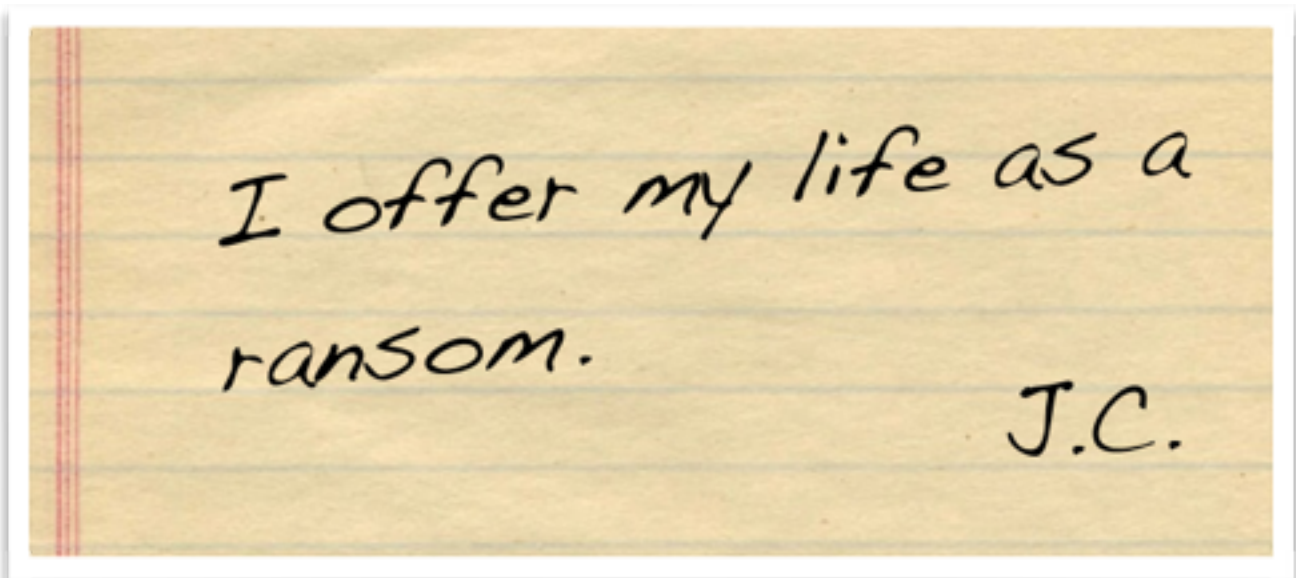


Hope Christian Church
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23 March 2014

Sermon Series: *The Gospel of Mark*



The Son of Man Came To Serve, Not Be Served

Why Did Jesus Come to Earth?

Mark 10:35-45 9ESV)

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶ And he said to them, "*What do you want me to do for you?*" ³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸ Jesus said to them, "*You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?*" ³⁹ And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "*The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,*" ⁴⁰

*but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”*⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.

⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Introduction

In possibly every culture on the planet, the idea of greatness carries with it the notion of having multiple people surrounding you taking care of your every need. The truly great and powerful people in the world are the ones who have servants to do this, that, and the other thing for them so that they are not required to waste their time doing the mundane tasks of daily life for themselves. This of course, frees them to do the things in life that are really fun and bring joy to life.

Great people never have to serve themselves because they have servants to do that for them. All the great estates and great manors of the world employ many servants and who do all that needs to be done while the lord of the manor is off swimming or reading or resting or horseback riding or on some adventurous trek across the wide world. Don't you wish you had some servants to serve you? How many servants would you need in order to be happy? The idea of greatness entails servants. Right?

Wrong. Jesus turns this idea of greatness on its head. According to Jesus, in order to become truly great, one does not *acquire* servants, one *becomes* a servant. The more one becomes like a servant, the more Christ-like one becomes.

The Context

Immediately prior to this conversation that was just read to us, Jesus had for the third time¹ predicted his arrest, rejection, condemnation, torture, crucifixion, and resurrection (10:33-34). Though Jesus said these things “very plainly,”² the disciples were not understanding what he was saying.³

It is painfully obvious that they did not understand because as Jesus was predicting the brutality he was about to face upon arrival in Jerusalem, James and John were daydreaming about each having the highest seats of honor in the kingdom of God. And, once again, as we

¹ See also Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34.

² Mk 8:32.

³ Mk 9:32.

saw last week (Mk 8:34), when Jesus realizes that the other ten disciples have heard what had been said, he called a team huddle.

Mark 10:42 (ESV)

⁴² *"And Jesus called them to him and said..."*

Jesus looks to the Gentile culture to illustrate his example.

Mark 10:42 (ESV)

"You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them."

