

Let's turn to Mark chapter 9.

So if you would take your Bibles and turn to Mark chapter 9. We're going to continue in our text in the book of Mark. Today's message is entitled Christ's call to servanthood. Mark chapter 9 verses 30 through

37. Mark chapter 9 verses 30-37. When you have found that passage, if you would, rise and stand with me in honor of the one who gave us his word. Mark 9 verses 30-37 reads, from

there they went out and were going through Galilee. And he was not wanting anyone to know about him. For he was teaching his disciples and telling them the son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him. And when he has been killed he will rise again three days later. But they did not understand this statement and they were afraid to ask him.

And they came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house, he began to question them, what were you discussing on the way?

But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. And sitting down, he called the twelve and said to them, if anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. And taking a child, he set him before them. And taking him in his arms, he said to them, whoever receives one child like this in my name

receives me. And whoever receives me does

not receive me but him who sent me. This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray. Father, we are so thankful to

be here today as a congregation worshiping you. We're so thankful for the grace that you have given us that has united us in Christ and we plead with you acknowledging our utter dependence on you that your word would penetrate our hearts by the work of the spirit.

I pray, Lord, that you would remove any hindrances for me, any nerves or distractions and that you would help me be the

mouthpiece for you and nothing more. Simply a tool that you use to edify your people. We love you and praise you and thank you for your grace and we ask for your grace to continue that we might glorify you in all that we do. In your holy

name I pray, amen. All right. You can be seated. So over the last few weeks we

have seen a lot of teaching from Jesus more than we normally have in Mark. We have seen him revealing things

that he normally hasn't and if you remember in chapter 8 there

was that pivot point that we had that was actually the first prophecy that Jesus gave about his passion when he told the disciples what was going to happen to him and we remember Peter's response and how he rebuked Jesus, those types of things and we'll talk more about that. This particular passage ties in with those previous

ones because he's once again going to share a theme and you'll see a recurring theme from the time he spoke to the disciples in chapter 8 until now and even going forward of suffering and humility. So you remember he was revealing

the first passion account on his way to a very specific city and he was revealing that now the process of his mission was going to turn from ministering to the crowds to facing Jerusalem. So he was turning his face from the crowds and ministering to them and he was going to complete his mission. He's coming to do what he was sent to do and in the transfiguration we see very much and coming down from it an air of servitude and dependence on Christ and humiliating, excuse me, humbling oneself. There we go. Humbling oneself before Christ. So you see this constant theme of suffering and humility and today's text is no different. It will continue as we go forward.

I want us to wrap our minds around as we go through the text today that the mark itself is repeating this theme over and over now. something we should pay attention to. If something gets repeated in scripture there is not a lot of especially in Hebrew but there is not a lot of words that we use for emphasis. Repetition is where you get emphasis from. repeated the more you should pay attention to it. So now we're in another instance here of looking at humility and suffering and we know that Jesus is on his path to humility and suffering in Jerusalem and that's what Jerusalem stood for in Jesus' mind and he already has expressed the disciples will share that with him and now he's going to teach them another valuable lesson. But we're going to see here the disciples as sinful, fickle, selfish human beings, they're going to turn it back on themselves as they often do, as we often do as humans. And so we're going to see a lot of valuable things in here for us to walk away with. But the main thing that I want us to understand is that we as followers of Christ, are called to servanthood. We have a gracious father and we're going to see the gracious position of Christ teaching his disciples even when they don't want to communicate with him and we'll talk about that in a few moments but the overarching theme of today's passage is humbling oneself before Christ and being the servant that he's called us to be. So let's dig in together.

