

“What do you really want (this Christmas)?” Mark 10:32-52

CCH Sermon Sun 4th December 2022

v45 **PRAY**

- I wonder what you want for Christmas?
 - I’m sure you’ve heard the true story about the British ambassador in Washington (Sir Oliver Franks) some years ago, who received a phone call from the editor of the Washington Post asking him what he wanted for Christmas.
 - Sir Oliver had only just arrived in Washington and didn’t realise that this tradition had been going on between journalists and diplomats for many years. So he knew that he had to get his request absolutely right.
 - Something tasteful but not over the top.
 - Something modest but not trivial.
 - He talked it over with his senior staff and then told the paper what he wanted for Christmas.
 - He forgot all about the phone call until Christmas Eve when the Washington Post ran a front-page article: “What the world wants for Christmas.” They’d run a survey of all the ambassadors in Washington.
 - The French ambassador wanted **world peace**.
 - The German ambassador wanted an **end to famine and poverty**.
 - The Chinese ambassador an end to **injustice**.
 - And the British ambassador? He wanted a **box of crystallised fruits!**
- Well in this final passage of our studies in Mark this term, Jesus asks us a question.
 - It’s the same question that he asks James & John in **v36**
 - And it’s the same question that he asks Blind Bartimaeus in **v51**
 - **What do you want? What do you want me to do for you?**
- Let’s look at the three sections of this passage together which picks up on so many of the themes that we have seen this term.

1) v32-34 JESUS WALKS THE ROAD OF SACRIFICIAL SERVICE

- Now we’ve been looking for some time at this middle section of Mark’s gospel.
 - It’s bookended by two blind men that get their sight
 - And it contains three predictions by Jesus that he is going to die & rise.
 - This is the third and it’s the most specific.
- Notice first Jesus’ **initiative**. v32.
 - This whole section we have been “on the way” to Jerusalem, to the cross
 - And Jesus is leading the way as the forerunner.
 - Setting his face towards sacrifice and service.
- Notice also his **precise knowledge of the future** v33-34
 - It’s far more detailed than his previous predictions (killing & rising 3 days) but
 - location: Jerusalem
 - specifics: mock, spit
 - he knows the future in microscopic detail and yet he’s still heading for Jerusalem!

- How do you feel when there's **something painful** coming up you don't want to do?
 - a difficult **phone call**
 - a dirty household **chore**
 - I put it off. I try to find someone else.
 - I linger at the **back of the pack**.
 - Not Jesus, he is striding ahead. The forerunner, the pioneer.
- We will see Jesus in Gethsemane pleading with his Father that there might be another way, but there isn't. And so now and then, he walks reluctantly but resolutely to his own death.
- And it's a reflection of his **love** for us, and his **obedience** to his Father.
 - He is a man on a mission.
 - This mission is the most costly mission- self sacrifice, he will have to face something that he has never experienced in all eternity- being cut off from the Father.
 - But it will bring his children home.
 - He is paying in his blood for their sins to be forgiven.
 - Jesus walks the road of sacrificial service.
- But the road of the cross is not just something for Jesus.
 - It's something he calls all his disciples to.
 - We've seen that again and again this term.
 - So to the second point... v35-45.

2) v35-45 JESUS DEMANDS THE ROAD OF SACRIFICIAL SERVICE

- This is now the **third time** that Jesus predicts his death (end of ch 8, 9, 10)
 - And it is now the **third time** that Jesus' disciples follow it with an **epic fail**.
 - Again and again, we've seen the disciples completely misunderstand
 - They are more blind than the blind man.
 - At a time when they should have a **shred of compassion** thinking of Jesus, comforting him, listening to him, they are thinking of their own agenda.
- It's as **embarrassing as it is insensitive**. Look at the question James and John ask v35.
 - Well Jesus is incredibly patient and gracious.
 - He doesn't smite them with a rebuke
 - He doesn't challenge their overinflated egos.
 - He doesn't say "excuse me, is the reason I came down from heaven to be your personal butler"?
 - He says v36 OK so.
- And then we see deep into the self-centredness of their hearts. v37.
 - It's the red carpet.
 - They want the hall of fame.
 - Jesus do you mind if I just piggyback onto your glory so that I look good.
 - Do you mind boosting my social media likes?
- It's ugly, but it's us.
 - How often do you review a conversation, or something you did at church and think "how did I come off there? How did I look?"
 - I'm sad to say that too often for me it's too much.
 - I am the centre of my attention. When I replay the day I want glory.
 - I don't mind using Jesus to make me look good before others.

