

Focus on Mark 10:35–45

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” C. Clifton Black

Originally the market compensation required for release or “redemption” of property (Exod. 21:8, 30; Lev. 25:47–52; Num. 3:45–51), “ransom” emerges in the Bible as a vital religious metaphor for the reclamation of God’s people (Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Isa. 43:1–7; 44:21–23), especially through Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:23–25a; 1 Tim. 2:5–6; 1 Pet. 1:18–19). Jesus freely offers his own life for the release of a murderous captive (15:6–15). The depth and power of that tale is matter enough for easily befuddled disciples to ruminate.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” James J. Thompson

Jesus gives his life as a ransom for many. His sacrifice on the cross becomes the ultimate paradigm of servant leadership and self-sacrificial love, and we are called to emulate this example. But self-sacrifice must not become self-denial as an end in itself. Self-sacrifice for a disciple of Jesus Christ must be in the service of something higher than the self. The promise of the gospel is that in the sacrifice of self for others, not only will a higher and better self emerge, but the reign of God will continue to unfold. Self-sacrifice thus does not mean self-mutilation or self-extinction; we are not called to disappear. Vanity and ambition are vices, but so are timidity and sloth.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” by
David B. Howell

When we have “dealt with our issues” and overcome the insecurities that drive us to greed and coveting, we, like Jesus, can be in a position to serve at least some of the time and not be served all the time. Transformation happens through servanthood. When the man with many possessions (Mark 10:17) asks about eternal life, Jesus invites him, “Follow me.” Following Jesus in a life of servanthood transforms us unto eternal life. When John appeals to Jesus to stop the man from casting out demons, Jesus responds, “Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me” (Mark 9:38–39). Following Jesus, even in unorthodox ways, can lead toward wholeness. Servanthood is a means to grace.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”
Charles L. Campbell

Jesus’ words may also be read as an extraordinary promise: “You will not always be driven by your fears and your need for security. Rather, you will be empowered to take up your cross and follow me. You will be faithful disciples even to the end.” Here is the great promise for the church. We need not always live in fear; we need not continually seek our own security. Rather, we have Jesus’ promise that we can and will live as faithful disciples as we seek to follow him. It is an extraordinary promise made to such a fumbling, stumbling group of disciples—then and now!