

We're in the middle of this series on the Gospel of Mark, and even more specifically, we're in this section that starts back in Mark 8 where Mark is honing in on Jesus' declarations of his upcoming death. You know what's interesting is that the text we are in is Jesus' third prediction of his death. Every time Jesus predicts his death, it seems as though the disciples don't quite get it. We're at one of those inflection points again.

I was getting a bit cynical towards the disciples. Then I remembered the way Mark's writing invites us to see ourselves as the disciples, and I thought, well, that's not great because it made sense to me. I was thinking this whole week, why does Jesus continue to reiterate this, and yet we miss it? It caused me to focus on the fact that nobody saw the death of Jesus coming. Nobody saw it. It was in the scriptures. It was prophesied about, but yet still, those who were closest to him, there was something that they were missing in which it didn't make sense.

I came across this article in the New York Times from 2018. It was preceding Easter, and it was talking about the resurrection and the surprise of the resurrection. The author was writing about how it didn't make sense, particularly given the ancient stories of Homer and the Greek philosophers, that nobody saw this hope coming. The author writes, "To many believers and even to many non-believers, the story of Christianity seems monumental and unchanging, the stuff of often cited creeds and hymns. It's essential to appreciate, however, that there was no pre-existent expectation of an atoning messianic human sacrifice in the complex Judaism of the first century. This is like a \$30 way of saying nobody expected that Jesus would die. Nobody anticipated, not within first-century Judaism, that the Messiah would have to die.

There was this hope of resurrection that was floating in there, but we jumped over the fact that if you're to be resurrected, you must first die. And nobody in that first century anticipated the atoning death of the Messiah. So when we come to a text like this, we get so familiar with the story of Jesus having to die, of laying his life down. I just invite us to come fresh to this because the story is so unexpected and contrary to what we understand about a Messiah-type figure that even its contrast to what the first century anticipated seems to speak of its own validity. It's almost as if because the story was so unexpected with all of Jesus' disciples vanished at that moment he was hanging on the cross, and it's in that very act that it seemed so mysterious to even its first viewers and witnesses, that itself speaks to its own validity.

Homer would not have expected; he would not have written in his Iliad that the hero of the story would give his life to die. This idea of Jesus, the crucified God, giving his life over for us as the act in which he rises to glory is so profoundly unique among the world stories that it seems that even in that act, it must change everything. The death of Jesus is

the center point of our faith. The death and resurrection of Jesus is so profoundly unique in the history of religion that there's almost a validity unto itself. This is not a story people would make up. You would not write this story.

As we come again to the third prediction of Jesus' death and his disciples wrestle with what this means, I invite you not to think, "How stupid are they?" I invite you to think, "How stupid am I? How could I also make that mistake?" Because that's what Mark is writing. He's inviting us to see ourselves as the disciples and just question how it is that we may not have anticipated this.

In the modern world, there are really two postures we take toward the cross. We either are skeptical, and we think, what difference does this bloodthirsty God make who needed someone to die for our sake? Isn't that just some ancient myth? We're either skeptical of it. Or the second posture, we haven't allowed it to resonate in our soul in such a way that it begins to transform us from the inside out. So there's either skepticism or apathy about it.

When we look at something like the cross, if it hasn't begun to reshape the very core of what we understand about the world, then I don't think it's done its full work within us. Jesus is going to lay out one of his more challenging teachings in such a way that will provoke us to think if this has resonated with us.

As we've been going through this, one of the things we've noted is how quickly Mark moves in his text. He's always "immediately this and Jesus went there," and it's this very fast-paced narrative, but we are coming to the end of Jesus' life, even though we're halfway through the book of Mark. Mark moves at an incredible clip up until this point. Then starting in Mark 11, the rest of the book is the last week of Jesus' life.

