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## **Servant Leadership**

Mark 10:32-45

Baseball is elbowing its way into our Spring schedules. The kids I talk to all want to play the great positions. The positions of glory; Pitcher, shortstop somewhere on the infield so you can hear the roar of all the fans. Players are much more interested in taking their turn at batting practice than shagging foul balls or picking up the equipment. If you happen to get placed in the outfield you plead with your coach not to put you in right field. I never did enjoy right field. I didn't think it was fair. So rarely did a ball ever come out there..I usually fell into a sleepy daze..and when it did, I was so excited I usually muffed it. Which kept me firmly imbedded in right field, using my cleats to scratch out my waiting spot. I would stand out there trying to stay awake and wish I was playing in the infield where the positions of importance and real action.

Many of us are more motivated to do things that would place us in the limelight, the place of honor, the important positions...then those of equipment manager. We would much rather be the one throwing the shutout than washing the uniforms. We would much rather be hitting the long balls than chasing the foul balls. We would rather be the star than the servant. We would rather be the sergeant, barking out commands to others, than the servant taking orders.

Jesus is looking for leaders to lead, but there are some things that He's looking for, in a leader that He can use. Do you want to be a leader that Jesus wants to use?

Turn with me in your Bibles to Mark chapter 10. We will be reading verses 32 to 45. To come to Jesus He requires a childlike dependence on Him. We cannot come to Him based on our talents, our wealth, our position. We must be ready to give that up to be used by Him. Jesus calls us as disciples of His to come and serve. Do you want to be used greatly of God? We hear the word Servant leader and it sounds like an oxy-moron. It sounds like a two word label that is

incompatible with each other. Kind of like. Jumbo-shrimp. Or, student teacher. Civil War. True lies. Death benefit. Servant Leader? How can a leader be a servant? What are those qualities that mark a servant leader? Lets read as we learn from Jesus example. (READ)

Characteristics #1 of a servant leader. Servant leaders can walk ahead when others are fearful. Being a servant leader does not mean were always following behind. A servant does what is best for others. Sometimes it's best to lead the way, the right way to go when they don't see it. Verse 32 Jesus was walking on ahead. Where were they headed? Jerusalem. What was the reaction of the disciples and those who were following? Amazement and fear. For months now the religious rulers and authorities have hassled and challenged and threatened Jesus. They perceived Him and rightly as a threat to them..so they have been plotting to get rid of him. Mark 3:6 plotting how to destroy Him. Jesus has avoided direct confrontation up until now. He has spent the bulk of His time in the area surrounding the Sea of Galilee. Now he heads down into the hotbed of religion..He is heading towards Jerusalem. The followers have heard the death threats, they have read some of the hate mail, they know the rumors that have been circulating down at the marketplace. They are fearful for their health in Jesus choice to head towards Jerusalem. They are amazed and fearful at His choice of direction. They probably can sense a showdown is eminent.

The picture here is graphic. Jesus is walking ahead on the road. Probably all alone. He is confident, he knows exactly what God his father wants him to do. He is obedient in moving toward that mission. Behind him are the disciples and followers wringing their hands in fear wondering the worst case scenarios that could befall them in Jerusalem. Are you willing to walk ahead even when others are fearful?

I thought it was interesting that God did not choose to reveal the details of His plan to all twelve disciples at the same time. God revealed His plan to His obedient servant..His Son Jesus. Jesus knew God's plan and was prepared to act on that plan and share it with others. The servant leader may have to walk alone. He or she may have to set the pace...and that can get pretty tiring when you are the only one who is running. You may be the one that God calls to walk on ahead. Nobody else at your work may be interested in tracking God's way. Are you

willing to walk out ahead while other Christians tremble and fear. Do you share what God is doing in your life during breaks. Do you recognize God doing anything in your life? At school are you willing to walk on alone and go for God...not because your parents want you to or don't want you to... but because between you and God, you want to be a servant leader? It's tough to walk alone.

