

What Do You Want Me to Do for You?

Mark 10: 32-52

Jesus is “in the lead” on the road to Jerusalem. The disciples are astonished and afraid, and He tells them for the third time that He will be mocked, flogged, killed, and raised. He is walking straight toward the cross. Then He asks the same question of two very different petitioners: “What do you want me to do for you?” Their answers expose what they think they need from Him.

1. James and John answer wrongly.

They ask for seats at Jesus’s right and left in glory. Jesus has just described His death, and the sons of thunder are arranging the seating chart. They want Jesus as a means to status. Before we laugh, how often do we come to prayer with the plan already settled and ask Jesus to sign at the bottom?

“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus tells them. They claim they can drink His cup. But He is going to drink the cup of judgment and give His life “as a ransom for many” (v. 45). He pays what sinners cannot pay and bears what we cannot bear. James and John will share His suffering, but they cannot accomplish His atonement.

There is a terrible irony in their request: when Jesus is crucified, Mark places one man on His right and another on His left. They imagined velvet chairs. He was walking toward crosses.

The other ten are indignant, likely because James and John asked first. Jesus calls them together: “Not so with you.” Whoever would be great must become a servant. The Son of Man Himself came not to be served but to serve. There is no following Jesus while treating Him as an accessory to the life and status we have chosen.

2. Bartimaeus answers rightly.

Outside Jericho, a blind beggar hears that Jesus is passing and cries, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” What he lacks in eyesight he makes up for in insight. He names Jesus as the promised King and brings no credentials, no claim that Jesus owes him something. He asks for mercy. Faith is the empty hand that receives Christ; the power lies in the Savior, not in the strength of the hand.

Jesus asks him, “What do you want me to do for you?” Bartimaeus answers, “Rabboni, I want to see.” Jesus restores his sight and says that his faith has made him well. James and John thought they could see exactly what was best. Bartimaeus knew he was blind, trusted Jesus for mercy, and asked to see. The people in the most danger are often those most convinced that they can already see.

Mark says Bartimaeus “followed Jesus on the way.” The first thing he does with his new eyes is follow Christ toward Jerusalem. He begins beside the road and ends on the road. He begins begging and ends following. His faith does not stop with receiving a gift; he wants the Giver.

Now let Jesus ask you the question. If He does not arrange your family, career, health, or church the way you want, do you still want Him? Will you ask Him to bless the seat you have chosen, or will you say, “Son of David, have mercy on me”? Ask Him to open your eyes, to give you Christ, and to help you follow wherever He leads, even when that road passes through suffering. What do you want Him to do for you?