The rulers of the Gentiles enjoyed the power they had. They "lorded" their authority over their subjects. They enjoyed giving commands and telling their subordinates what to do. They were strong in the exercise of their authority. They commanded respect and made sure their rank and office were duly noted and never ignored. But this kind of leadership was not the kind of leadership that Jesus would tolerate among his people.

Mark 10:43-44 (ESV)

⁴³ *But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,* ⁴⁴ *and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.*

This was not their first time Jesus had instructed them on true greatness (see Mk 9:33-35). He first addressed this issue with them immediately following his second prediction of his rejection, murder, and resurrection (Mk 9:30-31) but they had not yet learned the lesson. So it was necessary for Jesus to once again teach them.⁴

He said here almost the same thing as he had previously. The first time he had said, *"If you want to be first, then you must be last of all."*⁵ Here he repeats the same truth but uses different words. He yearns for his disciples to absorb deep into the marrow of their souls, not only the truth of who he is and why he came, but also the truth of what he expects of his disciples.

For Jesus, no conversation lacked potential for life-transformation. Every casual conversation could be used as an opportunity to teach gospel truth. Every moment could be the opportunity of a living illustration of what it really means to be his follower. Jesus never had a "day off" from being messiah. He was perpetually alert to moments when truth could be spoken and lives shaped for the gospel. Jesus did not wear his "messiah robe" from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and then take it off after quitting time. He was constantly communicating to his

⁴ It is noteworthy that immediately following each prediction of his Passion, Jesus offered a brief but substantive teaching on the meaning of discipleship.

⁵ Mk 9:35.

disciples the truth that would forever completely change their lives. And that life-changing, soul-transforming truth, could come in a single moment in a single sentence.

One of the men whom God has used most deeply to bless my spiritual growth said this,

What I have learned from about twenty-years of serious reading is this. *It is sentences that change my life, not books.* What changes my life is some new glimpse of truth, some powerful challenge, some resolution to a long-standing dilemma, and these usually come concentrated in a sentence or two. I do not remember 99% of what I read, but if the 1% of each book or article I do remember is a life-changing insight, then I don't begrudge the 99%. And that life-changing insight usually comes in a moment...⁶

I believe one of those moments and one of those sentence which has has the power to change lives, both for the disciples and for us, is what Jesus said next.

Mark 10:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

In one sentence, Jesus explains both why he came into this world and how he expects his disciples to live in light of why he came. These are two incredibly important questions.

1. Why did Jesus come into the world?
2. How then shall we live in light of why he came?

Let's think about each of them separately.

Why Did Jesus Come Into the World?

First, lets take the question, "Why did Jesus come into the world?" Jesus offers us a negative and a positive answer to this question. First, he states why he did *not* come into this world and then he explains why he *did* come into the world. Let's examine the negative reason first.

Jesus Did Not Come To Be Served

Jesus does not want there to be any confusion about why he came into the world. He says, *"The Son of Man came not to be served..."* Jesus did not come into this world to be served. He did not come into the world looking to recruit helpers to take care of all his needs.

⁶ John Piper in the sermon "Quantitate Hopelessness and the Immeasurable Moment" preached 13 July 1981, available at <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/quantitative-hopelessness-and-the-immeasurable-moment> accessed 21 March 2014.

He did not come to earth because his Father's house is so big that he needed to hire a new group of servants to clean the 157th floor because he fired the first group and sent them to hell. He did not come here looking for servants to work in the kitchen because God was tired of making his own meals and Jesus didn't like hunting (Psalm 50:12). He did not come looking for servants to sit with him in his massive kingdom because it's so big and sometimes he gets lonely sitting in the rocking chair up in the heavenly attic. Jesus did not come looking for servants to carry his litter so he could more comfortably get from place to place. **[God carried Israel, Israel did not God]**

Jesus did not come to be served as though he needed anything. Don't come to Jesus thinking he needs your service. Come to Jesus knowing you need his. We do not have anything to give to him that we did not first receive from him. We dare not serve him as though we do.

Acts 17:25 (ESV)

²⁵ [God is not] *served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything,*

God is not a needy god, he is a giving God. God is the Great Giver of all things and we the receivers. Therefore we ought never to think that we provide him with something he does not have or is not able to do for himself. We dare not serve him like that.

An Objection

But you may be thinking, "Wait a minute, aren't God's people, throughout Scripture called God's servants? Isn't Moses⁷, Joshua⁸, David⁹, and Paul¹⁰ called the 'servant of God?'" Yes, but what that means is that the LORD is their master and they do what he commands. It does not mean they provide some service to him which he is either unable or unwilling to do for himself. Being the "servant of the LORD" means he directs and they follow; he commands and they obey his commands.

If Jesus did not come to be served, then why did he come?

