

Mark 10:35-45 NIV “Jesus’ glory road”

“Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘we want you to do for us whatever we ask.’”

When someone asks for a big favor as James and John did, we go on high alert, don’t we? When was the last time someone asked you: “Would you help me?”

Don’t you love being put in that position? If it’s a beautiful woman asking a guy, “Would you do me a favor?” many men would break their necks trying to help.

If a beautiful woman asks another woman for a favor, what are the odds of a favorable response?

When someone asks, “Will you do me a favor?” it is so wide open we are usually afraid to answer.

We’ve all regretted at least one hasty “yes.” We would be reluctant to say “yes” to certain people, before knowing what the favor was.

Jesus did not get sucked in:

(36) “‘What do you want me to do for you?’ he asked. (37) They replied, ‘Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.’”

That request tells us lots about James and John, doesn’t it?

Our text is Mark’s account of James and John wanting the best places in God’s kingdom.

Compare the following detail Matthew’s Gospel includes.

You possibly know of the addition.

“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. (21) ‘What is it you want?’ he asked. She said, ‘Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.’”¹

In mom’s ambition for her sons, she knelt and really turned on the humble charm.

¹ Matthew 20:20-28 NIV

Do you think that James and John asked their mom to intervene for them?

Mark likely knew Mrs. Zebedee well.

Did Mark do her a kindness by leaving her out of his gospel account?

Though Mrs. Zebedee made the request, even in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus replied to the sons.

(22) "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered.

The mother of one of our associate ministers once came to me with a request on behalf of her son.

It didn't help.

Of course had she knelt and begged as Mrs. Zebedee did, I might have listened more sympathetically.

I still could not have granted her request; it was not mine to give.

For at least two reasons, these readings confirm my belief in the Scriptures:

A) If the Gospels were written by a group who concocted a story about Jesus' life, their stories would not vary like this.

Differences such as between Matthew's and Mark's accounts make the Bible authentic. They indicate to me that Jesus' life and resurrection were not a fabricated tale.

B) A second detail strengthens my belief in the Scriptures.

The Bible shows its characters warts and all.

Only Jesus is perfect.

Even the apostles have defects and flaws.

But what does the Lord want us to learn from this James and John incident?

1. This episode tells us that Mrs. Zebedee and her sons had a mistaken idea of the afterlife.

How do you view eternity?

What do you see happening in heaven?

Many think that we'll pursue the same goals we have now, only under better and more permanent circumstances.

Fishermen hope to see ideal fishing holes.

- Catching prize fish all day; no limits.

- Hanging with favorite friends and loved ones without sunburn, game wardens, or fear of storms, drowning, or hangovers.

Pet lovers imagine being reunited with their favorite cats, dogs, horses, or parakeets.

Sports fans dream, too:

A few years back, a satellite TV company ad showed a guy who died in front of his TV while watching a football game.

He and his TV set ascended together, and he continued watching in heaven with no interruption.

The ad never indicated or hinted where the guy’s wife was or if he had a wife.

Most of us likely envision an ideal heaven.

What did Jesus contemporaries expect?

At that time, many Jews thought the Lord would restore Israel’s past glory days.

A new King David would rule in Jerusalem.

He would rid Israel of Romans and Gentiles, or at least let the Jewish people dominate all their foes.

Most Jews saw themselves in charge.

All Jews would have their own grapevines and fig trees, abundant fresh water; they would help rule over other nations.

Jesus’ disciples grew up with that viewpoint.

James and John hoped for that day.

2. James’s and John’s request tells us they had selfish ambitions.

They aspired for power.

They thought Jesus would soon be king and they hoped to be his generals.

That’s why the brothers wanted to be on Jesus’ right and left when he came to rule:

"Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

They saw the afterlife in selfish terms, didn’t they?—“What’s in it for me?”

Whether left or right of the chief, it would be great for folks to see them at the head table.

They were not concerned for God’s success.

They wanted glory and recognition.

