

## Matthew 20:17-28 | The Servant of All

Date: November 20, 2022

Text: Matthew 20:1-19

### Welcome

I love you.

Open your bibles to: Matthew 20:25

### Text

(Mt 20:17-28 CSB)

25 Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. 26 It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

This is God’s awesome word.

### Recap: Same Theme

And it puts an exclamation point on this section of Matthew 18-20.

This is the mountaintop for the theme that he’s hit over and over and over of

- *“How and who will inherit eternal life.*
- *“How and Who will be great in the coming age?”*

And builds it to climax here where the **Greatest is the Slave and the Greatest gives His life** and **for this reason** is exalted in the Kingdom.

### Passion Prediction

So that’s where this is leading:

17 While going up to Jerusalem, Jesus took the twelve disciples aside privately and said ...18 “See, we are going up to Jerusalem.

And the disciples are like, “*Ya, everyone’s going to Jerusalem. It’s almost Passover.*”

But after Jesus says this, he, for the 3rd time, predicts his death and resurrection.

The **Son of Man will be handed over** to the chief priests and scribes, and **they will condemn him to death.** 19 They will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged, and **crucified,** and on the third day **he will be raised.**”

He predicts not just the cross, but also the resurrection.

Even here, Jesus has Psalm 22 in mind that Amanda read, which begins with “My God my God why have you forsaken me” and ends with the Lord hearing the cry and the righteous king being raised up to rule all the nations.

- Jesus is certain **He will be crucified** and die for the sins of the nation
- and **He is certain the Father will raise Him in glory.**

### Still Not Getting It

And just like the other instances where Jesus has flat out told the disciples ***what awaits Him and what awaits them if they are to be his disciples***, they don’t get it or simply refuse to hear it.

Matthew 16 He tells them and Peter says, “*May it never be!*” And Jesus tells Peter to shut up cause that’s the devil talking.

Then in Matthew 17 he tells them and they just kinda go “*eiuhfedFo*”

They’re not responding to what Jesus is laying out for them for 2 years.

- **YES, kingdom**
- **YES, glory.**
- **YES, vindication.**
- But first, mercy.

- First, suffering.
- First, a cross.

For lots of reasons, it's hard for them to understand this before the resurrection.

We're on the other side of it and we still have difficulty grappling with it.

### **"He'll Listen to Mom"**

So Jesus has said,

- *"Yes, you guys who have left everything: 12 thrones",*
- then: **"Cross"**,

but they don't wanna hear it or talk about it,

- so they move right back to the thrones

AND THEY SEND IN MOM!

20 Then **the mother of Zebedee's sons approached him**

Can you picture it?

*"Hey Jesus, ya ya we heard the cross thing, but our mom wants to ask you something.."*

She knelt down to ask him for something.

**"Promise...that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right and the other on your left, in your kingdom."**

### **Right Expectation, Wrong Timing**

*"I heard what you said about the thrones. I wasn't really paying attention during the crucifixion and flogging part, but I heard the thrones thing. **Can you honor my sons in the kingdom?**"*

- *When you're ruling the nations from Zion,*
- *When the gentiles are bringing their glory into the holy city*
- *and coming up to learn the Torah*
- *and the law is going forth from that mountain*

- *and the glory of God is covering the earth as the water covers the sea*

*Can James and John be next to you? Can they sit in the places of honor and rule with you?"*

**There's nothing wrong with this question.**

She has a clear understanding of what the kingdom of God is.

And she loves her kids.

She wants them to be great. You parents feel the same.

No believing parent thinks, like, *"Eh, I don't care what they do with their lives."*

So Jesus doesn't correct her expectations about the kingdom.

He doesn't say, *"Silly, primitive, nationalistic, legalistic, unspiritual, Jewish lady, what is this earthly kingdom of God and thrones thing you're talking about?"*

Right? Jesus doesn't say that's a dumb request!

It's a good request!

**It's full of faith and trust that**

- **Jesus is the Messiah**
- and that Jesus will rule the Coming Age
- from David's throne
- in his Father's House
- in David's city.

This mom knows who it is she's talking to.

*"You're the guy. You're going to establish the Kingdom. Can my sons be next in line of honor?"*

**The Cup of Suffering before Glory**

Jesus doesn't correct what the kingdom is, *but he does have to inform her that she, **and they,** haven't put it together yet that **the kingdom requires a cross;***

- Jesus' cross in a unique way,

- and all who would follow after Jesus in another way.

