

What Does Glory Look Like?

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- [0 : 0 0] We're finishing off our study on this little section of Mark's gospel that focuses on the cross-shaped life this evening. And we come to the third and final prediction of Jesus' death and the accompanying teaching with it.
- So we're going to read that now. Mark chapter 10. I'm going to read from verses 32 to 52. Mark 10, 32 to 52. And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them.
- And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve, again, he began to tell them what was going to happen to him, saying, See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles.
- And they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.
- And he said to them, What do you want me to do for you? And they said to him, Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory. Jesus said to them, You do not know what you're asking.
- [1 : 3 0] Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? And they said to him, We are able. And Jesus said to them, The cup that I drink you will drink.
- And with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. But to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.
- And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.
- But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.
- For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. And they came to Jericho.
- [2 : 3 5] And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.
- And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stopped and said, Call him.
- And they called the blind man, saying to him, Take heart. Get up. He's calling you. And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.
- And Jesus said to him, What do you want me to do for you? And the blind man said to him, Rabbi, let me recover my sight. And Jesus said to him, Go your way.
- Your faith has made you well. And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. Amen. This is God's word.

[3 : 42] Well, do please turn again in your Bibles to Mark chapter 10. Amen. If Jesus was present with us here right now in person, if he stood right here on this platform and asked you what he could do for you, what would you ask for?

Truthfully, from your heart of hearts, what would you want him to do for you? Would it be more money? Not to be greedy, but just a bit more to ease the burden, be a bit more comfortable, pay off the mortgage, put the kids or the grandkids through university.

Would it be fame? Celebrity? To reach the top of whatever it is we do? Well, we've been seeing over the past few weeks that these things are to be held on to very lightly, if at all.

So maybe you just ask Jesus to guarantee your place in glory, your place in his kingdom, so that when it comes to the end of time, when the world is made new and the great resurrection happens, you just want to be guaranteed to be there, to have a seat saved and a good one.

That's what the disciples ask for here. Or would you ask him to give you whatever you need to follow his path through the cross to glory, to see the great spiritual realities that there are?

[5 : 12] That last option is close to what the blind beggar asks for in this passage, in the face of that question from Jesus. This is the last passage before Jesus and his disciples reach Jerusalem.

Notice verse 32 and 52. They are on the way to Jerusalem. But we've seen already, haven't we, that that phrase is about more than just the geographic journey.

For Jesus has been taking his disciples on another journey with him. Ever since the first prediction of Jesus' death, the disciples have been learning what it is to follow Jesus.

Jesus said himself that if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses it for my sake will save it.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul? They're on the road, yes, to Jerusalem, but they are together on the road to the cross.

[6 : 18] Jesus to his cross that has cosmic significance, but the disciples are on their own path to the cross, a path that is to be marked by the way of Jesus' kingdom and not the kingdoms of this earth.

It's a path that is prepared to give up the whole world with all of its riches and all of its power, all of its reputation, all of its comfort.

Jesus' kingdom has a glory that is upside down. It isn't like this world's concepts of glory, but Jesus' way is the path to real and lasting glory.

But it looks nothing like what we think or perhaps even what we'd want. Two things in this passage. When James and John are asked the question, what do you want me to do for you?

We see unwanted, unimagined glory. And when the blind beggars ask the same question, we see an unmatched gift. So first, verses 32 to 45.

[7 : 24] Unwanted, unimagined glory. Glory in Jesus' kingdom is completely unlike what this world thinks about glory. The Christian hope is not delayed gratification.

It's not deny yourself so that in the future you get to enjoy the things that you really want forever. It's not a case of weighing things up and thinking, okay, I can be last now, I can be unknown now in this world so that one day the tables will turn and I'll be in a position to lord it over people.

That's why the disciples are thinking here. In very familiar fashion, Jesus predicts his death and immediately afterwards, those closest to him show that they completely miss the point.

And instead of following the path of self-denial and sacrifice, they go off on a chase for glory. Their request, verse 37, is to be seated either side of Jesus in his glory.

