
KNOW AND GROW IN CHRIST

SERVE

Mark 10:42-45

In order to know and grow in Christ you need to **Gather** with God's people. This is essential. As we sing together, truth goes deep into our hearts as we worship the Lord. There is a power in God's presence that we experience together. Faith comes through the hearing of the word of God. Gathering is essential. I encourage you: every single week settle it. "I will be here. I will worship the Lord with God's people. I'm going to come ready. I'm going to come early so that we can worship the Lord together."

We **Connect**. We connect relationally. We share our lives together. We center on Christ. We help one another apply truth and we care for one another. We connect.

Today we will look at the topic: **Serve**. We turn our lives out, focused on others. If the prospect of gathering and connecting is all about me and my preferences, and what I want and what I'll get, and the return for me, we will spiritually die, because in order to know Christ and grow in him, we must turn outward and give, serve, spend our lives. Obviously you are going to hear more about that today.

And then **Grow**. Our own daily walk with God that starts with time with God in prayer and in the word.

Now, this is very important. Let me just say this as I share the vision with you. We have come to think of the Church as a building, as an institution, as an organization, and those are just tools that are out here on the edges. **If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are the Church. You are God's program. You Gather. You Connect. You Serve. You Grow.** So, if you are locked into that thinking of "Alright, I go to the program, I go to the meeting," then you are investing yourself in building a program, and that's not what God calls you to do. **He wants to build you and he wants you to invest in building others. Gather, Connect, Serve, Grow.**

So we come today to **Serve**. Mark Chapter 10:42-45:

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. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The language of these verses builds on a contrast, a contrast between the rulers of Jesus' day and his disciples. There is a great difference between how leaders and rulers in the world lead and rule and those who follow Jesus, and that contrast is the backdrop for this entire section. "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you."

Now, that little phrase "but it shall not be so among you" literally is: "it is not so among you." Translators are a little afraid, because the reality is the disciples are not modeling this behavior very well at all. They are not acting according to what Jesus is describing here. But when you look at the full force of that phrase, "it's not so amongst my disciples," Jesus is saying to us: "If you are not living to give your life away and to serve, you are living outside of the values of my kingdom and outside of the reality of who I am and knowing me." I'm not insinuating that you earn your relationship with God, but to live and experience and enjoy the kingdom of God and all that that entails is to live according to this value of service.

This is what it means to know Jesus. This is a part of how one grows in the Lord. We live our lives in service to others, in a heart attitude and in action. In the kingdom of God there is a new way of doing things. There is a new reality, and it's characterized by serving one another.

Under this topic this week and the next couple of weeks, we will look at, first of all, the interior life. What does service look like in my own heart? Then we'll look at service in the Church, and in the community, and in the world. By way of introduction, let me just make a couple of connections for you, for us as a church.

Two years ago, we decided, "You know what? We want the largest offerings that we take in this church to go to help other people, to go not for our own return, but to bless other people, because this is really at the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. So we said we want to build a playground for the foster children here in our city. 4KIDS, our ministry partner, told us that that would take about \$65,000. We said, "Okay, we are going to do it." We announced it. Almost immediately you gave \$30,000, and before you could give the rest, the Baptists came in and said, "Hey, we want to give the other half." That's the way Baptists are. They just can't wait to get rid of

their money and to help, and that's what they did. The First Baptist Church of Fort Lauderdale came in and said, "Could we give the other half?"

Now, as things played out, there were complications over the lease and the property and the facility and the location and 4KIDS wisely said, "We don't want to invest this money until we absolutely know that it's going to go for that effort." So they waited, and when they finally got it all settled, a government agency said, "Hey, we're going to build a playground." Then our elders met and said, "You know what? Let's give 4KIDS the money. That was our desire - to bless the foster children in our county. Let's give them the money." They told us we could have it back. We said no. The latest news is that they are going to build a second playground at their office facility where foster children are often present, waiting to be placed. See how God just magnifies it? He gets us. We're usually first, then the Baptists. I'm totally kidding. And then when the government is on board, you know God has really moved, right?

Last year we said we were going to give an offering to help children in Romania hear the gospel. We worked with a ministry partner, One Hope, and then the provider of the largest bible app in the world, YouVersion. Then the Bible App for Kids was translated into Romanian and we gave \$35,000 toward that effort. You gave \$35,000 for that effort.

