

Mark 10:35-45

December 6, 2009 – ADVENT 3

Christ Comes to Serve

✦ **Not in self-seeking position (vv.35-40)**

✦ **Giving His life as ransom (vv.41-45)**

In the name of Jesus, our Servant-King, dear expectant Christians:

They say your whole life flashes before your eyes in the last second. From this moment with the executioner's sword flashing high in the air to first contact I'm thinking about my brother John. I'm remember all those times we spent together with Jesus of Nazareth. I'm more convinced than ever that He truly is the promised Messiah. That's why I'm here, glad to be here, to see Him soon.

In all my life one thing I regret most was what we and our mother asked of Jesus one day. It seems so disgusting now. But it's all the more reason I know I'm not alone even in these last seconds of my life. Jesus is right here with me. At this last moment for me **Christ Comes to Serve**.

✦ **Not in self-seeking position (vv.35-40)**

After these eight years I can't imagine how we could ask Jesus such a selfish question. Maybe that's why Jesus called us the "Sons of Thunder." We could burst out with the most ridiculous ideas. Like that time we thought Jesus should call down fire from heaven on a whole village of Samaritans because they were inhospitable. He scolded us and led on to the next village.

It was never Jesus' way to put Himself forward. He was always glorifying our Father in heaven. But I shamefully admit John and I did. Jesus had just tried to teach that rich young man about heavenly wealth, and here we were seeking a kind of earthly glory like God. How could Jesus be so patient when He had just told us again that He would suffer shamefully and die in Jerusalem? You'd almost think we were deaf. And practically everyone I know would have complained, "Don't you disciples even care about me at all? Here I am telling you about my death, and you act as if you cannot hear me!"

But that's not Jesus. He just kept heading toward Jerusalem, and we just kept **seeking** our own selfish **position**. We knew Jesus would not like our question. So we asked for a blank check from Him first. I'm embarrassed to repeat this: "*Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.*"

Did we think He would talk like King Herod, "Up to half of my kingdom!?" Jesus is so wise. He just went along with it. "*What do you want me to do for you?*" He asked, even though He always knew what everyone was thinking. We were selfishly trying to get ahead in the King's court.

"*Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.*" I still don't know why He didn't call down thunder on us for that one. But really. Jesus didn't bat an eye. He very kindly informed us, "*You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?*" What were we thinking? We had no idea how His life would end even though He kept telling us. So we just blurted out like two school boys, "*We can.*"

I'm a few years older than my brother John. I should have known better. Our mother should have known better, but then she wasn't hearing Jesus' teaching or His predictions about His passion the way we were. I can forgive her and John too. But I'm really ashamed of myself for making Jesus put us in our place. "*You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with....*"

That's why I'm here waiting for Herod's executioner to finish the job. He's like his grandfather Herod the Great who massacred all the baby boys in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. Cruelty runs in the family. His uncle Herod Antipas had John the Baptist beheaded just to keep his drunken promise to that dancing girl. After today with me, Herod Agrippa will try to do away with Peter too. But an angel will

let Peter out of prison. Then Herod will sit on his throne in a shining silver robe and take praise like God. What a painful death for him to be eaten with worms. That's what I deserve too, John and I. We wanted God's glory without the cross of His Son. Jesus calmly told us, ***"To sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."*** Christ came, it is true, but **not in self-seeking position**. That's what we were doing, always trying to be first. The others got pretty upset with us "Sons of Thunder." But we all could see our sin after what Jesus said next.

✠ Giving His life as ransom (vv.41-45)

The moment of death comes so quickly with an executioner like this. But it's amazing how your mind can process so many thoughts in that split second before earth's little day is done. I'm not afraid. Believe it or not, it's an honor to be the first of Jesus' disciples to die for His dear Name.

I feel that way because of what He told us. The other ten disciples were mostly mad that they didn't think of it first. We were like a family who loses a rich relative, and then everybody scrambles to get the best for themselves from the estate. You call it "Black Friday" after Thanksgiving when shoppers stampede for the sales. We disciples could have killed each other too, if Jesus had not been so wise to put us all in our place. I will never forget the way He told us. This wasn't the first time or the last.

"Jesus called [us all] together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"

You call them "politicians," always trying to make everyone believe they really care about the people. I suppose some of them do. But Jesus saw the root of our problem was selfish blindness about His death and the shabby way we were treating each other. You don't have to be a politician to act like the worst of them. We were proving that for sure. Some of you do too in your marriages or the way you're so, "Me first!" in your family. Instead of giving everyone else the first and the best, you try to take the way John and I did. And if someone else beats you in line, or gets the best parking space ahead of you, your heart starts pounding as if you've never listened to Jesus at all.

But that's why Jesus kept calling Himself ***"the Son of Man."*** He wanted us to know He's one with us sinners, not sinful like us, but carrying our sin. I can tell you absolutely, Jesus never did or said anything wrong. Two Jewish courts and two Gentile courts tried to convict Him with false witnesses. Perjury couldn't even make Him guilty. But He died in our place. He came **giving His life as ransom** for us all. That kind of faithful love finally makes you want to serve everyone else like Jesus.

That's why nothing else matters now. In these last seconds before Herod's sword slices through my neck, I am at peace. I know Jesus lives. I saw Him alive many times. Calm and still is my heart this moment. Even in my memory my Lord **Christ Comes to Serve**. In your last hours too His Word will be with you to bring you to glory. Life's pomp and circumstance, the riches and the toys down here will pile deep in burning landfills. No one will want them anymore. Why would you keep your baby toys after you grow up? Why do you keep wanting earth's baby toys when heaven has so much more?

It all comes down to this. Christ died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. And this gives me hope in that final flash of Herod's sword, ***"Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*** He gave His life for me. I gladly give my life for...

In memory of the Apostle James, the brother of John, the first disciple to be martyred, ***"put to death with the sword"*** of King Herod. (Acts 12:2 – 25 July A.D. 41, <http://elvis.rowan.edu/~kilroy/JEK/07/25.html>)

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.