When we envision heaven, do we see ourselves honoring God or are we thinking about our comfort, kudos, and credits?

James and John wanted what many of us want.

In so many words, “Jesus, when everyone is admiring you as the king of the universe, we want to be next to you in the photo ops.”

When presidents sign bills, congress people crowd into the picture?

We like the success image, don’t we?

James and John wanted to share the glory.

Our text tells us that the other ten apostles were indignant with James and John.

Why were they upset?

They wanted that glory, too.

They wanted to be in the victory picture.

Isn’t this one of the things that makes us angry with others?

We like to see ourselves as successful.

When someone close to us seems to ruin the picture for us, we get upset.

For example, have you ever been a party to a conversation like the following?

- **She: Why can’t you take out the trash once without being asked?**
 - **He: You are always on my case. Why don’t you lay off?**
- **She: Well if you’d just do something right once or on time.**
 - **He: I’ll tell you what you can do with your trash . . .**

Isn’t she saying, I resent you for being so lackadaisical and doing so little when I want success?

And isn’t he saying, I want my way once. That’s my view of success.

Someday, God willing, we shall look further at how jealousy and envy kindle anger.

But today let’s look at two thoughts from our text.

1. First, it’s evident that Jesus encouraged his followers to express their feelings.

The disciples did a lot of that.

Jesus candidly shared his feelings; that is a good thing.

Often what we say is disconnected from how we really feel.

Hiding feelings usually worsens matters.

One of the Proverbs reads:

“He who conceals hatred has lying lips.”²

Do you get upset at something your friend or spouse does and stay angry all day?

You don’t verbalize your anger--just stay cold and indifferent all day, or for days.

James Whitcomb Riley was asked how he handled an unkind critic. **“I threw a great big chunk of silence at him.”**

The poet Frost wrote,

“Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I’ve tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.”³

Here’s what God’s word advises us:

Verse 15: “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. . .

be made new in the attitude of your minds . . . put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

² 10:18

³ Robert Frost 1874-1963

26 'In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, **27** and do not give the devil a foothold . . .

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."⁴

Jesus promised room in heaven for all who want to go. We do not need to muscle ahead of anyone or try gain status over others.

"We are all members of one body."

Recall the last time you hit your thumbnail with a hammer?

Your whole body jumped into sympathetic reaction with your thumb.

The Holy Spirit wants us to grasp that thought.

All of us should be working to get our families and the entire church family into heaven.

Heavenly activity is praising God in love; not pursuing prestige and selfish pastimes.

Finally back to our text:

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (44) and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. (45) 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."

Jesus gave us the correct life-example.

He came to serve us and the Father.

He did not seek his own glory.

Think of Jesus' last 24 hours.

- **He was arrested by a mob at night.**
 - **False witnesses accused him and condemned him.**
- **They unmercifully beat him.**
 - **They forced him carry his cross.**
- **They stripped him and drove nails through his hands and feet.**

Soldiers and religious men mocked him.

- **His disciples fled.**

A few elderly women helplessly watched.

⁴ Selected verses from Ephesians 4.

Jesus received brief early acclaim for his miracles, but Jesus received no lasting glory.

Powerful people rejected him and shamefully treated him.

Even many of those who had received his free meals, likely shouted, **"Crucify him!"**

He had to drink a bitter cup and suffer a humiliating, painful "baptism."

That's why he said to Mrs. Zebedee's sons: **"You don't know what you are asking,"** Jesus said to them. **"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"**

Jesus served us, his human brothers and sisters; he received no glory until after his resurrection.

We should not seek glory now either.

Note what Romans 8:17 tells us:

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (NIV).

Glory comes in the resurrection, not before.

When we stand before Christ, he will judge us on the basis of our actions as servants.

"Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 24:21 NIV).

Based on our present behavior, where will we be sitting in God's kingdom?

God bless you as you faithfully serve God our Creator, our Lord Jesus Christ, and all those around you!

Bob Blair

PO Box 176

Cleghorn, IA 51014 www.robertblairbooks.com