Now, what we are saying in that is this is a value for us. We live to serve. You walk in the foyer and see we need new carpet. You go back into these bathrooms and see we need new bathrooms. I'm not saying we'll never raise money for bathrooms or foyers or carpet or paint, but we want to establish the value once and for all that we live and exist to give away what God has given to us. We are doing it very imperfectly. We are learning. We are growing in that effort, but I want you to connect this component of discipleship with how we want to walk this out as a local church.

It begins with a value in our hearts that we are calling in this one word: **Serve**. So let's look at it. Four points today. The first one is Measure.

I. **A New Measure.**

Greatness is redefined as service and Jesus gives us a new measure. There is a new measure of what it means to be great when you follow Jesus.

We recently had a Super Bowl. I don't know if you watched it. It was really a rather amazing game. Tom Brady won again and the Patriots won. Like many of you, I just don't like the Patriots. Here is

this man who has won all these Super Bowls with a supermodel for a wife and he advertises women's boots. How can you root for this good-looking guy? But my kids and I were kidding because people are now calling Tom Brady the GOAT. Do you know what the GOAT means? It's an acronym for the Greatest Of All Time. People are saying that Tom Brady is the GOAT. And when you look at his accomplishments, you look at his achievements, his Super Bowls, his longevity in the league, he holds almost every imaginable record. He has become a standard of greatness. He has exceeded many of the ways that we measure greatness as a quarterback in the NFL.

Jesus measures greatness in an entirely different way than what you might think. He does not measure greatness by your gift or your ability – your speaking ability, your seeing ability, your ability to perform in a given way, your ability to encourage, your ability to host, your ability to pray – whatever it may be. **He measures greatness by service.** So he tells us, "...whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all."

This is not the first time he has used this word "servant." He did it in the previous chapter, in Mark 9:35, where he sat down, called the twelve to himself and said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." In that instance, "he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

This is a phenomenal promise that Jesus gives us. He is saying to beware of an inflated sense of your own importance, thinking that other people, no matter how simple or how young or how undeveloped, are beneath you. When you welcome and receive everyone, and the child in front of you is of great importance and you receive that child, you receive Jesus and you receive God the Father. It's amazing! Jesus is emphasizing for us this call to a heart attitude of serving other people. Jesus awakens one's spiritual life, taking that person to a place of recognizing the beauty and the magnificence of other people, no matter how simple it might be. He is calling us to prefer others, to consider their needs more important than our own, to give to them and to put them before ourselves.

This involves humility, an attitude of willingness to help and eagerness to sacrifice for the benefit of others. This is the kingdom of God. A New Measure of Greatness.

II. A New Method.

The rulers of this world acquire what they want through power and control, but Jesus calls us to a completely different method of leadership and influence. He contrasts his disciple with the ruler of the age and tells them, “You lead, you influence in a different manner.” So Timothy Keller writes, “God says for you the route to gaining influence is not taking power. Influence gained through power and control doesn’t really change society. It doesn’t change hearts. I am calling you to a totally different approach. Be so sacrificially loving that the people around you who don’t believe what you believe will soon be unable to imagine the place without you. They will trust you because they see that you are not only out for yourself, but out for them too. When they voluntarily begin to look up to you because of the attractiveness of your service and love, you will have real influence. It will be an influence given to you by others, not taken by you from others.” **Jesus is identifying not just a new way that we measure greatness, but he is identifying a new method for influencing society. We are to be known as those who live their lives for others.**

Philippians Chapter 2 is a magnificent passage of scripture where Paul celebrates in a hymn the sacrifice of Jesus. He comes to a point in that passage where he says, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” Do you see again the call to follow Jesus? He continues:

...who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now, here is Paul’s logic. Paul begins that passage by saying, “Listen, if you have experienced the love of Jesus at all, if Jesus has blessed you and transformed you, then #2: I want you to get along. I want you to completely put away selfishness and selfish ambition and I want you to have the mind of Christ, which is yours. I want you to follow the example of Jesus.

He then takes us to Method. He said we want to copy the humility of Jesus. He humbled himself and God exalted him. That’s the message. That’s our method. We walk in humility and we let God

exalt us when and if he wills. For example, James Chapter 4, verse 10 reads: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” A New Method.