So Mark, even in the way he's designed his gospel, is trying to get us to slow down at the very last moments of Jesus' life because it is the high point, the center point, the glorious moment of his ministry. So while he has moved quickly, he all of a sudden zooms in. It's the moment in the movie where you lean in, and you can't wait to see what happens next.

They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over 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." Mark 10:32-34

Now imagine the scene. Jesus is leading this entourage, if you will, into Jerusalem, and it says there are two crowds that are with him. Mark has been slowly developing this motif throughout his whole gospel. There's the 12 disciples, and then there's the crowds who are curious. Remember, this whole time he's trying to provoke us to think, which group are you in? Are you a follower of Jesus, or are you an onlooker? Then what's fascinating to complicate things is he tends to make the disciples out to be the bumbling ones, the ones who don't have it all figured out, and the crowds as the ones who do figure it out; he's trying again to draw us in as readers.

The scene is unfolding, and Jesus is out in front of the crowd marching to Jerusalem. He's already said why he's going to Jerusalem. He said that a couple of times before. So the reaction that comes from those two crowds are two distinct reactions.

It says, "The disciples were astonished." They were astonished because they understood, a little bit at least, what it meant to go to Jerusalem. It meant that he was going towards the thing he had talked about, and so in some sense, they intellectually get what's about to unfold, but in another sense, it hasn't resonated at a depth that's transformed them.

You'll see that in the question of James and John. After Jesus says that he is going to give my life for all, they're like, "Hey Jesus, I got something I want you to do for me." You see this arrogance, this thing in which they've missed something, but yet there's an astonishment, and the astonishment is actually a moment of humility in the disciples. They see what Jesus is about to do, and they think, "I can't imagine he's leading the way to the cross." Mark over and over has talked about the way, and here Jesus is out leading the way, and it says the disciples were astonished.

That word has an intonation of amazement or a sense of wonder, almost like a wonder and a terror mixed together. It's the amazement that renders you and me speechless. It's when you recognize the gravity of a particular moment, and it says, the disciples are astonished. But then there's this other crowd. They aren't quite followers yet, they're intrigued by Jesus, and they seem to be around him because they recognize something different.

The crowd isn't astonished; the crowd is afraid; they're terrified. The word is quite literally phobia. It's where we get our word for that. It's this idea in which they recognize what Jesus is about to do. They also knew that marching into Jerusalem meant danger for his very life and his followers. So as they're watching this, they're afraid. There's a sense of anxiety, fear, and dread that the crowd realizes what's going on, this confrontation that's coming, but it doesn't well up in them as astonishment like the disciples. It wells up within them a sense of fear.

And I just wonder, where in this are you? Do you have a sense of astonishment at Jesus marching into Jerusalem, marching toward his own cross for you and for me, or is that something fearful?

Think of the text we preached on last week with the rich young ruler in which Jesus confronts this man and says, the one thing you lack is you have to give up everything that you've centered your identity on. He says that's the thing you have to give up. And the young ruler walked away sad. He was a bit fearful of what Jesus would demand. For these disciples, they have, in fact, already left everything. That's why there's a difference. The disciples don't have it figured out. James and John, like I said, they make a mess of things in a few verses, but there is something in there in which when they had given everything up, they had followed Jesus, and they were astonished at the work of Jesus.

Church, are you astonished at that? Have you lost that sense of wonder in something like an act of communion in which you take the elements—the bread and the juice—and you realize what Jesus has done for your behalf? That's an astonishing fact. Something that shocks the world, and the world is still putting itself back together because of that act. It is still trying to figure out what all the cross means. Are you astonished by that?

Jesus had the crowds; he had the 12; then he had the three. He had this tight inner circle, and James and John were within that. It doesn't take long before the disciples screw it up. "*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask' (v. 35).*" Isn't that a gutsy question? Jesus had just said that he was going to Jerusalem. He's going to be handed over. He's going to be flogged and spit on and mocked and killed, and three days later he will rise. And James and John say, "That reminded me; I've got a question for you." And they go there, and they say, "We want you to do for us whatever we ask." Think about that; this is the most vivid description of Jesus' crucifixion.

