

The Servant King and His Army

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[0 : 0 0] Well, as we begin our time together, I just want to throw out some everyday occurrences that might happen to you and see how you feel about it. You're lying in bed, trying to catch up on your sleep, trying to ignore the baby's cries in the corner.

Your wife digs you in the ribs and she mumbles a word that every dad hates to hear, it's your turn. Oh boy. Maybe you're at work, needing to leave early.

Maybe your boss says, listen, I need you to cover a shift. I need you to work late. You're playing your favorite PC game.

You get a call from your mom, wait, finish up. You haven't done the dishes yet. Ah, the worst. Or your phone rings. It's someone from church. You just know they're going to ask you to do something that you don't feel like you've got the time or energy for.

And then we've all experienced these kinds of things in our lives and we get that little rush, that little surge of frustration. I call it a squirt of frustration because it's some chemicals inside your body that says, oh, don't do that.

[1 : 1 1] Oh, I don't want to do that. You get that irritation or that anger. That little clenched fist. The rolling eyes. Oh, no. That sigh.

Oh. That sinking feeling in your stomach. Oh, dear. You may not say this, but this is what it's doing. This is why you're doing that. How dare they tell me what to do? Who do they think I am?

Do they think I'm their slave or something? Well, today's passage should help us get to a grip on our attitude, our emotions and our actions when it comes to serving others.

Because today's passage is all about learning to be a servant and about how we can do that because of the king that shows us what true servanthood looks like.

Because it teaches us all about Jesus as our servant king. It teaches us about Jesus as our servant king. Now, if you've been with us in Mark, you'll have realized by now that the whole point of the gospel, it's a message to proclaim the kingship of God or the kingdom of God, but the kingship of Christ.

[2 : 1 9] So the gospel message is all about Jesus being a king. If you remember, we started in Mark chapter one weeks ago, months ago, and one of the highlights in Mark is Mark chapter eight, as Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ.

Do you remember that? And how important it was for Jesus' identity. But just what kind of king is Jesus going to be?

Here in our passage today, he talks about himself as a son of man in verse 33. Have a look at where he says, he tells the disciples, and he says in verse 33, 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.

And he goes on to tell them what's going to happen to him. But this son of man is a figure from the Old Testament, from Daniel chapter seven. And he's this glorious, transcendent, royal figure.

Just a few weeks ago, we saw Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration. And the son of man is, what happens to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration is tracking off of what happens in Daniel seven. Daniel seven says this.

[3 : 26] You don't need to turn to it. I've got it on the screen for us. This is what he's talking about, the son of man. It says, he was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. All nations and people of every language worshipped him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. And his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. This is a seriously powerful king that we're talking about.

Now, it's this kind of imagery that fires up the minds of the disciples. And that's why they want to join Jesus in what they consider his glorious moment of triumph as he enters in Jerusalem.

You see in verse 37, they ask him, well, let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory. So they're thinking of this Daniel seven type stuff when they think of Jesus as the son of man.

But notice what they're missing. Look what Jesus says about what will happen to the son of man back in 33 again. We're going up to Jerusalem. The son of man will be, not come into his glory, but be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law.

[4 : 33] They will condemn him to death. Doesn't sound very glorious. They will hand him over to the Gentiles, his enemies. Doesn't sound like he's going to win. They're going to mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him.

Three days later, he will rise. You know, it's like they don't even hear that part about the son of man, about what will happen to him, all this killing. They've got this inbuilt blind spot to the fact that this king is going to suffer a crushing, painful and humiliating defeat.

But that gives Jesus the opportunity to teach them about the true nature of God's kingdom and the true nature of his kingship. Jesus will at last reveal not just a vital truth that they've missed, but in fact, it's really the central truth about Jesus' kingship, about who he is, about what kind of king he's going to be.

Because he's going to be a king that rules through service. Jesus is going to be a king that rules through service. Look what he says from verse 42 onwards.

Jesus called them together and said, You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the high officials exercise authority over them.

