

**Mark 10:32-52**  
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**EXHORDIUM**

As we begin to understand what Mark is doing in this gospel, we need to understand our own place in the story. It is easy to be an outside observer, simultaneously rooting for and correcting the various characters. We see that the Pharisees repeatedly behave poorly and rightly receive the rebuke of the Lord. But then we notice the disciples and they often do not seem to fare much better than the Pharisees. Jesus rebukes them also but, for the most part, His rebuke of His own disciples has a far different effect. It changes them in a way that it does not change the Pharisees.

As we think about this passage, we need to remember that we are not simply watching a movie, trying to sort out the good guys from the bad guys. We are invited to take our place as the characters, themselves. We will be the Pharisees? Or the disciples? The fact that you are all here, now, shows you have already chosen to be disciples. But what happens in this passage to the disciples? Are they godly? Do they get what Jesus is saying? Are they learning about His Kingdom and the sort of King that He is?

The short answer is, “No, they don’t get it.” They keep messing up. They keep presuming upon Jesus and assuming they know they way, perhaps even better than Jesus does. But before we rush to condemn them, let us do a little self-inventory. Do we get it? Do we understand who Jesus is, what He is doing in the world and how He does His work? And before you rush to answer THAT question, think about your own responses to the events surrounding you.

Who is in charge of this country? Who controls the destiny of the United States? How do we develop long-term security in our own lives and on the National scale? If our country got in real financial and military difficulty, who would come to our rescue? How do go about the work of transforming the society around us? Sure, it includes politics, but is politics the central means of transformation? If not, what is?

We are not simply watching history but are part of history. How is our character doing in the story? Are we acting like faithful disciples?

## EXEGESIS

**And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,**

The disciples are still reeling from the last words of Jesus. The first shall be last. Look out you may lose everything to be My disciple. But the disciples were hoping for the fortunes of Jesus to turn around dramatically. He is going up to Jerusalem. This is it. We have given up everything and we are about to get our reward. Who would not be scared?

Jesus goes out of His way to tell His disciples that He loves them and does not have a wonderful plan for their lives. He is brutally honest with His disciples but they continually and I think, purposefully misunderstand Him.

This is not the first time that Jesus has directly told the disciples what is going to happen to Him. Although the Jews believed in the Resurrection of the body, they did not really have an understanding about the Messiah dying and rising again to life to secure the victory of His people.

**<sup>33</sup>Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: <sup>34</sup>And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.**

This is all very straightforward. Jesus says nothing more here than what actually and literally occurs. The disciples are always prone to take Jesus's metaphorical sayings literal and His literal sayings metaphorical. We often do the same thing.

**<sup>35</sup>And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. <sup>36</sup>And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? <sup>37</sup>They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.**

Oh, you two, Why do you continue to do this? Do you not know the Lord? But before we condemn them, we should also marvel at their faith. In Your glory Lord, grant us these wishes. We read super spiritual into this. These Sons of Thunder wanted to be at Jesus's side in heaven forever and a day. But that is manifestly not what they were asking. They wanted to be the supreme counselors of the Lord in His glory, His Kingdom on Earth. It

took great faith to utter these words. How were they going to contend with the powers that be? They had only a rag-tag group of soldiers at best. When they get a chance to strike they cannot even cut off heads, only ears. But James and John believe Jesus is going to win against all odds. The Jews will not be able to defeat Him. The Romans will not be able to defeat Him. Jesus is going to rule in Jerusalem and they want to be there. What men of faith!

Our zeal is far less than theirs. We say, “Jesus, we know that men on Earth will never submit to you, so we do not even want to rule down here. If we get to heaven, can we have a cloud or two and some old angels to boss around?”

**<sup>38</sup>But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? <sup>39</sup>And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: <sup>40</sup>But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.**

They didn't know what they were asking. If they wanted Jesus's authority, they were going to have to endure suffering.

Who is at the right hand of the Lord? Maybe not James and John, perhaps Peter and John? Or, Peter and Paul? James becomes the first Martyr. Peter and John are pre-eminent figures. Paul is the writer of much of the New Testament. These are all pillars at the right and left of Jesus.

**<sup>41</sup>And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.**

Why were the disciples displeased? Was it because they were sad that James and John were acting unspiritual? Was it that they had unduly bothered the Lord? I venture to say that it is because they didn't think to ask Him first. They were not merely jealous, they were envious.

**<sup>42</sup>But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them,**

Jesus is patient with His disciples. In this case, it is not James and John who are the problem. It is the others who became angry with them. James and John were perhaps a little out of line, putting themselves forward. But the rest of the disciples were more out of line. Jesus humbles them all but He does so in a kind and patient way.

**Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.**

He puts James and John in their place for seeking the place of lordship over others. But the other disciples were desirous of the same thing. Jesus is saying that Christians shouldn't want to serve in the role leadership for this reason at all. Of course, leaders in the church do have real authority. Jesus is not saying they don't. But what is the purpose of that authority? Is it to serve and build others up? Or is it to dominate and control them. Well, worldly rulers dominate and control. Christian rulers shepherd and serve.