Most scholars believe that what Jesus said in 33-34 is Mark's way of summarizing all that is to come in the remaining chapters. It is a vivid, difficult, grueling picture, and somehow the disciples come with this blank check mentality that's like, "Jesus, I love what you're about to do, but I got more for you." The question doesn't get much better before we get to verse 36. It's so fascinating what Jesus' response is because he doesn't rebuke them. Think about what's going on in his mind and what's his response. "*What do you want me to do for you?' he asked" (v. 36).*

Just think about that moment, what is lying ahead of Jesus, and Jesus has the wherewithal to say, "You know what? I do want to do something for you." In some ways, I wonder if it's the same moment as the rich young ruler in which he's trying to understand motives. He's allowing the disciples to ask, what's that deep desire, that deep longing, because that's what Jesus is going to call into question. What is your deepest longing? For the rich young man, it was the wealth; it was the riches.

For James and John, what we're going to find here at its core is they sought the glory that was due to Jesus. That was their longing. And in this question, Jesus is forcing them to look inward and say, what is it that is your deepest core desire? Jesus is not down on desire, but what he will do is confront when that desire is distorted, when it is for something that will let you down, when it's for something that will ultimately

not lead to your wellbeing. So Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you? *"They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory'"* (v. 37). Here's where Jesus gets a little catchy with them. *"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. 'Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?'"* (v. 38). Jesus looks at this question, and he says, "Listen, you don't really know what you're asking." Because here's the irony of the story. The question was, "Jesus, when you come into your glory, can I be at your right or your left?" Here's the irony. When is Jesus brought to his prominent place of glory? It's when he's hanging on the cross. And who's at his right and left? Two criminals are being crucified next to him.

Jesus is inviting them and saying, "If you want to be by my right or left, you don't get it because the way to glory is to actually take up your cross and follow me." James and John have this perspective in which they want this glorifying moment to be one in which they are exalted and lifted up, but the way of Jesus, the way of the cross, is the way to glory. It's not an upward journey; it's a descending journey. That's what's so radical about the death of Jesus. That's what has shaped the world, the known world, out of Jesus' death is that it's a complete reversal of what you would expect. No one saw it coming. No one wrote a story about their hero dying.

He gives two images—the cup and the baptism. Now the cup, throughout the Old Testament prophets, was used to speak of a suffering that was to be endured, specifically a suffering that was focused on the judgment of God on the evil that was to come. So Jesus asks if they can drink this cup. Remember the scene in Gethsemane? If you're familiar with the end of that story, Jesus is in the garden moments before he is arrested. Then he would eventually go to the cross just hours later. He's praying in Gethsemane. He says, "Lord, if it's your will, take this cup from me" because Jesus understood the weight, the gravity of taking that particular cup. And he looked at these disciples and asked them if they could drink the cup that he was going to drink. He says that he is taking on all of that. He is going to take in that drink.

This image of the baptism. Some scholars I have read talk about how it actually meets the broader sense of baptism in the sense of an immersive story. It's Jesus saying that he is immersing himself fully into this cup of suffering for the sake of others. He asked James and John if they could really drink the cup and be baptized in the way Jesus was going to be baptized. He says, "You don't know what you're asking."

"We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." Mark 10:39-40

The disciples, which actually may be a bit naive, but in a sense, they're saying, "Jesus, we've left everything to follow you. We're here." They probably didn't fully understand the cup and the baptism. I don't think they're there yet, but Jesus says that day is actually coming. And what we know of the 12 is that almost all of them were crucified for their faith. There was a sense in which they took the cup, and they took the

baptism in the way that Jesus did. It just wasn't the way they understood it.