Jesus Came To Serve

Jesus says reason he came was to serve. He did not come looking to be served, he came to be a servant himself. He did not come as a mighty conquering king. He came as the long foretold Suffering Servant. He did not come as haughty Sovereign. He came as a humble servant. He did not come as the all-powerful Son of the Almighty. He came as a lowly Son of Man.

⁷ Dt 35:4.

⁸ Josh 24:29.

⁹ Superscription Ps 18:1 & 36:1.

¹⁰ Rom 1:1.

How Does Jesus "Serve?"

He came to this earth to serve. The question is then how? In what way did he come to serve? And whom did he come to serve? Did he come mainly to serve sick people by making them well? Did he come mainly to serve those demonically oppressed by setting them free? Did he come primarily to serve the average Jew by putting right the hypocritical religious leaders of the day? There is truth in all of those, but in his own words, the main way he came to serve was by "**offering his life as a ransom for many.**"

He Served by Willingly Offering His Life

Notice that Jesus knew exactly the reason for which he came—he came to offer his life as a ransom. He came to die. However, Jesus was not a hapless victim of circumstance. He did not come to bring peace¹¹ and then accidentally stumbled into a political quagmire from which he was unable to escape. He knew exactly what he was doing. He willingly offered his life. He chose to lay it down. No one took his life from him (Jn 10:18). He three times on the way to Jerusalem predicted his death in amazing detail (Mk 10:33-34). He voluntarily offered his own life in obedience to the Father's will.¹² Jesus came to earth to give his life away.

He came to serve by dying.

He Served by Becoming a Ransom

But there's more to it than that. Jesus did not just come to die as though his death in itself was the purpose. His death is far more significant and meaningful than that. His death was offered as a "**ransom for many.**"

The word 'ransom,' (*lutron λυτρον*) refers to "the price paid"¹³ to free a slave or any person from "slavery, prison, or death."¹⁴ "The prevailing notion behind the metaphor is that of deliverance by purchase, whether a prisoner of war, a slave, or a forfeited life is the object to be delivered." The entire act of paying the ransom and delivering to freedom those enslaved is called **redemption**.

Old Testament Background: Ransom, Redemption, & Passover

The Old Testament background to this is God's redemption of Israel out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt. Israel was enslaved in Egypt. They painfully endured four hundred years of oppressed existence in the "iron furnace of slavery"¹⁵ under the harsh taskmasters of Egypt.

¹¹ Matthew 10:34 ff.

¹² Recall Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42).

¹³ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Mk 10:42.

¹⁴ D. A. Carson, R. T. France, et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 967.

¹⁵ Dt 4:20; 1 Kg 8:51; Jer 11:4.

The ransom that finally effected their deliverance to freedom was the price of the lifeblood of every first-born in Egypt. *The blood of the firstborn of all Egypt was the ransom that freed the Israelites.* And to this day they are reminded of that price and their freedom every year at Passover.

In Mark 10:45 Jesus' is teaching that his voluntary offering of his own life secured the deliverance of those who were ransomed. There is an objective aspect to the salvation of God's people. Salvation, in all its fullness, is far more complicated than us merely choosing to believe in Jesus. Our ability to chose Jesus is rooted in an objective, divine transaction which took place at Calvary's Cross.¹⁶

Paul picks up on this notion when he wrote to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

*¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for **you were bought with a price.**¹⁷ So glorify God in your body.*

What Was the Price of the Ransom?

Jesus willingly offered up his life in exchange for ours. What is the price of the ransom? Jesus' life-blood is the ransom price to secure our freedom. We see this explicitly in two places.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (ESV)

*¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the **precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

This will be the new song of heaven,

Revelation 5:9 (ESV)

*"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and **by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation...**"*

Who Was Ransomed?

The price of the ransom was the blood of Jesus, his very life. The next question is, "Who was ransomed?" Revelation 5:9 answers that question saying that Jesus ransomed for God people **"from every tribe and language and people and nation."** So people from every nation and

¹⁶ See also John 10:27-28; 17:2, 6, 9, 1124.

¹⁷ See also 1 Cor 7:23.

ethnic group on the whole face of the earth had the ransom price of their salvation paid for at Calvary's Cross.

In Mark 10:45 Jesus said that he came to "offer his life as a ransom **for many.**" Many, but not all. There are *many* who will benefit from Jesus ransom, but not *all*. There are *many* people who will be redeemed "from every tribe and language and people and nation," but not *all* will be ransomed. The question is are you in the 'many?'

The fact that Jesus came to this world "to give his life as a ransom for many," means that his death was a **substitutionary death**.¹⁸ "The prepositional phrase 'for many' translates *anti pollōn*. The ordinary meaning of the preposition *anti* is 'in place of' or 'instead of'—a clear indication of **substitution**."¹⁹

The substitutionary nature of the death of messiah goes back to the beginning of the sacrificial system itself. God established the rule that the only means of atoning for sins was death.

Hebrews 9:22b (ESV)

²² *Indeed... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

Every single sin, whether it be stealing a piece of fruit from someone else's tree or taking the life of another human being, every single sin is so wickedly evil in the sight of God that only means of appeasing God's just wrath against sinners is death. And since every single human being has sinned, if there are to be any living humans, then a substitute must die. Thus God commanded animals to be sacrificed as a substitute. But the animals did not actually take away sin²⁰, they merely provided a temporary covering of sins until messiah would come and actually take away sins by fully and completely atoning for sins.

Isaiah 53:4-6 (ESV)

⁴ *Surely he has borne **our** griefs
and carried **our** sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

⁵ *But he was pierced for **our** transgressions;
he was crushed for **our** iniquities;
upon **him** was the chastisement that brought **us** peace,
and with **his** wounds **we** are healed.*

⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray;*

¹⁸ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 383.

¹⁹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 721.

²⁰ Hebrews 10:4.

we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on **him**
the iniquity of **us** all.

Isaiah 53:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make **many** to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear **their** iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of **many**,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Jesus came to earth to offer his life as a ransom for *many*, but not for *all* people. His death was a substitutionary death. But we must know clearly how we can be numbered among the ‘many’ who are covered by the effective ransom of his blood.

How Can We Be Sure We Sure that We Are in the ‘Many?’

Jesus’ death is not effective for all people, meaning each and every single person who ever lived. We know this because Jesus himself tells us that not all people will be saved. Hell is real and it will be densely populated.²¹ He died for all kinds of people—from every tribe, language, and nation—but his death does not automatically effect (bring about, cause) the salvation of all individual persons.

So how can you be sure that Jesus’ substitutionary death is effective for you? How can you be sure that you are saved and covered by his blood? How can you be sure that the ransom he paid is effective for you and that he purchased your salvation?

I’ll let Jesus answer that for you.

John 6:35-40 (ESV)

³⁵ Jesus said to them, *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

³⁷ *...and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.* ³⁸ *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.* ⁴⁰ *For this is the will of*

²¹ Jesus taught, ¹³ *“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.* ¹⁴ *For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”* (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV)

my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

First, you must know that you cannot save yourself. A ransom is a price paid by another to effect the freedom of the one being held captive. You must look away from yourself and look to Jesus for your salvation. You must renounce all trust in your own ability to deliver yourself and look to the Son and believe in his ability to deliver you from death and give you eternal life. You cannot trust in yourself. *You must realize that apart from him you will die.*

You must come to realize that all the sins that you are presently trusting in to satisfy the hunger and thirst of your soul will only eventually lead to your spiritual death. You must stop trusting in your sins to satisfy your soul and start trusting that Jesus will satisfy your soul. You must look to him to satisfy all the desires of your soul. *You must believe and trust that the commands of Jesus will lead you to life and away from death.* If you come to him in this way, then he will never cast you out and he will raise you up on the last day. If you look to him in this way, then you need not doubt that your soul is secure in the strong arms of Jesus. If you trust him like this, then his death was the ransom that gives you life.

From What Were We Ransomed?

Let's conclude with one final question, "From what were we ransomed?" Peter said that we were "*ransomed from the futile ways inherited from our forefathers*" (1 Ptr 1:18). I can't help but wonder if Peter is describing the stubborn, faithless, idolatrous, self-centered lives of his forefathers as they continually refused to trust God in their wandering in the wilderness. All they repeatedly wanted to do was go back to Egypt. Again and again they wanted to return to a life of brutal slavery because they could not endure the process of sanctification that was delivering them into the Promised Land.

Jesus said, "*Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin*" (Jn 8:34). The only ones who are truly free are the one whom the Son sets free (Jn 8:36).

By his death, Jesus ransomed his people out of the iron furnace and brutality of slavery to sin. By his death, he has delivered his people into the wide open spaces of spiritual life and purity. By his death, Jesus ransomed his people out of the dominion of darkness and transferred them into the glorious kingdom of his marvelous light.

How Shall We Live In Light of This?

So then how shall we live in light of why Jesus came? If you have never before asked Jesus to deliver you from the futile life of slavery to sin, then pray right now and ask him to set you free and he will do it.

If you are already one of his disciples and you want to be truly great, then serve others by helping them fall in love with this truth the saving truth that Jesus offered his life as a ransom to set people free from slavery to sin. Even the Son of Man came not to be serve, but to serve humanity by offering his life as a ransom. Do not seek your own greatness. Pour yourself out to help others fall in love with this Suffering Savior who came to serve them, not be served by them.