Number one, Christ's prophecy. Christ's prophecy. Verses 30 through 32. Chapter 9 verses 30-32 reads, from there they went out and were going through Galilee and he was not wanting anyone to know about it. For he was teaching his disciples and telling them the son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him. And when he has been killed he will rise again three days later. But they did not understand this statement and they were afraid to ask him. So now he's back in Galilee but

this time he's secretly traveling through Galilee. If you remember a few chapters ago we saw his last miracle in Galilee. It was when he landed the boat and the Pharisees came out and his opposition came out and Herod was opposing him. He's had all this opposition in Galilee. He's not here to do ministry anymore. This is simply a path that he must walk to get to Jerusalem. So he's

back in Galilee and he's making sure that no one knows he's there. All he's there to do is travel through the area to avoid the antagonism of the Jewish religious leaders in Herod. And so ensuring that the crowds don't amass around him. It's not clear where he walks, but he would have been going through someplace that was not with a lot of towns around. He could avoid crowds. His goal is not to minister to the people at this time. He is now on a mission. He is setting his sights to the culmination of what the son of man has come to do, which is to give his life for his people. Now, of course, being a good teacher as Jesus is, he doesn't pass up the opportunity to teach his disciples even further. So in verse 31 he begins to teach them and prophesize again. So this is the second prophecy in Mark so far. So you might write that down. There's three specific prophecies about the passion from Jesus. We heard one in Mark chapter 8 in verse 31. And now he's once again giving a prophecy of his passion. It reads the son of man is to be delivered in the hands of men and they will kill him. And when he is being killed he will rise again three days later. There's a couple of things we have to look at here. First of all is what's the differences in the passion? The information that Jesus is giving. So in the first passion prediction he blames or holds responsible the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees for turning him over to be killed. But here there's a different level of responsibility. And it's very important that we understand that this time he will be turned over into the hands of men. Jesus is now looping in responsibility for his death by prophesying that it is humanity in general that will kill him. It is humanity in general that's going to be responsible and held accountable for killing him. There's a very specific thing here that we have to understand in the original language that in English it just doesn't translate very well. So there's a word here. It may be translated as delivered in your particular version is to be delivered. It may say betrayed. It may be handed over. But that word first of all is definitive in nature as in it's already happened. In other words it's so set in stone it's already part of the redemptive plan. It is absolutely decreed by God and will happen. It's definitive in nature. So it's going to happen. He will be delivered. but the verb be delivered is not only definitive But it's also in the passive voice. I'm not going to go into the entire Greek lesson but the passive voice is something that does not have a subject present in the original language. So the verb is just there. Delivered. And what that's called in the original language is a divine passive. Out of great respect for the name of God, the Jews were very particular and careful

to not have to write the name Yahweh or God or El in the Hebrew. unless they absolutely have to. And in fact, when they were writing out the Hebrew scriptures, the Torah, to continue to pass it on generation from generation, which they were very meticulous about, they were so reverent over the name of God that they would, if they came to the name of God in a particular passage, they would throw the pen away that they were using, they would rise up from the desk, leave the room, ceremonial wash, change their clothes, come back, write the name of Yahweh, dispose of that pen and go back and put on other clothing. every single time the word Yahweh was translated. If you read the Old Testament the name Lord in all capitals in your English translations is the name Yahweh. Every single time it says Lord in all caps in the Old Testament that was the method they used to reverence God's name. And the New Testament is very similar. They would do what's called a divine passive which we see here where they would not write God's name. They would just have a verb and it was assumed that God was the one they were talking about to keep from having to write his name. Now, why is that so important? Because the context of this text what Jesus is explaining to the people is that the son of man is to be delivered by God to the hands of men. It's a definitive. It's going to happen. But God himself by using a divine passive, Mark is saying, God delivered the son of man over to the hands of humanity. That brings so much more depth to what he's saying. Because we know that God, through his redemptive plan as we can trace it throughout all of scripture, we know that God gave his son for us. We know that God turned his son over to be killed to redeem his people. And Jesus is reiterating and reinforcing that idea by the way he's explaining it to the disciples here. And so in this prediction, he is saying that God is turning over, but it does not negate the responsibility of humans. Later on in Mark chapter 14 and verse 21, Jesus will say, for the son of man is to go just as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born. So Jesus is holding men responsible when God is the one that handed over to those human beings. And so we see a beautiful picture here of God's divine sovereignty and the responsibility of man for his evil sinful heart. Now, this doctrine is extremely hard to wrestle with. I haven't got it figured out. I haven't spoken to anyone. I read a lot of books that don't have it figured out. Spurgeon the prince of preachers said the idea of divine sovereignty and human responsibility is like two rails on a train track. A straight train track. They don't intersect where we can see it but he knows that somewhere out in the distance beyond the horizon where we can't see it

