

Mark 10:32-45

**“The Son of Man Came to Serve You”
Fifth Sunday in Lent (B)**

March 17, 2024

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Jesus said:] **“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”** (Mark 10:45).

Who here remembers those rubber bracelets from the 1990s? You know those rubber bracelets with those four letters: “WWJD,” which ask, “What would Jesus do?”

For a time, I wore one of those rubber bracelets. I thought they were cool. I thought they were hip. I wanted to be just like the crowd. And, whenever I looked down at my wrist, I was always reminded to ask myself, “What would Jesus do?”

As inspiring as those “WWJD” rubber bracelets were, there was a flaw. Now, the flaw was not in Jesus, so whatever Jesus would do would always be correct. No, the flaw is in us – *you and me*.

You see, whenever you think to yourself, “What would Jesus do?,” you are likely thinking the things of men; you are likely thinking of yourself. You are thinking from a self-centered point of view. After all, how many of us actually searched the Scriptures to find out what Jesus would do? So, of course, Jesus would do whatever you wanted to do. You are putting yourself in the stead of Jesus; you are putting yourself in the stead of almighty God Himself.

Just think about the Twelve Apostles. They are prime examples of self-centeredness, even when they were in the presence of God Himself. Earlier in Mark’s Gospel, we find them arguing amongst each other on who is the greatest. Jesus asked them, **“‘What were you discussing on the way?’ But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And [Jesus] sat down the Twelve and said to them, ‘If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all’”** (Mark 9:33-35).

Later on, John said to Jesus, **“Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your Name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us”** (Mark 9:38). To that, Jesus said to John, **“Do not stop him ... for the one who is not against us is for us”** (Mark 9:39, 40).

John was curved in upon himself. He thought only those among the Twelve could do awesome things in the Name of Jesus.

We have this attitude too. It's only those who attend the right church that inherit the kingdom of God, right? I've heard that all my life. It's only those LCMS Lutherans. It's only those Roman Catholics. It's only those in my denomination.

Normally we like to critique Simon Peter, but today it's James and John's turn for critique. It's those sons of Zebedee who are desiring positions of glory in their Lord's kingdom. They ask Jesus, ***“Grant us to sit, one at your right and one at your left, in your glory”*** (Mark 10:37). I can only imagine what the other apostles thought of that question. Peter could have looked over at his brother Andrew and each thought: *“Why didn't we think of that? And, really, this honor should go to us! Jesus called us first!”*

Like the rest of us sinners, they craved attention and the recognition for their own accomplishments. Like children shoving their siblings out of the way, we want the important people in the world to take notice: *“Hey, look at me!”*

Like the apostles, we get caught up in ourselves. We stop seeing our neighbor as someone to serve and instead look inward and say, “What do I want?” This fractures us. Self-centeredness leads to feuds, divorce, and all other sorts of splinters.

So Jesus dismisses the request of James and John. Jesus says to them, *“It's not Mine to grant, but the Father's. Those positions have already been filled.”*

Jesus asks James and John: ***“You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”*** (Mark 10:38) To this, they say: ***“We are able”*** (Mark 10:39).

It's this request to be Jesus' right and left hands in His glory by James and John that leads Jesus to say: ***“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”*** (Mark 10:45).

Now, James and John, as well as the rest of the apostles will drink from Christ's cup. They will suffer for proclaiming Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins. None of them would have the celebrity life of a televangelist, the fast cars, the luxury houses, the luxury jet; instead, they would be hated and reviled, stoned, stabbed, poisoned and crucified.

- Did you know that you would be mercilessly ridiculed and derided by the fallen world when you were baptized?
- Did you know that when you confessed your Christian faith on your Confirmation Day that you said that you would rather die than to fall away from the one true Christian faith?
- Did you know that your confession of faith would exclude you from a fallen world of fleshly delight, from sexual immorality to elective abortion?

It's not easy when the tide of the fallen world turns against you, when those shouts of "*Hosanna!*" change to "*Crucify Him!*" It's not easy when those around you pit you against "the science" or "tolerance."

We certainly have our own bitter cups to drink from. It's hard to choke down the dregs of illness and death, disappointment and heartache that can come from this life. It's hard, but it's not impossible. Even unbelievers experience suffering in this life, but we have something else. We have the promise.

The fallen world has its false gods of tolerance, fairness and being nice and living life to the fullest, but all that leads to is death. All the good deeds in this fallen world cannot keep us alive. All the tolerance and equity in this fallen world cannot forgive sins or take away your guilt. You will still suffer. You will still die.

Jesus is different. Jesus is the Lord of Life. Jesus offers up the cup of salvation. Jesus marches to the cross in order to save you, so He can serve you. Jesus enters Jerusalem to be the Suffering Servant who offers up the once-for-all sacrifice for your sins and for the sins of the whole world. God became man to be that sacrifice, for without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

God became man for a single purpose: to be "***wounded for our transgressions***" and be "***crushed for our iniquities***" (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus comes in order to "***bear the sin of many, and make intercession for the transgressors***" (Isaiah 53:12), because of Him will be laid "***the iniquity of us all***" (Isaiah 53:6). This is the purpose of Jesus' mission. He came to "***give His life as a ransom for many***" (Mark 10:45).

Besides the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, we have the Passover of Exodus 12. In the Passover, the lamb was killed – *sacrificed* – in the stead of the firstborn of the people of Israel, ensuring that the destroyer would "pass over" the people of God when the lamb's blood was spread upon the lintel and the doorposts of their homes.

As with Christ, in His sacrifice, He endured the smiting and striking by God the Father as His blood was poured out for the multitudes, so that all who trust in Him would be saved from God's wrath. To this, St. Paul writes, "*For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*" (1 Corinthians 5:7b).

So, what would Jesus do? He suffers for you. He dies for you. He does this to save you from bondage. He does this to save you from your self-centeredness. He does this to save you from Satan's accusations. He does this to save you from this fallen world.

Our self-centeredness does not want to deny yourself. Our self-centeredness wants to make yourself your own god.

But Christ's sacrifice on the cross for you and for me wipes that away and causes us to not look inward, but outward, toward God and our neighbor. Jesus' chief mission, His central issue, was to restore the relationship between God and man. In order to restore this relationship, the dividing wall must be destroyed – and this wall is sin.

Jesus' focus is the forgiveness of sins. He has come to serve and not to be served. He has come to serve you and He has come to serve me. For this reason, our church services are not called the worship service, but the "Divine Service." This comes from the German word "Gottesdienst," which means "service of God."

This church service is called "Divine Service" because God continues to serve us to this day. He serves us with His Means of Grace – His Word and Sacraments, which give us the forgiveness of sins that Christ won for us upon the cross as our Suffering Servant.

So, what would Jesus do? He would suffer. So, we must be prepared to suffer. But He also gives us the fruit from His cup. He has taken away the sin and punishment from you so that the cup you drink at this altar is only His blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, for your salvation and your eternal life.

The Son of Man came to serve. He came to serve you! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus serves you His Means of Grace so He can sustain you to life everlasting. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +