words about what would happen to Him in Jerusalem? (b) Read Isaiah 14:12-15 Why is ambition so dangerous? (c) Discuss whether ambition can be "good". Give examples from Scripture**

"You do not know what you ask." This was Jesus' rebuke to James and John, who, with Peter were the three persons closest to Him throughout His earthly ministry. They were close to him, yet the desire for position and status shows that they did not yet understand his ways (Psalms 9:7, Jeremiah 9:23). The two brothers were not alone in striving for pre-eminence – this was not the first time that Jesus taught His disciples that greatness in His kingdom comes through humility and service, not talent or ambition. At the beginning of chapter 20 Jesus told a parable about grace – God rewards according to His goodness not based on what we think is "fair" given how hard we have worked. At the end of chapter 19, Peter asked Jesus "what's in this for us, since we've given up everything for you". Jesus graciously answers promising that not only would the disciples be rewarded in this life, but they would also "sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel". That didn't seem to be enough for the sons of Zebedee, they wanted the two best thrones! John Calvin cautions that "if this could happen to two excellent disciples...with what care ought we to walk, if we do not wish to turn from the right path?"

2. **Read Mathew 20:22-23, Acts 12:1-3; Revelation 1:9 (a) What "cup" and "baptism" do you think Jesus was referring to? (b) What was the same about the cups? What was different? (c) Read Philippians 2:5-7, Mathew 26:38-39 Since "all things are possible" why do you think Jesus answered the two brothers the way he did at the end of Mathew 20:23?**

Triggered by his disciples' show of selfish ambition, Jesus teaches (again) what service and leadership in the kingdom of God requires. Jesus had just told them what was going to happen to him in Jerusalem but sometimes we are so pre-occupied with our own agendas and prayer requests that we simply don't hear what God is saying to us. In ancient times, humility was considered a vice, not a virtue – it could be argued that this is so in the world today- the idea that a slave could lead was considered preposterous. Yet the Bible teaches that humble service is the ONLY way to greatness in the kingdom of God. Jesus took this to the ultimate extreme – he sacrificed His life in humble service becoming a suffering servant and a ransom for many. Christian leadership must be visibly and substantially different from worldly leadership. "It [must] not be so among us" (v26)

3. **Read Mathew 20:28, Isaiah 53:10-12, Phil 2:5-8 (a) Discuss what these passages speak to us about sacrifice and service. (b) Read John 13:1-5, 12-14 How can we follow Jesus' example this coming week?**

Prayer: *Our Heavenly Father, thank you for the example of our precious Lord Jesus. Let His mind be in us and "let the only greatness, eminence, and rank we desire be to submit to one another and let our primacy be to be servants of all". Amen*