

**6/21/26**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**For Group Meetings from June 14<sup>th</sup> – June 20<sup>th</sup>**

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** Sovereign God, you turn your greatness into goodness for all the peoples on earth. Shape us into willing servants of your kingdom, and make us desire always and only your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (Matthew 9:35-10:8) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** Mark 10:35-45

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Who approaches Jesus at the beginning of this passage?
2. What specific request do James and John make?
3. What comparison does Jesus make between worldly rulers and leadership in God's kingdom?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When have you witnessed greatness? And how would you define greatness?
2. What motivates your acts of service: love, duty, gratitude, guilt, recognition, or something else?
3. When have you sacrificed something and gained something else in return?

**Memorize this verse:** "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) Who has modeled serving others in your life? What did you learn from them?

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 91:9-16. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

## Notes for ChristCare leaders:

Who will you serve? I don't know if you got a prickly feeling when reading that question or whether you read over it quickly enough not to notice how much it runs against the grain. As a culture and species, we tend to prize freedom and accomplishment and autonomy and self-determination, and the list could go on. Which is why, if we slow down and take the question seriously, we'll recognize how much it grates against our deeply held belief and culturally formed sensibilities. But perhaps one of the most malicious illusions of our culture is that we are free and autonomous beings who can live independent of all bonds of loyalty, devotion, and service. In fact, I shudder to think how much time and energy we expend in service to the idea that we don't have to serve anyone. This assertion is at the very heart of not just this week's passage but much of Mark's Gospel. Notice, for instance, the careful structuring of this larger section of Jesus' march to Jerusalem and his three predictions of his impending death. First, way back in chapter 8, Jesus cures a blind man at Bethsaida, but it doesn't seem to take at first. It takes a little time for the man to regain his full sight. Then comes Peter's declaration and Jesus' first announcement of his impending death. But Peter doesn't get it and rebukes Jesus. Then, in chapter 9, Jesus repeats his declaration that he will die in Jerusalem, a pronouncement that terrifies his disciples into silence. Until they begin arguing with each other about who is the greatest because, again, they don't get it. Jesus' words take time to sink in, so he puts before them a child and tells them that leadership and greatness are about welcoming the vulnerable.

Now, in chapter 10, Jesus says once more (in verses just before the ones we read this week) that he is going to Jerusalem to die. And, again, the disciples don't get it. First, James and John ask for special places of honor and then the rest of the disciples resent their self-interested pushiness. Jesus' words still haven't sunk in and taken hold yet, so he says as plainly and clearly as possible that to be great is to serve others and that to be first is to be last. And then comes another healing of a blind man, Bartimaeus. It's interesting how these healings of blindness bracket Jesus' three pronouncements of his impending death, the disciples' failure to understand, and Jesus ongoing teaching about what constitutes greatness. I think Mark tells the story this way because he knows that Jesus' words run contrary to our natural tendency to think about power, leadership, and all of life according to the terms of the world and therefore take time to sink in. In this week's reading, James and John think greatness comes from status and power. And in response, Jesus points out that there is no escaping service. You will either willingly, even joyfully, serve others, or you will become a slave to the illusion that you can be free and secure your future through status and power. So I'll ask again: who will you serve – the voices of the culture that say that you can be free – indeed, must be free – on your own and at any cost, or the voice of Jesus that calls you to find your freedom and your true self, through service to neighbor. From this point, Jesus whole life challenges not only our assumptions but the very powers that be with the surprising and life-giving revelation that as we lose ourselves in service, we find ourselves living more fully than ever before. It's an example and sacrifice validated in the resurrection and, for that matter, in our own experience as we give ourselves away in service and love only to discover a depth and quality of life we'd never experienced before.

## Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd ([tbook@desertcross.org](mailto:tbook@desertcross.org))

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### *Traditional version:*

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us  
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

### *Contemporary version:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the  
power, and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen