

Sermon Note: Not to be Served

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

As we continue our “Walking with Jesus” series, we arrive at a memorable moment in Mark 10:35-45 where Jesus teaches about true greatness. James and John seek positions of honor, but Jesus redirects their ambition toward service. Walking with Jesus means learning to lead not by seeking power, but by serving others. This passage challenges us to rethink leadership and reminds us that we find our greatest purpose in serving one another, just as Jesus did.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NRm5XZfV7A&t=11s>

In this scene from *Avengers: Endgame* (2019), Tony Stark makes his final sacrifice by using the Infinity Stones. His journey from a narcissistic playboy to a selfless hero is a modern reflection of servant leadership—choosing to put others before oneself, even when it costs everything.

Why This Video?

Tony Stark’s character arc begins in the first *Iron Man* (2008) film with his desire for power, wealth, and recognition; but over time, his experiences with the Avengers transform him. His final act in *Endgame* is an example of sacrificial leadership and service to others. Tony’s ultimate decision to lay down his life shows that leadership is found in putting others first rather than seeking personal glory.

Video Discussion Questions

1. How does Tony’s final act show growth in his character over time?
2. What do you think motivated Tony to sacrifice himself?
3. How does Tony’s leadership differ from his earlier behavior as a self-centered hero?
4. What emotions did you experience watching Tony make this decision? Why do you think it resonated with you?
5. How does this kind of leadership challenge the typical “hero” image we see in movies?

Mark 10:35-45 (CEB)

³⁵James and John, Zebedee’s sons, came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶“What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷They said, “Allow one of us to sit on your right and the other on your left when you enter your glory.”

³⁸Jesus replied, “You don’t know what you’re asking! Can you drink the cup I drink or receive the baptism I receive?”

³⁹“We can,” they answered.

Jesus said, “You will drink the cup I drink and receive the baptism I receive,⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left hand isn’t mine to give. It belongs to those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹Now when the other ten disciples heard about this, they became angry with James and John. ⁴²Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the ones who are considered the rulers by the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around. ⁴³But that’s not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant. ⁴⁴Whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all, ⁴⁵for the Human One didn’t come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many people.”

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. Who asks to sit at the right and left of Jesus in glory?
2. What role does Jesus say the disciples must take in following him?
3. Why is the word “servant” significant to Jesus, contrasting with the high-ranking officials of the Roman world?
4. How can we avoid ambition that blinds us to true servanthood?
5. What does being a servant in the church look like today?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. In this scripture, Jesus asked his audience to “keep the main thing the main thing.” Would you agree if I said that “living scripture” is the main thing?
2. A popular craft with children and youth—and even in my son’s Middle School engineering class—is to use common materials like string, cups, popsicle sticks, etc. to build a bridge. What do you think would be the most important structural part of building this bridge?
3. How does supporting objects with a bridge relate to supporting or serving others as a Christian?
4. How can serving and supporting people make you great?
5. Will serving or supporting always feel great? Why?
6. This news that “being great means being in service” shocked the disciples. Why do you think that was? Is that idea more or less shocking today?
7. What is one thing you can do this week to embody service the way Jesus described?

Weekly Action

This week, look for one opportunity to serve someone else in a way that costs you something—whether it’s time, energy, or resources. Reflect on how this act mirrors Jesus’ teaching on leadership and greatness. Consider journaling about the experience to explore how serving others shapes your faith.

Prayer

Servant God, there are so many ways You have given us new life. By the power of the cross, we have received the greatest love and gift we could ever receive. Forgive us for all the times we seek power and glory instead of living as faithful disciples and servants. May Your Spirit create in us hearts made to serve You and those around us. Amen.