What we will see and what we will read is that all the disciples flee in the moment of that confrontation in Jerusalem. But there is a sense that they will get there, but it's not before the crucifixion or resurrection. The death and the resurrection of Jesus make all the difference in the world. They understood it post-resurrection. What the disciples desired is to be glorified for their own purposes, but what they never saw was that discipleship is a commitment to the cross.

One commentator, Tim Gombis, says it this way, "There is no crown without the cross." You cannot go this route of glory without going through and taking up your cross. That is the kingdom of God. It is through that suffering. But the disciples have this confidence in them, one that was why that astonishment on the road was there. And Church, I wonder, as we follow Jesus, if we're ready to answer in the same way that the disciples did. Following Jesus will require every corner of us. It will require every aspect of us. It will be uncomfortable. It will be difficult. It will mean we have to lay down our opinions and desires and even our very rights for the sake of others because that's the way of the cross. Jesus, in a moment, will liken himself to a servant and a slave. This is the Lord of the universe who says, "This is the way. This is how you enter into the kingdom of God." It will require everything of us.

"When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John" (v. 41). Jesus is out in front with James and John. There are now ten more disciples in this secondary crowd, and they're wondering, "Hey, what are they asking?" And it says they become indignant with James and John. Now, most believe it isn't like they're mad; it's a little bit like they thought of it first. Like, "I want to be at the right and left; like that's a good question; I wish that was me." So they become indignant at this, and Jesus, I imagine, maybe with a slight eye roll, says in verses 42-45,

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 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." Mark 10:42-45

Jesus responds to this moment in which the disciples are seeking glory. They're seeking that position of prominence, and Jesus likens this to the rulers. He says that they take their authority and they lord it over you, which is his way of saying they domineer and coerce you. They hold it above like their view of authority, of influence is you rise in the ranks and then you have the positional authority in which you can dictate what happens next. This is worldly authority. Jesus brings this teaching into the political realm.

He says those officials, this is how they lead, but not so with you. The Kingdom of God is this alternative reality in which authority and influence function entirely differently than the way the world understands

influence and authority. And Jesus says it is not so with you. You do not operate in this way. Again, he had just told the disciples that he was going to die. This will be the height of his ministry. He's marching on the way there, and he says this is not how we operate. That's what James and John wanted—Lord put us in that position of authority. We'll have influence; we'll have power; we'll have prestige; we'll have all of this. Lord, may we be at your right and your left? They see the way this is going, and they think they can get in on the ground level. Jesus says that's not how it works. Not so with you.

Church, we have been formed of what it means to live and operate in this world, of what it means to influence others, what it means to bring the gospel to interact in the public sphere, in your workplaces, in the market, wherever you're at. But be careful. Jesus says to see how everyone else does it, but not so with you. Church, not so with us. We don't rule, we don't exist in the world using the tools of an old creation dynamic. The way to greatness looks a whole lot more like descent than it does ascent.

Jesus flips all of this. The death of Jesus means a difference for everything. Church, not so with us. We do not lead in the way the world leads. We do not operate and pursue influence and prestige, and power in the way the world operates. That's not the way influence happens. And again, my simple point in case on this is Jesus understood what he meant because millions of people across the world are still gathering, still declaring that Jesus is Lord to this day.

Often when the way in which Jesus operates is in a non-violent way in the world, we question and think it is not reasonable. It doesn't actually work in the real world. Church, we're here on a Sunday morning worshipping Jesus, joining millions across the globe. I would suggest that you don't have the perspective to see that maybe it does work more than we thought. Efficiency is never the goal; it's about faithfulness to the way of Jesus. But Jesus was no idiot. Maybe there's something to this way of Jesus that he understands about the way the world operates, the way the systems of this world operate in which the path of descent is actually the way you garner influence. The kingdom of God is breaking in, and Jesus says that we do not operate in the way of the world.

