

Message mates: The Cross, Selfless faith and Servanthood 19 October 2025

The three predictions that Jesus made of his suffering, death and resurrection in Mark's gospel show clearly that the Cross was central to Jesus's mission. The disciples failed to understand: they were concerned about their own glory, power, prestige and control and Jesus patiently corrected their selfish responses.

The first prediction (Mark 8:31-38) followed Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah. Peter 'corrected' Jesus and denied the possibility of the Cross. Perhaps he believed that Jesus would be hailed with prosperity and success – of course that would rub off on the disciples as Jesus's associates. After strongly denouncing Peter's plan as the way of Satan, Jesus made it clear that following him was a journey of carrying your own cross and denying yourself.

The second prediction (Mark 9:30-37) was part of a deliberate teaching strategy of Jesus. Nevertheless, the disciples were caught up with who was the greatest – they sought recognition, position, power and respect. Jesus corrected them by placing a child in their midst as a concrete lesson that true greatness is found in a child-like attitude, being a servant and in welcoming and ministering to the powerless (like children).

The third prediction (Mark 10: 32-45) was again a specific teaching time on the way to Jerusalem. James and John then approached Jesus requesting the places of honour around Jesus in his glory, a request that was rejected. The remaining ten were indignant that James and John had beaten them in requesting places of power in Jesus's Kingdom. Jesus taught them that the dynamics of power and control in the world were not the measure of greatness in the Kingdom – rather the greatest was the servant and slave of all. The model of this principle was Jesus himself: "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many".

This principle was modelled by Jesus again on the night before his execution when he washed his disciples' feet – he said this was an example for them to follow.

Summary

We follow Jesus on the road of suffering, taking up our own crosses.

We give up significance, status and privilege to become like children; we welcome the powerless.

We stop looking out for others to serve us and, instead, serve others selflessly.

There is no reward in the Kingdom of God for seeking power and control: true greatness comes through child-like surrender and service to God and others.