

Jesus and a Jewish Mother's Request

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Matthew 20:20-28

“Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him [Jesus] she asked for something.” v.20

The issue in this passage is status and honor (as in our *like me* culture). Jesus predicted “Suffering ahead” three times (16:21; 17:22-23), but this instance is the most specific. Mrs. Zebedee and her boys didn’t know what they were asking, because they didn’t realize that:

- future glory comes through present suffering.

²¹ And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.” ²² But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.”

This mother wants her sons to be winners in the heavenly game of thrones. Note that Jesus does not criticize her maternal ambition for the success of her sons. But this mother does not apprehend two realities:

- Her boys must first drink from Jesus’ cup- the cup of missional suffering. (John 3:16)
- The Father has already determined the heavenly seating chart.

²³ He said to them, “My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.”

Then Jesus teaches her sons of thunder how the heavenly Game of Thrones works. But first, Jesus wants to include all the disciples in this lesson.

²⁴ When the 10 disciples heard this, they became indignant with the two brothers.

What were the other ten disciples angry about? Didn’t their mothers have ambitions for them in the eternal kingdom?

²⁵ But Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and the men of high position exercise power 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—a ransom for many.”

- You “win” at the worldly game of thrones by getting others to serve you or by getting a great place at the table. However, one wins in the kingdom game of thrones not by your place at the table, but by how you serve those at the table.
- Here Jesus uses two different words for servant: *diakonos* (servant) means someone who stirs up the dust in order to meet the needs of others. *Doulos* (slave) means someone who serves anyone and everyone without thought of repayment or even appreciation. Fundamentally their service is to the Lord because of His service on the cross as ransom service for them.
- Whoever exalts himself or herself over others will be humbled. Whoever humbles himself or herself will be exalted. (Mt. 23:12)
- Spiritual authority flows to service, humility and suffering.
- Make Christ the center of your identity. (Galatians 2:20). Take Christ as your ransom. Note the last words in verse 28: “for the many.” This ransom payment from captivity to self and its consequences becomes effective for any who turn to Christ in surrender and faith
- Express your gratitude and devotion to Jesus. Take a place of service. Get training, get more training, and don’t make the church solely responsible for your training. New members at CIV are new ministers too.

My Next Step today is to...

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