Instead, we contrast the worldly view of leadership to the way that the kingdom of God operates, and he says, "Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." Now he's contrasting or bringing up these two images—servant and slave to say this is how we operate. If you think about a servant, a servant is someone who looks to the needs of others before their own. This is part and parcel of who Jesus is. Then he uses this other Greek word, which means slave. It's two different kinds of characterizations. We have to do a little work on this idea of slave because we think of the Antebellum South, and we think of the chattel slavery in our history, which it's similar but yet different in the first century. In the first century, there was an easier route to freedom. It was never the ideal though. God, throughout scripture, continues to denounce slavery. Yet the New Testament authors like Paul take up this image of slavery because they're using the understanding of the day.

But the whole time, Paul is planting the seeds of overthrowing this idea of slavery. It's never God's ideal, but he uses this imagery because it's the imagery of what a slave does not have by force or by whatever—their rights and their claims to their own personal life. Jesus says that if you want to be great, you actually have to become like a servant or slave. You give up your personal claims and look to the needs of others. This is the path of greatness; he says, not more and more power, more and more authority, but rather the opposite in which you serve in such a way that looks like the cross.

He says that this is the path to greatness. Jesus radically redefines greatness. He reshapes it. He redefines it. He reforms it, and then he embodies it. Because he will not teach something that he's not willing to do. So as he's redefining all of this, he's walking the path, and he will play this out over the next few chapters of the Gospel of Mark in which you see him talk about this, and then you see him embody it. The whole time he's saying, "Come follow me; this is the path."

This whole text reaches its zenith in verse 45. In some ways, you could even say this may be one of the summary statements of the entire Gospel of Mark and maybe even of the whole Bible. It's linking in from the book of Daniel and throughout the Old Testament imagery. It's often lost on us because we just don't have the biblical imagination that Jesus and the disciples had. But he says, "*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*" (Mark 10:45).

There are two points I want to make in closing. This last verse really exemplifies all of them, and it's that the death of Jesus makes two important differences for us. The first is that the death of Jesus makes the difference for eternity. This is the very core of what Jesus came to do right here in verse 45.

In Greek, the word "for" literally means in place of, as a substitute for, or on behalf of. There are other Greek words that you could use the preposition for, but Jesus chooses this one because what Jesus is saying is that he has come to give his life as a substitute for our life. Not being able to free and liberate ourselves is the gospel. We need someone else to come and take up the very death that is due to us.

Jesus functions as the substitute for the death that was coming to us, which is where we get this other word, ransom. What this word means in the Greek is it was the purchasing transaction to free a slave. It was the amount of the ransom. We tend to think of ransom as like in a kidnap situation, but Jesus is saying, "I have come to pay the price on your behalf." He says that he has come as a ransom for many. What is so beautifully profound here is what Jesus is doing at this moment is not just a small payment, but it's a cosmic payment. Remember when he talked about the cup and the baptism? The cup was about the judgment of God on evil, and he says that he is taking that judgment that was coming on all evil.

He's taking that; he's drinking it. He's literally taking it within himself. The judgment that was due to you and me for our own brokenness, the evil that we permit and that we permeate throughout the world. He says

that he is taking that punishment on. He is drinking it like a cup within him as our substitute, as our ransom because we cannot take that on. He took on the judgment. He took on the condemnation instead of you. He took the mocking instead of you, the flogging, the killing. This is that immersive baptism story. When you enter the waters of baptism, you affirm that the death of Jesus is, in fact, a substitute for your own death.

Going back to those two postures that we have towards the cross. When I say something like, Jesus had to die for your sins; you probably are either apathetic towards it because you've grown up in church. We sit in front of a cross every week, and it loses its edge. Or there's a sense in which you think that this is just ancient bloodthirsty religion. But here's what I want you to get. I heard Tim Keller, who passed away this weekend, say, "All life-changing love is substitutionary sacrifice." He says to play the logic out. If you want to doubt and be skeptical about Jesus' death as a substitute for you, think of any life-changing act of love. At its core, there is a substitutionary sacrifice that happens there.