This is the issue, *not the kingdom*, but the cross before it.

22 Jesus answered, “***You don’t know what you’re asking.*** Are you able to ***drink the cup*** that I am about to drink?”

And when He says that He’s talking about His cup of suffering in death. All 4 gospels record this statement:

**(Matthew 26:39)**

...he fell facedown and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, ***let this cup pass*** from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

It’s a cup of suffering for the sake of others.

A cup of choosing faithfulness to God in the face of temptation.

So Jesus continues:

“***You don’t know what you’re asking.*** Are you able to ***drink the cup*** that I am about to drink?”

And they say: “We are able.”

Now I don’t know whether to read this as a statement full of faith, like, “***Yes, Jesus, we will drink the cup you’ll drink and be baptized with the baptism, we’ll follow you no matter what, bring on the cup***” or as more presumption on their part, like they’re just skipping over it again, “***Ya ya ya, we get the the cross, the cup, etc, what about the thrones?***”

I’m not sure. Either way:

23 He told them, “***You will indeed drink my cup.***

Not the cup of God’s wrath, Jesus alone takes that, ***but the cup of suffering for the sake of bearing witness to God’s mercy towards the wicked***; martyrdom for the sake of love. They will drink that cup to the dregs.

23 He told them, “***You will indeed drink my cup.***

## Initial Failure Isn't Destiny

Initially they fail at drinking it, right?

- They fall asleep
- and then flee from the Garden.
- Peter denies Jesus.

Initially, the “we are able” talk is hot air.

They start as failures.

**But they don't finish as failures.**

Jesus said, “**You will indeed drink my cup,** *you will indeed give your lives in sacrificial love and faithfulness to God. You will indeed,* (Matthew 10) *suffer persecution and be killed* and **the cup that I drink** (Mark 10:39) **you will drink,** and with the baptism with which I am baptized, **you will be baptized**”

So they start with a failure in their “yes” to Jesus, **but they don't end that way.**

## It's really important you get that.

And so I want step out of the story for a sec and to encourage you with this:

You might have told Jesus: *“I'm able to drink the cup. I will follow you wholeheartedly no matter what it takes.”*

**But you failed at it.**

Push came to shove and gave into temptation;

- **Sexually,**

you had a choice between following Jesus or your flesh and you chose your flesh.

- **Financially,**

you had a choice to follow Jesus or your greed and you chose greed.

- **Emotionally/relationally,**

you had a choice to follow Jesus in showing mercy and forgiveness and you chose wrath and bitterness.

- **In the realm of discipleship**

You had an opportunity to share the gospel with an unbeliever or encourage and love a fellow believer and you chickened out.

You failed. You said, ***"I am able"*** and you failed.

Let this interaction encourage you.

**Initial failure isn't final destiny.**

These men tucked their tails and ran from Jesus **but later gave it all for Jesus.**

**Initially denied the cup and later drank it in full.**

**With humility and repentance, that's your destiny too.**

**Sign up again this morning, leave the past in the past, press on for the prize, and again say**

***"Yes, I will drink the cup. (Micah 7:8) Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light."***

*Don't let an early failure in discipleship keep you off the path completely. Get back up and finish the race.*

**The Glory that Follows the Cup**

And if you will, if you will not quit after initial failure to faithfulness but will,

- day after day, week, after week, month after month,
- walk in repentance and humility before God,
- carry a cross,

- and drink the different cups that come your way,

## GLORY FOLLOWS.

That's Jesus' whole point here.

She asks, ***"Who's gonna sit there?"*** And Jesus can't tell her exactly because that's been left to the Father, *but it's definitely gonna be the ones who drink the cup.*

Who sits at Jesus' right and left in the coming kingdom? Cup drinkers; those who give their lives for the sake of love like Jesus did.