[5 : 50] That word exercise authority, the Greek word is a compound word. It means downward authority. They exercise downward pressure. They push people down, and they don't lift people up.

He doesn't want his people to be like that. Verse 43, 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, and then he gives himself as an example, for even the son of man, that glorious figure from Daniel 7, didn't come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Now Jesus is not going to be just like any ordinary king on earth. He's going to be a king that serves. This is the key. This is the key to Jesus' kingship. Service.

Being of service to others. By being their servant. You know, a servant by definition exists to serve. They're there to identify a need, whatever that is, and then doing whatever is in their power to meet that need for that particular person.

[7 : 03] Now, I'm not sure many of us have our own personal servants at home. There may be, and you may know what this looks like. But maybe if you've been to a really fancy, schmancy sort of resort, holiday resort, and you've had a cohort of people waiting on your hand and foot, just to meet your every need.

Imagine there you are, and you can order an ice-cold strawberry daiquiri waiting for you at the pool at precisely quarter past ten in the morning. Not a bad problem.

Not a problem, sir. The servant is there to make sure you get what you need. Now, it's one thing to be served by the hired help. That's great. That's expected. What's not expected is if the owner comes down to serve you.

Imagine the resort you were staying in was a resort called Mar-a-Lago. Do you know who owns that? The person then who bought you a strawberry daiquiri would be President Donald Trump.

Well, here, Jesus, the Messiah, Jesus, the King, Jesus, the Son of Man, that Daniel 7 figure, the ruler of the kings of the world, the high king of heaven we're just saying about, is willing to give up everything to serve his people.

[8 : 23] And to drive that point home, Jesus uses absolutely scandalous language for a king. He uses these Greek terms diakonos, servant, and doulos, slave, to talk about the depth of the level of service he's going to undertake for his people.

And we sort of lose the scandalous nature of those words, because in Christian circles, service and servanthood is a sort of a, we talk about it all the time. But a slave is a bit of a different thing.

We don't like, we don't normally talk about slaves. And so Jesus uses that extreme slave language to drive his point home. Whatever his people need, he is going to provide. His job role isn't to be served, but to serve, to almost be a slave.

This king will be a slave for his people. This king is going to die as a payment price to set his people free. And that's the ransom that he's talking about. This ransom price.

What is that all about? Well, ransom language is used, was used in the slave markets of the day. It's a technical word for the price you pay to set a slave free.

[9 : 28] It's called the ransom price. But why is there such a need to have Jesus pay such a price for his people? Why is his life required as forfeit?

Well, this is where the servant language of Isaiah helps us to see what the depth of our problem is and what Jesus has to do about it if he wants to serve his people. If you've got your Bibles, turn back in Isaiah 53 with me.

Isaiah 53. Although we're just going to start a little bit early in Isaiah 52 because that sets the scene. In the book of Isaiah, you've got a number of what are called servant songs.

Servant songs. This whole section of Isaiah starts in Isaiah chapter 40, where God is going to do a new thing for his people. They would have been sent into exile. Isaiah is prophesying that they're going to be sent into exile, but they're not going to be left there.

God is going to do something to save them. And there's a person that he's going to use, and that's where these servant songs come out in Isaiah. And Isaiah 52, 53 is the highlight of those servant songs.

[10 : 36] Notice what he says in Isaiah 52 from verse 13. See, my servant will act wisely. He'll be raised up and lifted and highly exalted. Hmm, that's interesting.

So a servant, a slave, is going to be highly exalted. But how? Now, just as there were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man, and his form marred beyond any human likeness.

So this servant sounds like he's going to get beaten to a bloody pulp. And then through that, he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths, and they will see things that they haven't heard about before.

They will understand something. But what else is the servant going to do for his people? Have a look at 53 from verse 5. The servant is going to be pierced for our transgressions.

He's going to be crushed for our iniquities. But notice, our transgressions, our iniquities. There's going to be a punishment for him. The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds, by his wounds, we are healed.

[11 : 43] We all, like sheep, have gone astray, and each of us has turned to our own way. So that's the problem. And the Lord has laid on him our stupid, sheep-like ability to go astray the iniquity of us all.