Notice that Jesus who sets the pace, does not sugar-coat the mission He is on. He does not soft sell where he is going. Verse 33. "Behold we are going up to Jerusalem to be delivered to chief priests, be condemned to death, killed by gentiles (Romans) mocked, spit upon, whipped, and killed. This is the first connection of Jerusalem with the final destination of the mission. Jesus reveals more details about where He is heading and to what He wants them to follow. Jesus does not hide the truth of suffering that will take place.

This is the 4th time Jesus has tried to explain to the disciples what is going to happen to him. In Mark 8:31 Jesus explains, I'm going to be killed and three days later I'll rise again. Reaction: Peter tries to rebuke Jesus saying that couldn't possibly happen. In Mark 9:9 Jesus again explains his mission. Reaction. The disciples just don't understand. Later in that chapter 9:31 He tries again to explain His mission, the reaction...they don't get it. They are afraid to question Him.

Here in this passage, Jesus explains what will happen and where...there is fear. What will happen to those disciples who are with Jesus at the time of capture and death? Am I willing to walk with Jesus toward the cross? Am I willing to walk alone at school, in my family, at work, in my neighborhood, at church, walk toward following Christ even though I know that I may have to endure suffering? Am I willing to stand up for Jesus? Stand up for the truth's that I believe in even though it may open me up to ridicule by others? Jesus is our model, he walked ahead when others were fearful. Characteristic #1 Servant leaders can walk ahead towards God plan when others are fearful.

Characteristic #2; Servant Leaders recognize that God is the one who places. Places of honor are given by God. He is the one who decides who serves where. Who plays in what position. How the lineup reads. And Jesus has some criteria for who He chooses to play where.

Look at verse 35 James and John, the Sons of Zebadee, also nicknamed the son's of thunder, come up to Jesus and ask Him for a favor. Jesus replies with a question, "What is it you want?" Is it wrong for us to ask things of Jesus? NO! He encourages us to ask Him for things. He wants us to be dependent on Him. But, God will rarely fulfill a selfish request. Are you wanting something from God that is merely selfishness? Merely greed? Are you thinking that you can somehow manipulate God? I've found those who think this way, are very angry with God when it doesn't come to be. I gave it to God and He let me down...He's no good because he didn't do what I wanted to happen. My friends...God is not a sugar daddy. He will do exactly what is best for us...and sometimes there is a conflict between what He thinks is best and what we think is best.

Recognize that God is the one who places. Don't try to manipulate God to get him to do what you want. Don't try to pull your strings of influence to get yourself into places of honor and prestige. Here James and John ask for great positions in the kingdom next to Jesus. One wants the right side the other the left. All high profile stuff. Matthews gospel adds that their mother was in their trying to get her two boys in a good spot. Now their mother Salome was probably the sister of Jesus mother and James and John were probably cousins of Jesus. Did they try to pull some family strings to get a good position? Nothing wrong with asking favors from Jesus, but not from wrong selfish motive and manipulation. Jesus is not interested in fulfilling those kind of requests.

The servant leader recognizes that it is God who places people. Places themselves and places others. God's the one who makes the lineup not you! Are you willing to play in right field if God sends you out there? Are you going to play that position the best you can while your there or think the whole time...I could do better than that pitcher, I could do a better job in that position. Maybe God wants you to get up on the mound and begin pitching but your fearful of taking the leadership position that God has placed you in.

Folks we are all on the same team. We need that guy in right field just as much as the gal standing on the mound. We need the coaches and the equipment managers. In our church we need those who will teach, and train and lead as well as those who will clean up, set up. Are

you willing to be obedient in the place where God has placed you? Are you willing to be a servant in the position where He has placed. Don't look down on those who you think have a lessor job and don't look up with envy on those who you feel have a higher position. Look at verse 40, Jesus said, You boys want positions of greatness but they are not even mine to give...God is the one who prepares and hands out those positions of honor. God is the one who places...and the obedient servant leader recognizes that Char #1 Servant leaders walk ahead when others fear. Char #2 Servant leaders recognize that God is the one who places.