**Only those who suffer with Jesus, who bear a cross with Jesus, who drink a cup with Jesus, will reign with Jesus.**

This is how the apostles talk about it post-resurrection:

### **(Romans 8:16-17)**

....we are God's children, 17 and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and ***coheirs with Messiah—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.***

### **(2 Th 1:4–8)**

4 Therefore, we ourselves boast about you...about ***your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions that you are enduring.*** (all the cups you're drinking) 5 It is ***clear evidence*** of God's righteous judgment (what's the evidence? That they're enduring the different cups of this age faithfully, and what's the payoff for that?) that ***you will be counted***

***worthy of God's kingdom, for which you also are suffering,*** (and WHEN is the

payoff for that? The DOTL)...This will take place ***at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven***

***with his mighty angels,*** 8 when he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus



Cross, then kingdom.

It's humiliation and then exaltation.

**(1 Pe 4:12–19)**

12 Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you (like the cup tested Jesus, "not my will but yours..." , as if something unusual were happening to you. 13

Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice

with great joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are ridiculed for the name

of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Let none of you

suffer as a(n) (idiot). 16 But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him

glorify God in having that name...

19 So then, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust themselves to a faithful

Creator while doing what is good.

Cross, then kingdom.

**(Phi 3:10-11 NASB)**

...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His

sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

**(2 Tim 2:12)**

For if we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure (if we drink the cup) we will also

reign with him

*"If you can drink the cup, you'll sit at my right and my left."*

Again, He's not pointing them away from their expectation of the Kingdom, *He's just gotta deal with their hearts and give them clarity about the cross so they can actually inherit it.*

### **Jesus Leads the Way**

And the way Jesus does this is not simply through teaching it and saying it, **but in showing it.**

Jesus leads the way to the Kingdom, yes. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

**But before that Jesus leads the way to the cross.**

24 When the ten disciples heard this, they became indignant with the two brothers.

*“Trying to pull a fast one, huh? Getting your mom in on the deal, pathetic!”*

And then Jesus rebukes them, again, not for their expectation of the kingdom, but for their hearts and refusal to see the cross.

25 Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles **lord it over them**, and those in high positions **act as tyrants over them.**

They use their positions not to love and serve, but to be served.

26 **It must not be like that among you.**

*“Your calling is to 12 thrones in the coming age. You CANNOT use your position to abuse.”*

On the contrary, **whoever wants to become great among you**

the one who wants to sit on my right and left in the kingdom **THEN)**

**must be your servant (now).**

27 and whoever wants to be first among you **(then)** must be your slave **(now)** ;

And then what's the example? What does Jesus say to drive this home?

28 just as **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**

This is the path to glory for endless ages! Serving.

In God's economy, the greatest goes low and offers up His life for the sake of others.

This is what God calls great!

This is what God highly exalts!

Self-sacrifice and service ***for the sake of others!***

So Paul writes:

**(NRSV Philippians 2:3-11)**

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but ***in humility regard others as better than yourselves.***

Wash feet. Carry a cross.

4 Let each of you look ***not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.***

Wash feet. Carry a cross.

And how do we know what this looks like?

5 Let the same mind be in you ***that was in Messiah Jesus,*** 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God (his status as sovereign over all things) ***as something to be exploited***

No, he came to ***to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.***

Jesus,

7 emptied himself (of His right to be served), ***taking the form of a slave*** (and serving for the well-being of everyone else)

.... And being found in human form, 8 ***he humbled himself*** and became ***obedient to the point of death--*** (not my will, but yours) ***even death on a cross.***

**Highly Exalted**

So Paul paints the picture of Jesus' life as a servant *that culminates in a cross for the sake of others,* and **what is God's response to that sort of life?**

9 **Therefore** (BECAUSE OF THIS) **God also highly exalted him**

**and gave him the name that is above every name**, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue should confess **that** (Jesus, the towel boy!) **is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.

The sort of life Jesus lives, a life of service and cross bearing for the sake of others, ***IS THE SORT OF LIFE GOD APPROVES OF.***

That's the pattern of life that leads to resurrection and exaltation in the age to come.

### **Evangelism**

For believers, Jesus is still this way towards you. He's still in the foot washing business. Though He is seated at the Father's right hand, He still stoops low to love and serve you.

For unbelievers, Jesus is still this way towards you.

He came to give His life as a ransom for your sake.

**(Is 53:11-12)**

11 Out of the anguish of his soul **he shall see and be satisfied**; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, **my servant**, **make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.**

Even yours, by repentance and trusting in Him.

12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, **yet he bore the sin of many**, and makes intercession for the transgressors

28 **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**