**<sup>43</sup>But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:**

The truly great ones among you are those who serve you. Jesus really turns the world of the disciples upside down with this saying. It is exactly backwards to all that they think. The truly great ones are the ones who are served NOT the one who serve. This is why the disciples were indignant with James and John. They thought they were going to have to serve them. But Jesus flips this around. This is why he told James and John that they did not know what they were asking. Are you asking to be rulers? Or servants?

They thought that they wanted to be rulers. The other disciples thought the same thing. But now they are finding out that those who rule in the church are those who serve others. Again, this is not some super spiritual way to say that rulers really rule and don't really serve. No, Christian rulers do serve. They are subservient to their people. They teach, give, sacrifice themselves for the sake of their sheep. When Christian rulers do not do this, they are acting like secular worldly rulers. Jesus is being straightforward to the disciples, warning them that they are getting into something far different than what they expected.

**<sup>44</sup>And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.**

Paul later says that those who Lord it over God's people are often given more honor and respect than those who serve God's people. Paul was puzzled by this. Worldly rulers figure this out. They know that they can brow beat people and that it will work. It also works in the church. But brow beating does not produce the kind of heart submission that God desires. God wants us to serve Him and submit to our authorities because we love Him and them. We do not submit out of simply fear of wrath.

So a truly chief man, will be one who could brow beat, could demand honor, could control his people, but simply refuses to do so. He will serve them and have their hearts or have none of them.

**<sup>45</sup>For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.**

Who deserves a higher place of honor and submission than the Lord Jesus. He could have simply taken command and told His disciples not to question Him but simply to obey. He could have demanded absolute submission and He could have wielded the power to force compliance. But that is not what He does. All along, He teaches, exhorting them to get it, so that they can truly love one another from the heart, thus showing they are His disciples. He even washed dirty old feet just like a slave or servant girl might be called upon to do.

Are we taught to ignore the help? They are not even worthy of thank you. And they know it. And that is how we ought to view ourselves. That sort of person is hard to offend. We ought to be equally hard to offend.

Jesus gave himself up for others. Will you?

## EXHORTATION

What is our exhortation and application from this passage? Jesus and Mark give it to us in blind Bartimaeus.

**<sup>46</sup>And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.**

This is truly a pitiful man. He is blind. He is begging by the roadside. He is the sort of man that most of us would walk by and try to not even look at, so pitiful is the sight.

Bartimaeus is unclean, the son of an unclean man. This is not the word Timothy. It is of Hebrew origin and means unclean.

**<sup>47</sup>And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.**

The man exhibits faith and desire to change from unclean to clean. He knows that Jesus, the Son of David, the rightful heir to the throne of David, was just the man to make him clean.

**<sup>48</sup>And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.**

Mark probably polites things up a bit here. Can you imagine the indignation of the disciples to have such a wretch calling on Jesus? They would have told him to shut his mouth and not bother the Master. But he was rightfully disobedient to them and obedient to God. He knew that he was unclean and despicable. He did not come to Jesus for justice. He came for mercy.

**<sup>49</sup>And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called.**

Can our cries stop Jesus in His tracks? It takes real desperation and a spark of hope to do that.

**And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. <sup>50</sup>And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.**

His garment was likely his only possession. He had little to lose and all to gain. He ventures all on Jesus. Furthermore, the garment was probably spread on the ground to receive the alms that he begged from passers by. In addition to giving up all he owned for Jesus, he also ventures that Jesus would heal him and he would no longer need to beg. It is interesting in this story that Jesus does not come to the blind man. Even though he was blind, Jesus made him make his way to him. We are to go forward in the dark in order to receive the light.

**<sup>51</sup>And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.**

The disciples want to be at Jesus's right hand and left. Bartimaeus just wants to see Jesus.

**<sup>52</sup>And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.**

Can you imagine the first thing you see would be the face of Jesus? What blessed eyes! The man exhibits faith in Jesus and Jesus performs a miracle on him.

Once Jesus heals him, the man becomes a follower of Jesus in the way.

## **EXHORTATION**

Who do you want to be in this story? The Pharisees who continue to look religious but oppose true religion? The disciples who embrace Christ but keep on misunderstanding Him? Or Blind Bartimaeus, who just wants to see and be free from his misery. He has little to lose and all to gain and he ventures it all on Jesus.

Bartimaeus was an unclean wretch. He did not deserve the favor of Jesus and does not appeal to Jesus on that ground. James and John think they are worthy of the honor of being near Jesus, at His right and left. But thieves and robbers get that honor on the cross. To die with Jesus, THAT is an honor.

But Bartimaeus knows who he is and he knows who Jesus is. So, he comes to Jesus, humbly, expectantly, hopefully and in faith. Jesus answers his call. Let us be like blind Bartimaeus and come to Jesus so that we can see.