

Orcutt Christian Church

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Emmanuel = God With Us

Mother's Day

A Mother's Request

Mt 20:20-28

May 8, 2022

Communion: Archie Miller

Communion:

1. **♪ Doxology**

2. **♪ O God Our Help in Ages Past 686**

3. **♪ Here I Am, Lord 589**

4. **♪ O Word of God Incarnate 414**

5. **♪ Because I Have Been Given Much**

6. **♪ O God, Our Help in Ages Past 686**

7. **♪ Family of God**

Mt 20:20-28 (NASB) (*Mark 10:35–45*)

20Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, kneeling down and making a request of Him. **21**And He said to her, "What do you desire?" She said to Him, "Say that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine shall sit, one at Your right, and one at Your left." **22**But Jesus replied, "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 at My right and at My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

24And after hearing *this*, the *other* ten *disciples* became indignant with the two brothers. **25**But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles domineer over them, and those in high position exercise authority over them. **26**It is not this way among you, but whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant, **27**and whoever desires 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 as a ransom for many.”

Mother's Day.

I began reflecting on today's sermon a couple months ago. Mother's Day and Father's Day sermons are the most difficult sermons for preachers to share in these tumultuous times.

And I know that you are aware of the problems these special days pose for people.

Single moms

Single dads

Moms that hate their children

Dads that hate their children

Kids that hate their parents.

These difficulties are extremely well known to you.

I suspect the majority of sermons today will be based on Proverbs 31, and I've done those before.

Then I remembered the mother who made a request to Jesus about her sons.

Let me read this passage to you as Matthew writes it.

It's also in the Gospel of Mark with a different point of view.

READ TEXT

Who is this audacious woman?

When we read all four gospels, we learn that her name is Salome.

And Salome has a special relationship with Jesus.

She is his aunt.

Her sister is Mary the mother of Jesus.

And she has two sons who are Jesus first cousins.

Their names are James and John.

And here is an amazing thing about Scripture.

Salome is the first mention in history of a Helicopter Mom.

And if you read *Between Parent and Teenager* by Dr. Haim Ginott back in 1969, you will remember the teen who complained to Dr. Ginott that his mother hovered over him like a helicopter.

Helicopter moms want the best for their kids.

They call their college kids to wake them up for class.

Go to their professors complaining about not giving higher grades.

They keep track of their college kids bank accounts.

Advocate for their adult kids admission to medical school or law school.

And then when offered a position, according to Human Resources officials, the helicopter mom advocate for a better position at a higher salary.

They desperately want their kids to succeed, have the best positions, earn the most money, have the highest prestige.

And there is a payoff for the mom who gains prestige when her child succeeds and she can boast about Dr. son, or attorney daughter.

People then look up to the helicopter mom.

And here is Salome, the first account of a helicopter mom.

Matthew says the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons

and did what

She knelt in front of her nephew.

The Greek word (**προσκυνούσα** - pros-koo-neh'-o) means to kiss the ground when prostrating before a superior; to fall down and prostrate oneself; to adore on one's knees; to do obeisance.

Can you imagine any of your aunts doing that.

Jesus by this time has become quite famous in the Holy land.

Whenever He and his entourage enter a town, the word goes out and there is excitement as the people turn out to see His latest miracle, and listen to His latest sermon.

James and John, had just heard Jesus say to the twelve,

Mt 20:18-19 (NIV)

“We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death 19 and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”

James and John are still so self-centered they do not hear that Jesus is about to be executed.

Though Jesus gave His disciples full details concerning what to expect in Jerusalem, they neither understood the Cross nor were they encouraged by the promise of the Resurrection.

Luke states emphatically that **“as for them, none of these things did they connect together in their understanding or perception,”** (Luke 18:34, phrased)

All they hear is that they are going to Jerusalem, and that can only mean one thing.

Jesus is about to declare His Kingship.

Matthew tells us that Jesus had told this in privacy to the Twelve, and we read into the account that James and John make a bee line to helicopter mom, Salome, and tell her the new king of Israel is about to initiate His attack on Rome, and drive out the hated foreigners.

As the new king, He has to have advisors to assist Him in the ruling of the new Israel.

Salome has known Jesus since He was a baby, and had watched him grow, playing with His cousins, James and John.

She was one of the group of women who followed Jesus where ever He went.

.She, like her sons, had the view that the kingdom of God was near at hand.

Was not Jesus even now on His way to Jerusalem?

Despite Jesus' prophecy of His suffering and death, James and John and their mother could only envision the coming rule of Jesus in Jerusalem.

And this is where helicopter mom jumps in.

She comes up to Jesus and kneels in front of Him.

This would be custom of approaching an Oriental King, to show respect and deference.

21 And He said to her, "What do you desire?" She said to Him, "Say that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine shall sit, one at Your right, and one at Your left."

The seat at the right hand was the most honorable.

The left hand is second to that.

In spite of Jesus' warning against desiring to be "**the greatest**" (18:1-6), this ambitious mother requested that her sons be given thrones next to Jesus.

This is a very bold request to make.