So the truth is that our lives are forfeit. There's a death penalty hanging over each one of our lives because of the kind of lives that we've lived. We call it sin.

These are all different words that the Bible here uses. This really means the same thing. This is a debt that we cannot pay and live. We can pay it, but then we don't get to live. And this is where Jesus, our servant king, steps in the gap and amazingly, beautifully, wonderfully says, I'll do it.

I'll pay the price. I will give my life as a ransom for theirs, for ours. And he's offering himself up as a ransom. Jesus blends together true kingship and true servanthood.

This is sacrificial servant leadership on a level that no other person, no other king in history has ever done. In fact, we all know what kind of kings there are in the world, and all they ever do is take as much money as they possibly can for themselves, and we come last.

[13 : 05] They always put themselves first. Not this king. Not Jesus. Not our Lord. Well, let's think about ourselves for a minute.

Because it's talking about, there's this servant king, and then there's his people who need him. Let's think about our need of this king. What service do we need from him?

Do you realize your need of this king? Do you realize your need for this kind of service for a king that is ready to pay a ransom price for you?

Because only if you see your need for it will you then receive it. When you realize you're in a situation so deep, you cannot get yourself out of it in your own strengths and abilities. Because that's why the ransom language is used here.

It's like being caught in a hostage situation. Really like a slave situation. Slaves can't free themselves. They don't have the power. They've got to have someone come and do it for them. Similar like in a hostage situation.

[14 : 07] Now the problem with movies is they make us think we can play our own hero and get ourselves out of any situation we can. Remember that movie Die Hard? For those who are old enough.

And you've got Bruce Willis, right? And we think we're Bruce Willis. We're going to save the situation. But in truth, we're more like the poor people taken hostage. We've got no way of escape from our captives unless someone comes and pays the ransom for us.

Then we can walk out a free man or free woman. So I want to ask, has Jesus done that for you? Have you humbled yourself to the point where you realize your deep need of him?

Or are you too proud? Not thinking you need to be ransomed. Your situation is not that bad. Maybe you can do something about it. Or maybe you're happy to stay hostage to your own sin and to the brokenness of your own mind and to the brokenness of your own past.

But what about the dark forces behind your sin? Can you do anything about that? Or maybe that's why the disciples didn't hear Jesus at all when he talked about his humiliation and death.

[15 : 14] They didn't think they needed any of that ransom stuff. They were fine as they were. They just needed a little bit of a top-up and they wanted to be at the top looking down on everyone else. And then that's why, back in Mark chapter 10, Mark ends this whole section with this healing of the blind man, of blind Bartimaeus.

If you remember in Mark, in the Gospel of Mark, Mark often uses a healing, a miracle to make a point. And this blind healing is no different.

Because blind Bartimaeus is exactly the kind of person that Jesus is looking for in his kingdom. Why is that? Well, let's just read the story quickly. I'm going to read from chapter 10, verse 46.

Jesus and his disciples and this big crowd came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with this large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus, that is, son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging.

So you've got this beggar. We know what that looks like in South Africa. And this one is blind. So you're like just the lowest of the low. Imagine the leader of South Africa or of our community or of the Western Cape driving past and actually stopping and doing something if there were no cameras there.

[16 : 38] They often do it when there's a camera opportunity. There's no way. It's because they can't do anything for them. But this blind man, when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, son of David, have mercy on me. He's begging for help. Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted out all the more.

Oh, sorry, I've read that already. Son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus stopped and said, call him. So they called the blind man. Cheer up on your feet.

He's calling you. Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. What do you want me to do for you?

Jesus asked him. The blind man says, Rabbi, I want to see. Jesus says, go. Your faith has healed you. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

[17 : 41] So why is this miracle here? What does it tell us about blind Bartimaeus? Why does he make a good example of a kingdom disciple? Well, it's because, first of all, he knows how much trouble he's in.

He's blind. And he can't fix the situation by himself. He's totally unable to get himself out of his own situation, out of his own trouble. And he knows that only Jesus can do it for him.

