

Sermon Mark 10 32 45 5<sup>th</sup> S in Lent Series B

Sermon: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

Text: Mark 10:31-45: Jesus again predicts His death, and  
The request of James and John

Theme: On the way to the cross

Goal: To follow Jesus on the last stage of His race

Dear Friends,

**Introduction:** Imagine that we are watching a movie: Jesus on His way to Jerusalem. This was His last journey to the Holy City. The clouds are becoming darker on His way. Several scenes are shown in this text of Mark. Each of them has a big lesson to us while we are following Jesus' path to the cross.

### **I – Jesus knew where He was going**

This has been the third time that Jesus speaks clearly about His passion. The disciples were astonished and afraid. Jesus was aware of His mission. He was not only a teacher or a healer, but He was the Lamb of God, who had come to take away the sins of the world. He knew even the details of His suffering: “We are going up to Jerusalem, He said, and the Son of Man will be *betrayed* to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will *condemn* Him to death and will hand Him over to the *Gentiles*, who will *mock Him* and *spit on Him*, *flog Him* and *kill Him*. Three days later He will rise.”

We are following these paths in our special Lent readings at the beginning of each Service: Jesus was betrayed by Judas; the chief priests and the teachers of the Law condemned Him to death at their religious trial; He was handed over to Pontius Pilate; He was mocked by the soldiers, who spat on Him, flogged Him and crucified Him.

Jesus knew that this sacrifice was necessary to pay for the sins of the world; but it was not the end! “Three days later He will rise.” He was prepared for the suffering, but He was also conscious about His victory!

## II – The disciples were not prepared

The disciples were following Jesus straight to Jerusalem, straight to the cross. But they were not prepared for what was to come. We heard some weeks ago that when Jesus spoke for the very first time (Mark 8:31-33) plainly about His suffering and death, that Peter rebuked Him: “This shall never happen to you!” - Now, it seems that the disciples didn't realize how painful it was for Jesus to face suffering and death. On the contrary, they were dreaming about power in the future kingdom of Jesus. In spite of the three years of teaching as Jesus' disciples, they still had the wrong idea of an earthly and powerful Messiah, that would restore the kingdom of David as grand as in the old days.

This false concept helps to understand the request of the two brothers John and James. They wanted places of honor in the future kingdom. They wanted to sit at the right and at the left side of Jesus' throne! What a foolishness! And what more? The other disciples became indignant with James and John. Did they want those places for themselves? *Jesus must have felt anguish that, so close to the end of His ministry, He was still apparently getting nowhere with these men* (ABC 1190).

The request of the two brothers was a wrong and selfish prayer. When they approached Jesus, they came confident and sure that Jesus would attend their prayer. “Teacher, they said, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” Jesus had promised them: “Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24). What then was wrong? St. James 4:3 explains: “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

It was a good opportunity for Jesus to teach them about humbleness in His kingdom. Jesus would show them in practice what it really means to serve when He washed the feet of the disciples on Maundy Thursday. Jesus mentioned the common way of the rulers of this world: they lord over their people and exercise authority over them. But, He said, “not so with you”. The kingdom of God among us is His church. The church is not a place to rule with authority like the politicians. The church is a (2)

place to serve, each of us according to the skills God gave us. Jesus reigns over our hearts and calls us together as His people to do His will and to proclaim His Kingdom to others. If each of us looks for the best way to serve, and not just to command, the church will be always a pleasant place to come and to work as God's family. Jesus says: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”

### **III – Jesus, the Servant per excellence**

“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 sets Himself as the best example of service. He goes back to the beginning of His teaching in this reading, when He spoke about His suffering and death in Jerusalem. The goal of His suffering and death was “to give His life as a ransom for many”. His death was not only a historical mistake, but was God's plan to redeem humankind. After Jesus' sacrifice, no more sacrifices were necessary as they used to be needed again and again during the Old Testament covenant. A New Covenant was to begin through the blood of Jesus. *Ransom means 'the price paid for release' from bondage. Jesus gave His life to release us from bondage to sin and death. (CSSB 1523).* Jesus purchased us not with gold or silver, (as Luther quoted 1 Peter 1:18-19), but He purchased us to His Father with His life and with His blood shed on the cross.

**Conclusion:** The movie goes on. We are still in Lent. The teaching of Jesus in this chapter was like a trailer before the movie to let us know what was to happen. We know the entire story now and we also know that it has a happy end. But we are still in Lent while in this world. We are not in the perfect heaven yet. Suffering and death are still around us. It is not always easy to follow Jesus. But we can lift our eyes from the sufferings to the empty cross, where Jesus paid for our sins, and we can look to the empty tomb, where He rose again and shows us hope! Let's follow Jesus till our happy end. Amen.