III. A New Model.

We are told in verse 45, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...” **Jesus is held up here as an example.** Certainly, that’s what we just read in Philippians Chapter 2. A model is beneficial because it brings clarity. We may think we understand something, but when we see it lived out before us, we gain new insight and new understanding. A model is defining for us, and very practical. It helps us implement and put into practice. So the Christian truly is able to ask, “What would Jesus do?” This we see in the life of Jesus as he tells us to follow his example.

Do you remember John Chapter 13 where Jesus, on his final night right before he was about to be betrayed, is giving his parting instruction to his closest followers? We would think that these words are the most important words that Jesus ever shared with his followers. And you will remember that as he instituted the Lord’s Supper, he dressed himself to serve and washed his disciples’ feet. Then he gave them these words: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done.” **Jesus models for us what it means.**

It’s interesting. In those verses that I just read in John 13, Jesus finishes saying, “I have done this; I have done it deliberately; I have done it as a model, as an example for you to follow,” then he flips. He says, “Listen, but that’s not true for everyone. There is one here who will betray me and this doesn’t apply.” I draw your attention to that to see that Jesus sees this as characteristic of his kingdom. **This is who we are. This is a point of identity, defining for us.**

I’m afraid, friends, if you are here and you are not a Christian and you are intrigued, or looking, or wanting to know more, I have to tell you that many times the Church has not given you a good example in this area. Many times what we have communicated is that we really are about celebrities and giftedness. And thank God for gifted individuals, but let us as a church be known as a church that serves. Amen? Amen. **The Son of Man came to serve.**

The fourth and final point is this: He gives us means.

IV. A New Means.

A new means, a new ability, a new power. The passage ends with what may seem like a passing comment, but it's the seminal passage or phrase in the entire gospel of Mark. It's one of the most concise and powerful statements of the purpose of the entire bible. Verse 45: **“The Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many.”** The phrase means essentially Jesus came to purchase your life, to pay the price, to buy you back from enslavement or imprisonment. The idea here is that Jesus purchases you and me for himself.

Think about this for a minute. If you have been listening to this message and paying attention and trying to work out some of the applications and how they might look in your life, you may be thinking, “Okay, Jesus is telling me there's a new way to influence, a new way to lead. There is a new way to measure significance in his kingdom. It's defined by his own example. We lay down our lives to serve other people.”

If you are putting the pieces together, you know what you should be thinking right now? “No way. That's impossible. I mean, who can really do this? Who can really live a life where what you do you do not for yourself but for other people?” Let's just get real. If you're thinking about it, you are like, “Oh man, I just wanted to go home, take my shoes off, put my feet up. Brian, are you telling me I've got to go home and wash the dishes? Horrible! For the rest of my life?!”

I don't know what application your mind went to, but Jesus wants to give us this glorious vision. But it's impossible, really, day in and day out to live this way. So Jesus says, “Listen, I've got good news for you. I'm going to set you free from your enslavement to the old man, to that old way of doing things. I'm going to empower you. In fact, you can't do this without me.”

Let me show you this from the passage, because it's actually quite rich. Flip back to Chapter 8 in the gospel of Mark. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 are a section, and in it Jesus teaches you how to be a disciple, how to be a follower of him. That's the theme of the whole section. In it, there are a lot of verses that have the word “disciple” and they instruct you in exactly what you need to do, just like the verses that we read already as our main text. But there is a pattern that takes place and that is repeated in these passages. Three times Jesus predicts he is going to the cross, he is going to die.

The first one is in Mark 8:31-32: “And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.” This is the pattern. Jesus tells them, “Listen, I'm going to die. I'm going to give my life. I'm going

to be crucified. And the disciples immediately manifest the opposite attitude and the opposite behavior. Peter graciously takes the Lord of the universe aside to help him understand how mistaken he is. Right? But if you think about it, this is our natural reaction to the cross. “Really? Could I suggest Plan B? Let’s get an army together and wipe these people out!” That’s how we measure greatness, right? “No, no. That’s not my method. It’s going to be the cross.”