His cry should be all of ours as well when we realize this. Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. By calling Jesus, son of David, they're again making the point that he's this king that they've been waiting for.

He's got power and ability to change things. And when we do that, we will get the same response from Jesus that this blind beggar got.

Jesus is on a mission. He knows what's waiting for him in Jerusalem. And yet, he stops, turns around, calls him over, and asks the most amazing question.

[18 : 44] Hey man, what do you want me to do for you? I'm here to help. How can I serve you? And it is in essence what he's saying. So it's only as we realize that we're in the same position as that blind beggar in total need of salvation.

In total need of someone taking away all our guilt and our sin. We're in a desperate situation that is beyond our control to change. And then we call out in desperation to the only person that can help us, that can change it.

And only then do we get to have Jesus become our servant and ask us, what do you want me to do for you? You know, I can't think of a better question to hear from someone that has both a powerful ability and the genuine servant-heartedness of Jesus.

Can you? Well, let's look at ourselves now in our current situation. All of this should help us to see that living a life of service is a defining characteristic, a hallmark of the kingdom of God.

Serving others is at the very center of God's kingdom. Jesus is the supreme example of living a life of service. He's willing to put his life on the line for us. He became a servant to the point of death to set us free.

[20 : 11] Now, if service defines the very core of Jesus' identity, then anyone who's received that service and been set free should automatically start showing that kind of service in their lives and be able to do the same.

If service is a hallmark of Jesus, it should be a hallmark of his people. Now, a hallmark, for those who, is it silver? Does silver have hallmarks?

If it's genuine silver or gold? It's a mark of genuineness. It says, this thing is the real deal. So we can only claim to be a genuine follower of Christ, a genuine disciple, the real deal, if we exhibit the same attitude and actions that Jesus did.

But it starts by receiving from Jesus the things that he says here, his ransom for our sins. Just listen again to what Jesus says when he corrects the disciples' thinking on this matter.

From verse 42, Jesus calls his disciples over. He says, yeah, you know, those regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their high officials exercise authority over them.

[21 : 19] 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 give his life a ransom for many.

We are to live a life that offers before it takes. Christians are to be servants and slaves of others. A life that asks, what can I do for you?

Well, here's how that might look like in everyday life for us. Remember those scenarios we looked at at the start? Getting up in the middle of the night to feed the kid, your boss demanding you to work an extra shift, getting kicked off your computer game, and then maybe the worst of the lot being asked to do something at church.

Well, here's what you do when you're faced with those situations now. You take a deep breath because service is not easy. And then you remind yourself that your life has been ransomed by Christ.

[22 : 26] that he didn't consider it too much trouble to save you from death. And then you tell yourself, you know, this is an opportunity to practice being a servant just like Jesus was and is for me.

And you compare what Jesus endured for you, that mockery, that flogging, that betrayal, his death, and you compare it to the totally trivial task that you're being asked to do.

And if that still doesn't work for you, you just cry out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! And that'll probably be the last time that the boss asks you to do anything of that nature.

But if you need help, you just ask Jesus for help. And then you go and you get up and you go and you do it. Now I'm not saying you're going to do it with a spring in your step, but there should be less eye-rolling, there should be less grumpiness, less fist-clenching, maybe a little more willingness, and then you're moving in the right direction of servant-heartedness and service.

Keep going. And you'll begin to find real joy and contentment as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus in serving others. And that will make up his servant army.

[23 : 54] But we need Jesus to help us with that, so let's pray. Dear Lord Jesus, you came from heaven to earth to serve and to save.

Lord, that you've done that for us and it'll cost you your life is still beyond our comprehension. And yet, Lord, we are so thankful that you did that. Lord, as we consider who you are, our king, but amazingly our servant, Lord, help us to remember then that we are to be servants as well and that nothing is beneath our dignity to do for your sake and your kingdom.

We ask for you to help us do this as you have done for us. Amen. we are so free to showcase what we do as we touch our because we are on the side of that.

It's very a pleasure that we have been able to to achieve as a food and it's amazing.