And it probably isn't just James and John thinking like this. After all, verse 41, the other disciples become indignant at the request. So after a long section of teaching on being last, on losing life, and all the other cross-shaped things, we end up again seeing the disciples' obsession with having glory.

[8 : 44] It's a very familiar picture by now. And I suspect that we're more like the disciples than we'd be pleased to admit. Look at verse 34. Jesus is saying that he's going to be mocked, spat on, flogged, and killed.

And then, only after all of that will he rise. A terrible and painful cross experience. And straight away, verse 35, James and John want Jesus to do something for them.

Jesus ever gracious, verse 36, asks, what do you want me to do for you? What do they want? After Jesus has described his cross, they want the best seats in glory.

They want the guarantee of being at Jesus' right hand and left, at the high point of his glory. If only they knew what they were asking for. They don't, verse 38.

The disciples' picture of what would look, what that would look like is just like the world's. Verse 42, those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles, lord it over them.

[9 : 55] Their great ones exercise authority over them. Isn't that what sitting either at Jesus, at either side of Jesus' throne would mean? That's what was being asked for.

Seats beside Jesus, the king, the next most powerful people, position, power, no, no, not in Jesus' kingdom. Jesus' people need to understand that our hope is not just one of glory in the future, but it's also of a glory that's vastly different to anything this world aspires to and longs for.

Service. Service is the mark of greatness and glory in Jesus' kingdom. Verse 43, being great is being a servant.

Look at Jesus' response in verse 40. To sit at my right and left is not mine to grant. It's for those for whom it has been prepared. Now, for a long time when I read this, I was left wondering who that might be.

Who would be the ones that get to sit at the right and the left in Jesus' glory? Would it be Moses and Elijah, who are with Jesus at the transfiguration? Would it be John the Baptist or David?

[11 : 12] Or maybe it would be the great apostle Paul. But in thinking like that, that only shows what I thought glory was really like. Those who have the biggest names, those who have yielded the greatest influence.

Mark actually tells us who will sit either side of Jesus' throne. Later on, Mark, in Mark, we are shown Jesus' coronation. It happens in a palace.

He has a purple robe. He wears a crown. He's called king. People kneel down before him. And then he ascends to his throne. And there, in the midst of it all, there are two people, just as James and John request.

One at his right and one at his left. Jesus' throne is not like the thrones that we have. Because he's not like, he's not a ruler like the rulers we have.

He doesn't lord it over people. Jesus' coronation is in Mark 15. And Jesus' throne is a cross. And he has two people either side of him on their crosses.

[12 : 19] That's what glory looks like. Not what James and John imagine and not what they wanted. Glory in Jesus' kingdom comes through suffering, sacrifice.

The cup that Jesus is to drink, verse 38 and 39, it's the cup of wrath that we see in Isaiah. He's going to suffer the cross in order to take away the wrath of God.

that's what his cross was for. An incredible sacrifice for the benefit of others. Deep, dark, awful suffering in order to rescue his people.

And verse 39, his followers will also face their own cross. Their cross won't be the same as Jesus won. Verse 45 makes that clear. His will pay a ransom that we can't afford, that no one else can pay.

But what he is telling us is that his followers will and must follow in that cross-shaped life. Jesus leads the way for his people to follow.

[13 : 26] We see that in verse 32. On the road to the cross, Jesus is walking in front, leading others there. Jesus exemplifies what his kingdom will look like.

And his people are to follow suit. Verse 43. It shall not be so with his people that they embrace the world's glory and power.

No, no. Like our king, we must serve. In fact, lower than being a servant, he says, verse 44, to be slaves.

To give our lives, to give things up so that others might experience the glory we knew. There was a cartoon about two mice that I loved as a child called Pinky and the Brain.

In every episode, Pinky would ask, what are we going to do tonight, brain? To which the reply was always, we're going to do the same thing we do every night, Pinky. Try to take over the world.

[14 : 30] Often that's what we want, isn't it? To conquer our own little worlds. As we approach each day or week or year, we can do it and set targets of what we want to do, what we want to achieve, how far we can go, how high we can reach, how we can be successful.