To sit on the right and the left hand is to be made the two highest ranks possible in the kingdom.

The one on the right being “second” in command and the one the left “third” in command.

She is asking that Jesus make her two sons the two highest ranking officials in the kingdom under Jesus.

How could this woman be so bold to ask such a thing.

Well, she perhaps reasons that as His aunt, request will be granted.

It is not uncommon for people to use their relatives or other relationships they have developed as a means to achieve some greater position for themselves.

There is a lot of truth in the saying, “It is not what you know, it is who you know.”

We often find that positions are not filled with the person best qualified, but the person with the best connections.

In this case we see the mother of James and John seeking to use her relationship Jesus’ aunt to gain prominent positions for her two sons – Jesus’ cousins.

Well, Jesus is about to be king, and kings tend to have big egos and people soon learned that if you come in a manner that magnified that ego, they could get the king to give them what they wanted.

We call it “buttering them up.”

Have you ever went to your boss and asked for a raise?

How did you do it?

Did you tell them how much you enjoy working with them?

How great they are as a supervisor?

Truth is, we humans like to have our pride built up.

We want others to think not only good of us, but that in some way we are superior to others.

Salome comes to Jesus seeking to gain prestigious positions for her sons – and really for her self as well.

What mother does not want her children to rise to important positions, to be “successful.”

Parents take great pride in how their children turn out – especially if they do achieve important positions.

And truthfully, we parents should take a certain amount of satisfaction in what our children achieve.

Here we find Salome is not just promoting her two sons for their sake, but really for her own sake as well since she would then have “bragging rights.”

“My two sons sit on the left and right of the king!

But, we can’t let James and John off easily, because the sacred book says

Mark 10:36 says

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and declared, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.”

Just like that!

Asking Jesus to grant them **whatever** they ask without specifying.

And, like Mama, they are prestige driven.

And children of helicopter moms learn to be manipulative, and demanding.

It may be that they were moved to make this request because Jesus had just assured the Twelve that they would sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

Unfortunately, the Twelve interpreted this in terms of the type of nationalistic ambition fostered and taught by the Scribes and Pharisees.

These rabbis turned the people away from God’s true purpose for Israel.

God had created the Nation of Israel for the purpose of preparing for the Messiah.

They were to teach the nations about the love that God has for all people.

They were to be lights to all the nations.

But the Pharisees and Scribes taught that the Messiah's only mission would be to overthrow Rome and establish Jewish supremacy over the nations of the world.

The Pharisees and Scribes ignored the promise of deliverance from the bondage of sin.

They overlooked the promise of the world's redemption as held out by Isaiah and other prophets.

They forgot that there could be no kingdom or restoration of Israel without a New Covenant.

They twisted God's Word, disregarded all but those parts which suited their own ideas and ambitions, and filled their imaginations with the picture of a Messiah who was the creation of their own desires.

Even after listening to Jesus teach for over 3 years, the disciples were not yet free of the prejudice and distorted ideas with which the rabbis had filled their minds in the years of their childhood and youth.

And, it may be that James and John were trying to use Jesus as a tool of their own ambition.

22But Jesus replied, "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 at My right and at My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

Notice how quickly they answered Jesus' penetrating question:

Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?

In less than a microsecond, they respond

"We are able."

How could they reply so quickly, as if they didn't even consider what Jesus was asking them.

“We are able.”

They could answer that question because their minds were on the crowns.

Jesus' mind was on the cross.

His question should have clued them in about the high price that would have to be paid to be counted worthy of the position they were seeking.

They will have to be able to **drink the cup** that Jesus was about to drink.

The quickness of their answer that they were able to drink that cup demonstrates they had not taken into full consideration all that would mean.

They, like Peter would later, boastfully claimed to be able to do something they were not yet prepared to do.

They were bold, impulsive, hot tempered.

Part of the reason Jesus nicknamed them, “the sons of thunder.”

It seems amazing that James and John would even have this request on their minds after the strong rebuke all the disciples received only a few weeks or so before when they had been arguing about who among them was the greatest in the kingdom

Mark 9:33-35 (BSB)

33Then they came to Capernaum. While Jesus was in the house, He asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” **34**But they were silent, for on the way they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. **35**Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the last of all and the servant of all.”

But, isn't that just like you and I?

We all have a "I" problem.

We can't see each other because we are focused on ourselves.

We want what we want when we want it.

James and John wanted to know what was in it for them.

Too often we are no different.

Even our prayers often center on what we want rather than being a servant God can use.

James and John claimed that they were able to drink the same cup that Jesus was about to drink, and in fairness to John, only he and Peter followed Jesus after He was arrested.

All the other disciples, including James, ran away.

Peter later denied Jesus, but John remained faithful.

John was the only disciple at the foot of Jesus cross when He was crucified.

James drank from the cup first.

He was the very first of the Apostles to be martyred.

In **Acts 12** we read that Herod killed James with a sword because it pleased the Jew's authorities.

John also drank from that cup, but in a different way.

John was the only apostle that did not die as a martyr but lived to be an old man and apparently died when he was exiled to the Island of Patmos.