Characteristic #3 The servant leader does not grab for personal glory. They see glory correctly. They recognize that true glory has suffering in it's back pocket. They realize the price that is paid for glory and they are also willing to pay that price. We may love to be famous and be honored like a mother Theresa or Corrie Ten boom, a Billy Graham but it's not until we read their biographies that we come to understand that honor and glory does not come without a price. And the true spiritual giant is not grabbing for the glory...they are doing the opposite. They are all about denying themselves and seeking to serve others. It's that selflessness that is so attractive. It is the committedness and dedication to God that we honor. We would love to have great effectiveness in our ministry, our community, our workplace...but are we willing to totally serve others? and put our aspirations of personal glory aside?

Here in Mark, Jesus has just told the disciples that the direction He's headed is toward the cross, towards suffering, towards shame and mockery and abuse. James and John and the other disciples too continue to jockey for positions on the way to the cross. Jesus made it clear...the way I'm headed is filled with suffering. And then in three days I will rise again. Suffering comes before glory. Are you willing to pay the price? James and John reply in verse 39. We are able. We can do it. Jesus tells them they will suffer. They will drink the drink of suffering that He must endure. They will be baptized with the baptism that He must endure, but not in the same way. They will suffer and die but not in the same redemptive way that Jesus died. They cannot. Redemptive sacrifice requires a perfect man. They weren't able to pull that off, Jesus was. They will suffer but not in a saving way.

Drinking a cup seems to be a metaphor of enduring suffering. It's like drinking a cup whose liquid may be laced with pain. When one drinks a cup He puts total reliance on the one who has filled the cup. Baptism here speaks of a total commitment. Wholly immersed and dedicated with one's whole life..enduring whatever it may take. Drinking whatever may be in the cup. Fully committing oneself no matter the outcome. History tells us James was the first disciple who died for his faith. John endured a life time of suffering and exile and was the last. They would suffer, but not the same suffering Jesus would endure at the cross.

The servant leader is not one who is quick to grab for personal glory. As the word got out among the disciples about the manipulation that James and John tried to pull, the others verse 41 began angry. Probably because they wanted to have those positions. Their attitude of indignance showed they too wanted that privileged status. And what did it produce. Disunity...Jealousy...strife...Grabbing for personal glory will bring conflict and strife. Jealous ambition will distract us from the love of serving others sacrificial.

Jesus is quick to call them on their error. Verse 42 Hey..You guys are just as bad as the Roman gentiles. Those rulers lord it over people. They throw their weight around and exercise their authority. Don't be the kind of leader that demands his rights. Don't you be like them. Don't be tempted to act like them. V.43 Be a servant. Be a slave. Serve others. God delights in using those who serve others and knows how to follow orders and be obedient. The leader who not know how to obey orders has no right to give them. Jockeying for position and power plays, throwing around your influence will bring strife and conflict at work at home and at church. Don't be tempted to pump yourself. Don't get snappy when you feel like your rights have been violated and honor due to you went to someone else. Instead, see how you can help that person over you do the best job they can do. Those who don't always have to take the credit are the ones who get promoted. Those who serve the other guy to make him look good are the ones who eventually do the best. Not only do companies like team players, god wants team players. Be a team player. Serve others. Think of one way this week how you can be a servant to someone. Can you offer to take care of the kids while your friend gets that needed break? Can you offer to help with a project

at work? Give some tutoring to someone at school who needs some help in math? Look for ways to serve others. Jesus tells us that Service is actually the backdoor to greatness. Great servants are great people, and everyone loves to be with them. Great committed servants of God are attractive to be around. That's what Jesus modeled for us. He died in service to us..He died a ransom for many. The prince of the universe didn't come to be served, but to serve. Are you ready to forget yourself into greatness and begin looking for ways to serve others.