- At least they've grasped that Jesus is going to bring an end time glory.
 - Perhaps they are beginning to see that he's the Daniel 7 **Son of Man** figure.
 - But they think "this is good. I can get my face in the **paper**".
- Jesus says, if you want glory do you even realise what the true route to true glory is?
 - It's via the cross.
 - You get a hint of that in v34. Mocking, spitting, flogging, killing THEN life.
 - And it will be the same for his disciples.
 - So he asks if they are ready for that? v38.
 - The Cup is the cup of suffering.
 - The baptism is a reference to being submerged in cross like agony.
- They don't really understand, but with great bravado they say, "yes we're up for that".
 - In actual fact they will face suffering v39 (**James** killed by Herod – see the book of Acts, **John** will be exiled on the isle of Patmos for his faith- read the book of Revelation. In fact according to tradition nearly every apostle was martyred, including Peter crucified upside down).
 - So this will happen. Things will be different after the cross and once the Holy Spirit brings understanding.
 - But for now they want the top spot, and Jesus says v40 that's not his to give.
- It turns more ugly in v41 because having your name in the headlights isn't just what the sons of Zebedee want. When the other 10 hear about it (v41) they are all stressed with J & J.
 - It's like shoppers squabbling over the last bargain
 - or wannabe film stars fighting to get the limelight
 - Obviously, they don't like the idea of James and John taking the top spots as Jesus right hand and left hand man.

So Jesus calls them together v42 and he says this.. boys boys boys v42-45.

Do you see what he's saying. (we looked at these words in Luke for the Queen's jubilee!)

- Everyone else climbs up the ladder **to be served**. But you are to climb down.
- You want glory, you want greatness?
- It's found on the road of self-sacrifice.
- It's consistent with what Jesus was saying in ch8:35. "Whoever wants to lose their life for me and the gospel will save it".
 - You want to save your bacon?
 - You'll lose it.
 - You want to gain life?
 - You give it up.
- Everyone else climbs up the ladder. Jesus calls us to climb down.
- Jesus demands the road of sacrificial service.
- At work.
 - I chatted to a Christian guy who came to the baptism. In his work all that his colleagues want is to make more money- to **get**.
 - This guy wants to **give**- to serve others, he doesn't want to max up the hours so that he never has time for his wife and boys.

- **At school.** some of you teenagers know “glory”, peer pressure in a school setting.
 - Social media, in the classroom, before your mates.
 - If you have the wrong views or wear the wrong clothes or like the wrong people, it’s social suicide.
 - But Jesus calls us to walk to the beat of a different drum.
 - The road of sacrificial service.
 - You serve the guy or girl who is left out, even if it costs you some street cred.
 - I bet underneath people are quietly impressed.
- How about **at home** for the adults.
 - your day at work is rammed & when you get home you just want to flake out
 - But Jesus demands the road of sacrificial service
 - That means you do what you don’t want to do
 - going to homegroup
 - phoning someone who is in need
 - emptying the dishwasher for your spouse
 - playing a game with the kids
- Why? because that’s the road that Jesus walks
 - And that’s the road that he calls his disciples to walk.
 - The road of **sacrificial service**.
- Did you think Christianity would be easy?
- What did you expect? Its’ only what we’ve been seeing this term...
 - the sacrifice of **praying** “this kind can only come out by prayer” rather than doing things in our own strength.
 - the sacrifice of **welcoming children** in GSMA & Sparklers
 - the sacrifice of **cutting off your hand** (taking radical action) to avoid sin.
 - the sacrifice of **fighting for your marriage** rather than taking an easy option.
- The kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Jesus is not like the beastly kingdoms we saw in Daniel which are all about get get get. His Kingdom is about give give give.
- Well it is painful giving and dying.
 - It is painful sacrificing.
 - In fact as we saw last time it’s not just difficult.
 - It’s impossible.

But we also saw that what is impossible with man is possible with God.

And that’s where this miracle comes in.

3) JESUS ENABLES THE ROAD OF SACRIFICIAL SERVICE (v45-52)

There is the obvious and wonderful miracle of Blind Bartimaeus, we’ll come to him, but the miracle Jesus works is in two parts. I actually put v45 in this section.

- First **RANSOM**. Look at v45.
- We’ll come back to this amazing verse at our Lifegroup prayer meetings on Wednesday.
- It’s super important.

- It speaks of the very reason Jesus came into the world.
- TO do what we can't. To serve.
- The shape of Jesus' sacrificial service is the shape of a ransom.
- This is at the heart of the Christian faith.

▲ My Christmas present this year is coming from **Cash converters**. Do you know that shop at the bottom of the high street? If you are strapped for cash, you can sell your phone or your power tools to cash converters, and they'll give you cash.

Imagine in the cost of living crisis you have to sell (or to use the old word pawn) your prize possession. Your Gibson electric guitar that belonged to your Granddad. But times are hard and needs must so you sell it to gain £1000, half of what it's worth.

