



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

Today God's Mercy Calls Us from selfish to selfless March 22, 2020

Matthew 20:17–28 ¹⁷ Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, ¹⁸ “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!” ²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. ²¹ “What is it you want?” he asked. She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.” ²² “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” “We can,” they answered. ²³ Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.” ²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must 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.”

1. If you had knowledge of the future, would it change the way you are thinking and acting today? If so, in what ways? **I would imagine that most of us would think that knowledge of the future would be a benefit to us. But having this knowledge would not put a stop to the thoughts and actions that flow from our sinful nature. The disciples had knowledge of the future and it seems to have fueled their desire for honor and greatness. It would be no different for me and my sinful nature.**

2. In addition to our text, Jesus had told his disciples what would be happening to him in Jerusalem on two other occasions. How did the disciples react each time? (See: Matthew 16:21-23; 17:22) **In Matthew 16 we find Peter scolding Jesus because of what he said he would suffer. In Matthew 17 the disciples were filled with grief over what Jesus told them. In our text we are not told of an immediate reaction on the part of the disciples. But we do see what happens next – the incident with Salome and her sons.**
3. James and John persuaded their mother to ask a favor of Jesus. What is it that they wanted? Why did their fellow disciples become angry with them? **James and John wanted the honor and greatness that would come from sitting at Jesus’ right and left in his kingdom. Those seats would indicate positions of authority that they would have, authority over their fellow disciples. When the other heard about this, they were angry at the men. From what Jesus said to them, it seems that their anger had to do with their own desire for greatness.**
4. As we deal with the coronavirus, we see people hoarding supplies and food. How does this make you feel and why? **In the sermon I shared my own experience. When I saw a person hoarding supplies it angered me. I got angry at the thought that I might not get what I wanted and needed. I was angry that I didn’t get there first. In my case, anger betrayed my own self-centeredness.**
5. Jesus says that the people of this world live for themselves (vv. 25-26). To his disciples then and now he says, “Not so with you.” Explain how those words convict us of sin. **Jesus’ words point out that as his follower my life should not be patterned after the lives of unbelievers. I should think, and talk, and act like my selfless Savior. My failure to do so is not just embarrassing, it’s sin, sin for which I deserve God’s punishment now and in eternity.**

6. In what ways are we Christians hypocrites? We are hypocrites because our actions do not match our confession. We call Jesus' Lord and Savior, but then so often "dethrone" him by making ourselves, our needs and wants, more important than Jesus.
7. "...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." How do these words assure us that God forgives our selfishness, hypocrisy, and all our sin? (cf. Romans 8:1) These words assure us that God does not condemn, does not punish our sin, not now, not ever. Why? Because he chooses to overlook it? No, because we are "in" Christ Jesus. Being in Jesus means living in the faith God gives us, trusting his promise that Jesus gave his life as a ransom for our sin. He bore in his body the punishment for sin so that we don't have to. He faced and endured our condemnation, leaving nothing for us to suffer or do. He's paid the price in full!
8. How/Why, does Christ's selfless sacrifice free us to be selfless? Because Jesus has paid the price of our sin, because we do not need to spend our days trying to earn God's favor, because along with Jesus, our God graciously gives us all things (Romans 8:32), because we don't have to work to satisfy our own wants and needs, we are free to live a life of thanks to Jesus, a life that concentrates on serving others instead of self.
9. Name some ways we can show love to each other in the midst of our current circumstances. Even though we are practicing social distancing, it won't stop us from caring for one another. We are showing love by staying healthy and protecting the health of others. We can look after those who are not in a position to venture out right now. We can pray for one another. We can call and text and email one another with encouraging words, holding up Christ's promises. Every day is filled with opportunities to do good and loving things that God has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).