Parents, you know this intuitively. Your kids are born into a state of childishness. They're raw; they're undeveloped. They really don't know how to bumble their way through the world. And think about it. If you want your kid to grow up and mature and develop, you will have to sacrifice. You'll have to essentially lay your life aside for 10 to 15 years for them to develop. You want your kids to develop intellectually, to be changed, to have a life-changing moment. You've got to read to them Dr. Seuss, over and over and over again. You have to sit with them every night when you're tired, and you just want to watch the game, whatever it is, you have to read to them.

Think about it socially. Think about the amount of time and energy you sacrifice driving them to and from friends' houses and sporting events. Think emotionally. Think about the way you have to listen to them talk and talk and talk, and then talk some more and ask questions and talk and talk, and it's not the most exciting conversation usually. But you have to sacrifice.

Think physically. Think of the resources you give, the amount of money you have to make to feed them, to send them to camps, to do this or that. Think spiritually, the way you have to walk with them and their questions and their doubts. Again, every life-changing act of love is an act of substitutionary atonement. For those children to be changed, you have to substitute something from your life on their behalf.

Maybe think broader. Think of every act of forgiveness. Think about a scenario in which you were wronged, and I mean deeply wronged. You can respond in two ways. If you don't want the situation to change, our natural reaction is we lash back at them. And our world, in some ways, is defined around this myth of redemptive violence in which one act of violence can be overcome by another act of violence. But does that actually change anything? If anything, at best, maybe it cultivates greater fear in the other, which they then subside, but it doesn't actually fundamentally change anything. Rather it just begins this cycle in which you lash back, and they lash back, and then you lash back, and they lash back and again, just go online anywhere in any corner of the internet, and you'll see this. But nothing has changed.

Forgiveness is fundamentally different because if you respond to pain with forgiveness, genuine forgiveness, all of a sudden the whole dynamic changes. The one who perpetrated the brokenness on you is left in a place in which they don't know what to do with that, and it actually takes that pain out of the world because where does it go? You absorb it. To forgive is to suffer. There is no way around it. If harm has been done to you and you go the route of Jesus in forgiveness, it will cause you suffering. And in that act, you are taking suffering out of the world, and you are burying it within your own self.

Personally, Lindsay and I are walking through a situation in which we, as a family, have been wronged. It's one that if I were to tell you the situation, you would tell us that we have every right to respond in vengeance. We have every right to lash back, to be frustrated and angry. But I've been haunted by this love of Jesus so that I can't give into that hatred. I can't give into that vengeance as much as every fiber of my being wants to.

I know deep down that the love that Jesus has shown to me, the substitutionary sacrifice in which the brokenness I've put out into the world, he has absorbed within himself—that's the better way. So my prayer is that the Lord would shape us into a family as a husband and as a wife, that we would respond, not perpetuating brokenness, but God would cultivate something in me in which I can bear a little bit of that suffering. Not because I'm the savior, but rather to say that's a better way.

All life-changing love is substitutionary sacrifice. And if that is true, that transforms our eternity. It makes all the difference for your eternity and mine because you will live on not wearing that guilt, pain, brokenness, and the punishment that's of sin that is due to you, but rather in Jesus' substitutionary act, he creates a way for you to live into a different reality. Jesus says even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for you and for me and for many. This makes all the difference in the world. Church, have you accepted that yet? Have you accepted that? You have to do something with the brokenness within you and within the world.

I just invite you to come before the Lord, confess your sin and your brokenness, and say, "I am caught in this cycle that I keep perpetuating all of this death and brokenness around me. Lord, I need your forgiving act of substitutionary atonement for me." And you open up your heart to that reality, and you begin to live in line with that. The Son of Man has come as a ransom for many.