You chat to grandad at Christmas and he tells you he wants his guitar back. Oh no, you've sold it. And then your mother does an amazing thing and goes to cash converters where it is for sale for £2000 and pays the full amount to redeem it.

- You and I have sinned against God.
 - We are sold into slavery. (it's not a perfect analogy)
 - Captured by sin and satan. (far worse than cash converters)
 - No wonder we can't change and won't change.
- The cost is not £2000 but an infinite sum.
 - Sin against a holy God is an infinite debt.
- But Jesus Christ has paid that debt by his death on the cross.
 - His perfect record is of infinite value and he pays that infinite debt.
 - And now the chains are loosed, we've been set free!
 - We are like the Israelites redeemed from slavery to Pharaoh.
- We are ransomed from sin, hell, death and satan.
 - In love Jesus pays in our stead.
 - He dies in our place.
 - He sets us free.
- Without this ransom we are forever eternally damned.
 - But if we receive this rescue we are forgiven forever.
- I spoke to a Church of England clergyman who said I believe Jesus died because of our sins, but not for our sins. In other words, his death was a result of our sin. That's true, but here he is clearly dying as a ransom **FOR literally IN THE PLACE OF many**.
- Are you one of the many? Have you received his forgiveness. Have you come to him and asked him. You can't serve others to buy your soul. You need Jesus to buy it. And he's done that at the cross.
Have you turned to him?
 - If you have you won't just have received ransom.
 - You will receive transformation as well.

TRANSFORMATION

- Look at the story of Blind Bart. He is the model disciple.

- We're in Jericho- we continue to head south.
- this is the last stop on the journey before Jerusalem in ch 11.
- For the non Jewish readers- another theme of this section- remember the feeding of the 4000, there's a little translation of his name v46.
- And here we meet someone so completely different from the rich man of last week.
- He's blind.
- But he can see more clearly than any of the disciples who Jesus is.
- Son of David. v47
- The one born in Bethlehem in David's line.
- (Remember the Messiah would come from David's family, a king to rule forever).
- More telling off v48.
- But Bartimaeus won't be stopped by what people think.
- v49. The moment that his life changed. Jesus hears his cries.
- Mercy- he's asking for the underserved ransom and liberation.
- I love v50. Like Levi leaving his tax booth, the disciples leaving their boats, he leaves his cloak, perhaps a receptacle for any coins he was begging.

AND LOOK!

- v51. WANT!
- It's the same language...
 - v35 We want you to do for us.
 - v36 What do you want.
 - v43 whoever wants.
 - v51 What do you want me to do for you?
- Rabbi. I want to be famous.
 - I want the status.
 - I want the glory.
 - I want to be your right hand man?
- NO! Bartimaeus sees more clearly than the disciples Jesus' identity, mission and call. I want to see.
- And I don't think this is just seeing with his eyes.
- He's seeing more with his heart.
- Because the man who has nothing now has everything.
- He follows Jesus on the road.
- Literally ON THE WAY.
 - He is being enabled to walk this road towards Jerusalem that you and I are called to walk.
- Here is a true disciple.
 - He is being transformed.
 - And so is everyone who comes to Jesus.
 - You have to receive a miracle
 - You have to continue to receive a miracle every day.
 - to do the impossible, and walk

What do you really want this Christmas?

- What is the greatest gift you want
 - Ransom and Transformation.
- What is the greatest gift you want for your nephews and nieces?
 - Ransom and Transformation.
- What might you be able to share with your friends and neighbours at the carol services?
 - Ransom and Transformation.

And it is found at the foot of the cross. which is where we will be in a moment in Communion.

We come empty handed to Jesus and ask for the miracle of sight.

To be able to see him, to receive his ransom, to receive his transformation.

Once we receive his service, he enables us to serve to others.

▲ There was a great Sainsbury's ad a few years ago with an animation of a dad sung by James Corden who was battling to spend time with his family and his work (he works in a toy factory). And then he clones himself to make a whole load of toys who do his work for him, so he can be at home with the family.

The line of the song is *"I wanna find the greatest gift I can give my family... The greatest gift that I can give is me"*

And maybe you want to give yourself to serve your family this Christmas (perhaps your parents if you are single, or your kids if you are married and have kids).

you can't buy that ability from Sainsburies! However good their ad is.

You want to help out.

You want to give.

But the road of sacrificial service is so hard.

But it's not impossible. Nothing is impossible with God. All things are possible with God.

You come to Jesus and he will forgive you. Saviour. Trust.

You come to Jesus and he will transform you. Lord. Repentance.

Opening your eyes to him more and more.

Changing you so that you can v51 follow Jesus along the road of serving others.

It's only possible through a miracle.

That's what I really want this year. to know Jesus more and having been served by him to serve others.

Let's pray for it now. Ransom. Transformation.