But think about the inappropriateness of Mama Salome, and her sons' request.

James, John and their mother desired to gain the prominent positions from Jesus.

It was sad statement about their character for them not to hear their Lord's saying He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die.

So concerned were they on getting a crown, they missed the cross.

And it's sad that after over 3 years with the Messiah they – and the other disciples – were still largely infected with the world's values.

Verse 24 tells us that when the other ten disciples heard what James, John and their mother had done, they became indignant.

As demonstrated by their continued bickering which continued even to the night of the Last Supper, they were indignant that James and John were trying to gain a higher position over them.

Matthew 18:1(NKJV)

the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

All of them were still infected with the world's values, and the world values positions of prominence and power. The result was jealousy and a split in the ranks of the disciples.

No longer were they the Twelve, but the 2 against the 10. Jealousy always damages the people of God.

It surely must have hurt Jesus.

He was on the way to the Cross to pour out His life in self-giving love.

Yet here were selfishness and jealousy raising their ugly heads among those who were closest to Him, attitudes foreign to the Son of God.

Ask the person on the street what success is and you will find for the most part that people define success in terms of money, prestige, position, power or fame.

Even churches are caught up in this mentality, defining success in terms of number of members, size of budget or how many campuses they can create.

The disciples wanted to be great in God's kingdom, but they thought of it ONLY in terms of worldly standards. Jesus takes this opportunity to teach them, and us, how to be truly great.

25But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles domineer over them, and those in high position exercise authority over them. 26It is not this way among you, but whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant, 27and whoever desires to be first among you shall be your slave; 28just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

That's some pretty strong language.

domineer over them

those in high position exercise authority over them

We are not to be like the world grasping and clutching for power.

We are not to think our ourselves as being rulers and great people.

The same philosophy of domination and wealth still drives many who are in leadership positions whether that is in government, business, and sadly, yes, even Christian organizations and churches.

I have known way to many ministers who have misused their position and seriously abused others.

There are many today in pulpits across our land, on the radio and TV who are self-seeking leaders who skillfully take advantage of ignorant, gullible, believers to build up their own little kingdom by fleecing the flock.

And I think of all those TV preachers who have multiple million dollar houses, and large jets, who use their position to get some of the poorest people to send in huge amounts of money to finance their worldly life style.

They tell people what they want to hear and play up to man's innate selfishness appealing to emotion and worldly appetites.

Jesus tells us in vs. 26 that it is not to be that way among believers.

Jesus tells us that the path to greatness within his kingdom is different.

but whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever desires to be first among you shall be your slave;

What a shock Mama Salome must have had to hear these words.

As a helicopter mom she had worked hard to engineer their careers.

Jesus turns the Messianic Kingdom's concept of greatness upside down from that of the world.

Greatness in the kingdom comes from being a servant and a slave.

Leaders in the church are to be slaves of Christ and servants of His people.

If you want to be great, you have to become a humble, selfless slave.

And a true servant will sacrifice for the sake of others in the name of Christ.

A sham servant avoids suffering and discomfort.

But, Jesus carries this even further than just being a servant.

If you want to be first, then you have to go another step and become a slave.

A slave is lower than a servant for a servant was free to go as he pleased.

But a slave was owned by his master and could only go and do what the master wanted.

The greatest in the kingdom is the one who is a slave, sold out completely to Christ and His kingdom.

Paul often referred to Himself in this manner, a slave of Christ as he describes himself in

Rom. [1:1](#) (HCSB)

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and singled out for God's good news

He says in

1 Cor 6:20 (NKJV)

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The slave is unconcerned for his own life,
unconcerned for his own glory,
unconcerned for his own power.

His only concern is for his master, his lord.

While many claim that Jesus is their lord, only a few are His slaves.

Jesus Himself is the example of what it means to be great in the kingdom, of what it means to be a servant and a slave.

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

Jesus came to serve you and I and pay the ransom price to redeem for you and I.

Jesus did not die on the cross so that you could live in happy circumstances,

He didn't die so you would be healthy and wealthy.

He died so that your bondage to sin could be broken, that you could be reconciled to God and escape His condemnation, and that you could now have an eternal relationship with Him.

If that is the example set by our master, then what should be the mark of our lives.

Well, yes, I know most sermons on this Mother's Day will be focusing on

Proverbs 31:27-28 (BSB)

27She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. 28Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband praises her as well:

But we simply as Christians have to broaden our concept of being slaves for Christ.

It's not just moms.

It's you and I.

Do humility and servant-hood characterize your life?

Is your concern what people do for you or what you do for them?

How much are you willing to sacrifice in the service of your master?

Is Jesus really your lord or just someone that you are seeking to use to gain what you want?

Are you still seeking after what the world values, or what God values.

Proud, boastful Simon was changed into the Apostle Peter who wrote,

1 Peter 5:6 (BSB)

humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

The truly great follow Jesus' example and seek to serve, not be served; to sacrifice of themselves, not seek others to sacrifice for them.

In all humility, let's you and I be the slave of Christ and serve Him and His people and let God be the one that exalts you.