What's beautiful about this is that the death of Jesus doesn't just make the difference for eternity; it makes the difference for tomorrow. Jesus has been making these statements, and remember when he was contrasting worldly leadership with the Jesus-shaped influence. It wasn't just that he had an eye for eternity, but rather the cross reshapes the way you operate from Sunday to Sunday, every single day of your life. Because that understanding of the world, when it gets into you, when you're impacted by it, it can't help but then manifest in the way you operate in the world. As one author writes, "The cross is not only the way to the kingdom of God, it is the kingdom of God." If you are to

experience that kingdom of God that Jesus invites us into now, we must be shaped by the cross over and over.

This is what Jesus invited the disciples to. He told them that they were going to Jerusalem. There's a conflict coming. He says, "When we are there, don't act like the world. You act differently." Where worldly influence is focused on a leader-focused platform, it's centered on more—we need more influence, more platform. It's a zero-sum competitive focus. People are not people that are created in the image of God; they are a means to an end. Worldly influence seeks to control. It's image conscious. Success in worldly influence is your own glory, but not so with you.

Jesus' way is a cruciform influence. It has an unrelenting commitment to love and grace. It's centered not on my agenda but on God's agenda, which is filled with redemption and reclamation, and restoration. It's others-focused, not self-focused. It's authentic to our own failures and brokenness. Success in Jesus-shaped influence is not about our flourishing; it's about the flourishing of the world around us. It's laying down one's life. This moment, in which it makes all the difference for both eternity and tomorrow, this is the invitation that Jesus has called us into. This is the invitation of what it means to follow Jesus. Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all.

I mentioned earlier that we lost Tim Keller this week. If you're unfamiliar with Tim Keller, he pastored faithfully in New York for many, many decades, and he was this beautiful example of what it means to be ruthlessly committed to the way of Jesus in the midst of a hostile, difficult area. I was struck by what Dan was sharing with us in our morning huddle about Keller and all these stories coming out about what a beautiful man he was because he was shaped by the cross. In his last week, he said there were three things that he wanted to be known for, and one of the things he said was, "I can't wait to see Jesus." Then he was asked about his legacy, and he simply said, "I hope my grandkids remember me." A man with global influence, *New York Times* bestseller author, wrote for *The Atlantic* and *the New York Times*, and he says, "I hope my grandkids remember me." And he said one more thing. He said, "I'm so glad my family loves me." What a beautiful life shaped by the cross to which he understood the difference the death of Jesus makes.

When he was first diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, I remember an interview with him when somebody asked if he was worried about death. He said, "No, not really. Because if Jesus actually died, and if he actually got out of that grave, that makes all the difference in the world because death can only be gain for the follower of Jesus." That echoes Paul's words, "To live is Christ, to die is gain."

I want to read one closing quote. I was reminded that Keller wrote an article about evangelism, particularly in light of the resurrection. He said,

Christian distinctives, [meaning the things that make us unique, like the cross] push against culture. But then we go into the culture with our hope. We simply try to be Christians in the culture, living with integrity and compassion. The gospel creates virtues in Christians. If Christians multiply in the culture, we can work for a more just society. And even if we do not immediately bring about a perfectly just society, we have the hope that, eventually, that's going to be established on earth by God. We do not have to become the darkness to bring this about. We do not have to say, "Well, we have to break a few eggs to make an omelet." We do not have to trample on people because we think that it is our only hope for a better world. It is not. We can remain faithful in our hope, even if it means that we ourselves do not necessarily see the immediate success we want. To be hopeful means to do what we are supposed to do because our eventual prospects are certain. Tim Keller

The death of Jesus and the resurrection makes all the difference in the world. If Jesus died on that cross and three days later walked out of that tomb, what else matters? We can be sure of that because if that happened, and he says, I am establishing my kingdom, and the gates of Hades cannot stand against it, we do not have to descend into the darkness to bring that about. Jesus will do that work. Our task is faithfulness to the way of Jesus. Because if we want to be great, we must become like a slave and a servant, and the rationale is clear for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for you, for me, and for all.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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