Maybe some of us get out of bed in the morning, take a look in the mirror and wonder, how will I get on in the career ladder today? Or maybe, how can I elevate myself at church?

How can I ensure that I don't have to be the skivvy, the person who does all the menial tasks to serve others? But Jesus' kingdom is marked by how lowly we're prepared to be.

How much shall we give away today, brain? The same as everyday, Pinky. The whole world. Because glory in God's kingdom is through the cross.

So as we pick up our cross and follow us, we're prepared to be servants and slaves. That is glorious. Jesus was raised up in glory on a cross and there were people either side of him.

[15 : 43] That was a picture of glory. But as well as that, in doing these things, we will be following Jesus to a glory that's far beyond what we can imagine.

For as we follow his lead, we can be sure that the cross he's picked up is the one that, verse 45, does pay a ransom. It is the one that buys us into the kingdom.

His cross does take away the wrath of God. His cross will absorb all that flows out of the cup of wrath. He is the king of kings who can truly be called great because he was the ultimate servant.

His cross as a saving sacrifice, as a victory over Satan, will bring the crown. His cross will bring the crown. But the disciples here wanted one without the other.

They wanted the crown without the cross. But the crown only comes through Christ's cross first and foremost, dealing with our sin, and then through our cross as we pick it up and follow him.

[16 : 56] So what does glory look like in our church? It looks like giving up things that we want, giving up things that we like for the benefit of others.

It is a glorious thing now to be prepared to cut back our hours at work with all the implications that has if we're needed to serve at church in some way so the gospel can spread.

It's a glorious thing to give up a Friday night in order to give someone a lift to Tronius and Activate who mightn't be able to get there otherwise. It's a glorious thing to take a stand on human sexuality at school, university work, even if it means a couple of years of being the bigot or whatever it is that you'd be called or whatever the cost is socially.

And of course, we mustn't trivialize the cross. It's true that any little act of self-denial and service that costs us, that is sacrificial, is following Jesus on this path. So for some of us that might be giving up something dear to us for the sake of our whole church, for the sake of the gospel spreading to our city.

But what Mark is saying here is that no cost, no cost can outweigh the glory that's coming, not even death. So that even if carrying our cross means real danger to ourselves, to our health, to our lives, that too will be worth it.

[18 : 27] that too will be a glorious sacrifice that leads to greater glory. We've been very privileged to live in an age where there have been protections for being Christians, but that's not the experience of a lot of Christians today or in history.

Those protections, those freedoms may even be wiped away in the future. But Mark is assuring us that actually when we do feel the pinch, when we feel the pain, when we feel the persecution for following Jesus, that is a glorious thing.

And if we're struggling now to see that, in the fullness of time, we will enjoy all the glory that is Christ's. And we'll be able to see that the self-denial and the sacrifice that looks so weak, that this world so scorns, is glorious just like the throne of wood and the crown of thorns.

Well, that's the unwanted, unimagined glory. But Mark moves on to tell us about the unmatched gift, verses 46 to 52. Jesus can open our eyes to see that which is most to be treasured and help us to follow him on his path.

The disciples ask to share in Jesus' majesty, but we see a blind man now called Bartimaeus who asks for mercy. Mark 9 to 10, whilst punctuated by the predictions of Jesus' death, is also bookended by two incidents with blind men.

[20 : 09] Before the first prediction in chapter 8, we see a healing of a blind man that has two stages to it. Jesus was making the point to his disciples that they were like the blind man who could see partially just before asking them who he really was.

Who do people say that I am? They could only partially see who Jesus was. They couldn't see everything about him. Now at the end of this section we have another blind man.

But whilst he is blind, he sees much more than the disciples. Notice that he addresses Jesus in both 37 and 38 as son of David.

Mark starts his book by saying that this is the gospel of Jesus the Christ, the son of God. And that term Christ means the long promised king. One descended from David who would come to rescue God's people.

And in Jesus giving his life as a ransom for many, that's what he'll do. And so as blind Bartimaeus calls out to him, son of David, he already shows that he knows more of Jesus than the disciples.