So Peter argues and then what happens? “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them (now, listen to these instructions – this is how to be a disciple), “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Really? This is your recruiting statement? “I’m going to the cross.” “No, no, no. I’ll prevent it.” “You’re acting like Satan. Get behind me. If you want to follow me, take up your cross and follow me. Die daily.” That’s example #1.

Example #2 -- Chapter 9, verses 30-31: “They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” **That’s the gospel. I’m going to save you by giving my life and then I’ll conquer the grave and be raised in three days.**

Verse 32: “But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.” Verse 33: “And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” This is so bad. Verse 34: “But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.” This is like family vacation, isn’t it? “What are you kids talking about?” No one wants to say. “I’m going to the cross. I’m going to die and be raised.” “Wow, I wonder what that means? Let’s talk about which one of us is the greatest.” This is the pattern that Mark is setting up for you. Jesus tells them the essence of the gospel. He will give his life. They seek to elevate themselves.

Then Jesus again rebukes them and teaches them about what it means to be a disciple. Verses 35-37:

And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” And he took a child and put him in the midst of them,

and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

He is teaching about discipleship, but notice the flow. Then we come to the third example, which is today’s passage. We didn’t read the whole context, but it begins in verse 32. They are on the road. They are traveling. He is going to Jerusalem to die. He is journeying up to Jerusalem, teaching them about the necessity of the cross and what it means to be a disciple.

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

“This is how I’m going to save you.” Verse 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.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

Wow. Verse 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?” 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, 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.”

So they are bickering over who is going to be the greatest. Let’s see how the other ten react.

Verse 41: “And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.” Who do those two guys think they are? The ambition of James and John awakens the ambition in the other ten, right? Maybe they were doing pretty well after the last speech that Jesus gave, but it only took one conflict for it to jump right back up. Verse 41: “And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.” And then today’s text:

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. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

I believe Mark builds you to this point where your response is not just, “Boy, these disciples are dim-witted. Jesus did not select the brightest of guys. They just don’t get it.” That’s not the response. You should (I should) see yourself. This is a mirror. This is how difficult it is for me to kill selfish ambition and selfishness and sin. This is the battle of my heart. And Jesus climaxes now. He has been predicting his death. Now is the explanation: I’m giving my life to set you free. It’s a ransom.

What happens next in this section is amazing, because they are headed in to Jerusalem. They come to Jericho, and there is a blind man on the side of the road. He is the only man in the first three gospels who is healed who is identified by name. He is a significant person and he is held up as a model of a disciple. One commentator makes that observation. I think he is absolutely right.

Here is what happens. They are coming into Jericho and there is a blind man sitting on the side of the road. His name is Bartimaeus. He realizes Jesus is there and he starts shouting: “Son of David, have mercy on me!” So the disciples, because they have been taught that everyone is important and it’s not about them, it’s about serving others – they tell the man to be quiet. They go to him and say, “Man, what is wrong with you? You’re a beggar on the side of the street. Just be quiet.” “Son of David! Have mercy!” Jesus stops. Scripturally literally says he stands still and he calls the man. So now the disciples say, “Hey, good news! Jesus wants to see you!” The man leaps up. He casts off his cloak and he comes to Jesus.

Do you remember that Jesus asked James and John, “What do you want me to do for you?” Well, Jesus now asks Bartimaeus the same question. He says, “Lord, I want to see. I want my sight.” Here is the amazing thing. Mark chooses this blind man as the man with exceptional insight who sees really who Jesus is as the Son of David, and he knows “I need mercy and I can get it right here.” He is this loud, obnoxious voice crying for mercy. **Jesus is the means. Jesus changes our hearts and he does it by mercy. He forgives us of our sin. He goes, suffers this terrible abuse, and he dies in our place so that we can be cleansed and forgiven and set free. He ransoms us, not just**

from the penalty, but from the bondage of it. And we are set on a lifelong journey of learning to depend on him to serve other people.

This is inherent to what it means to be a disciple. So I've got bad news for you. If you are here today and you are like, "Wow, I don't really like this vision. I would like to go to the church that says, 'Let's Gather, Connect, Rule (rule over other people).'" That's not a biblical vision. It's not optional. **But Jesus wants to awaken within you the attractiveness of this life. Then you'll see the impossibility of it, and that it comes as a gift of his mercy.** Amen?