[21 : 20] And his plea is a plea for mercy. So Jesus asks the same questions as he asked the disciples in verse 36. He now asks in verse 51, Bartimaeus, the same thing.

But what's his response? It's not to ask for riches or for fame. He doesn't see it as a chance to gain the world. He sees who Jesus is and his simple request, teacher, son of David, let me see.

And this isn't simply about physical sight. This man knows who it is that stands in front of him and he doesn't ask for the glory that the disciples long for. He wants only to see.

And blindness throughout Mark's gospel is as much about spiritual sight as physical sight. And so the request is also a request to see the cross.

That's what he's asking for. He wants to be able to truly follow Jesus on the way. Jesus has come to deal with humanity's problem. He's come to pay the ransom for sin.

[22 : 29] He's come to deal with the wrath of God. He's the true and greater son of David. His path is the path to the cross, the most important journey this world has ever known.

But Jesus also deals with another problem. For we are not only spiritually dead without him, we don't just need Jesus to ransom us, we're also blind.

Without God granting us sight, we won't be able to fathom our real and greatest need. We need Jesus to show us what his cross means and what it means for us.

Without God granting us that sight, we'll be stuck in a perpetual cycle of longing for the esteem of this world, of grasping at glory, reaching for riches.

Without God granting us sight, we'll only see with the eyes of this world, which has things so terribly upside down. But Jesus offers it to those who come to him like this beggar or like the child that we saw last week, knowing their predicament, knowing that they can offer nothing, cast aside by this world, verse 48, told to be quiet, hushed.

[23 : 46] To those who are desperate, calling out to Christ, have mercy on me. Jesus says, take heart, get up, your faith has made you well.

What would you have Jesus do for you? This man exemplifies what it is to be a disciple of Jesus. He asks for what he needs to follow him.

And that's what Bartimaeus freely does. Whilst the disciples are afraid of Jesus' talk of the cross, whilst they're more concerned with glory, this man, verse 52, is told to go his own way now that he's been healed.

But what does he do? Having received sight, he follows Jesus on the way. That little phrase again, on the way to the cross.

He picks up his cross and follows. He gets that the cross comes before the crown. This whole section we've looked at is full of concentrated teaching on what it is to be a disciple of Jesus.

[24 : 51] And this man is the final picture. It means crying out for mercy, asking God to let us see, and then following Jesus on the way to the cross.

Jesus gave this man what he needed so that he could follow him. That's the unmatched gift that brings us to unimaginable glory.

When our hearts long for this world, when we crave that which will raise us up here, when we care most about being successful in this life, when money, sex, power, and fame pull at our hearts, we need to ask God to grant us sight of what is of true value.

For we far too easily see glory as this world does. We far too easily drift towards that which will be comfortable in the present. Jesus has spilt out what glory looks like.

It's him hanging on a cross, paying a ransom, paying the price that needs to be paid to free us from slavery, taking upon himself the punishment that we are owed, enduring the wrath of God that should be poured out on us.

[26 : 06] Glory isn't a throne that's studded with precious gems, it's a throne that's pierced with nails. It isn't a crown of the finest gold, it's one crafted with thorns.

It isn't having all of this world, it's giving it all up, everything, just like blind Bartimaeus who verse 50 threw off his cloak, all he would have had.

He left everything he had to follow Jesus on the way, no longer now sitting at the side of the road, but on the road to the cross with Jesus.

Jesus bids all who would follow him to pick up a cross, a glorious cross of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and to follow his glorious path to the final, ultimate glory of his new Jerusalem, his new creation, his final resurrection, where all of history is headed, and we will see things as they really are.

And so he says nothing can be more than him. Nothing can be too costly to give up for him, for he has given everything to pay our ransom, to guarantee that our souls will not be forfeited.

[27 : 36] And so if we come to him and ask, he will let us see his cross and our own, but he will also bring us through to the crown. amen.

Amen. Let's pray. Father, we do give you great thanks for the cross of our Lord Jesus that has brought us life from death, forgiveness, where we owe a debt, but you've also opened our eyes to see the truth, to see that we need the Lord Jesus and to see that the path of following him in the end will be splendor.

So help us do it for we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.