with our finite minds God makes them meet in perfection. And so this is something that we have to wrestle with as human beings. God is sovereign over all and he absolutely decrees everything that's going to happen in such a way that we can definitively say that when God says he's going to do something it will come to pass. But that humans are responsible for their own actions and own sin in that sinful situation. And God is the divine judge that decrees what is good and bad and who is responsible and who is not and who are we to say anything more to the creator than yes sir as Paul says in Romans. He makes some vessels of clay for destruction and he makes some for admirable use and who are we to question that? But I want us to understand that Jesus is laying out himself in his own wording that God is sovereign over all and that man is responsible for the evil intentions of his heart. And that we in that need a savior. And as this passage unfolds, this one particular verse, I'll read it again. The son of man is to be delivered. We've talked about delivered into the hands of men. We know who's responsible for the death of Christ and their sinful hearts. It goes on to say, and they will kill him. And when he has been killed, he will rise again three days later. So we have here very similar language to Isaiah 53.6 and Isaiah 53.12. The suffering servant of Yahweh. We have spoken about that a little bit here and there as Mark has made references to it but Jesus himself now references again. I would like to read especially Isaiah 53.12 where it says therefore I will divide for him a portion with many and he will divide the spoil with the strong because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors yet he himself bore the sin of many and interceded for their transgressors. So we have the hope here that Jesus lays out that he will rise again three days later. And we know developing later on what that implies for the imputed righteousness of Christ that will come upon his people. But it's important to understand that in this particular passion, Jesus has shifted gears to reveal more to the disciples than he did in chapter eight. And so now with this shift of accusation, holding all of humanity responsible, we know that as he's explained to the disciples, they will kill him. And I want to pause here for just a moment and think about being turned over to humanity in their sin. In our day, sometimes it's easy for us to think Man, there's a lot of evil in the world. I can't imagine it being any worse. But by God's grace it's not worse. Because I want you to understand the sin that runs rampantly in the hearts of men unchecked by the grace of God is capable of worse things than what we can even fathom or imagine. There are things that happen in this world that makes our skin crawl and rightly should. things that humanity does to

one another. And I want you to understand what God did for the salvation of his people is took his perfect son, part of the Trinity and gave him over to the depraved minds of humanity to have their way with him. In fact, scripture talks about how much worse falling into the hands of men is. Second Samuel 24 and verse 14. David is talking about being in distress. And he says to Gad, I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of Yahweh for his compassions are abundant. But do not let me fall into the hand of men. He understood the depravity of man and he would rather be judged by God by the gracious merciful creator than handed over to the hands of men on their depraved things that they come up with to do to one another. So understand the depth of love displayed in the actions of Christ and God himself as he delivered his beloved son, his only begotten son over to the depraved hands of humanity for the people that he has chosen to save. There is no greater sign of love than this. So I want you to contemplate what Jesus went through and we'll be talking about it in a few weeks when we get to the passion as detailed in Mark. But I want you to understand what that weight carried for Jesus as he told his disciples what was going to happen to him. Now, as the disciples have heard

this message and what we've seen repeated over and over the last several chapters, they're still thick. They don't get it. So in verse 32, but they did not understand the statement and they were afraid to ask him. You know, Mark doesn't record Jesus' direct teachings often. He usually uses the physical actions of Jesus to teach us the lessons, but here we see a direct teaching of the disciples and this privilege that they have of understanding this flies over their head. And it's interesting that Mark notates and they were afraid to ask him. You can hear the first hand experience of the disciples here as Peter is the one that gave Mark, most likely gave Mark the contents of his gospel. You can almost hear Peter saying yeah, we didn't want to ask him what happened, what that meant or why he was going to do these things but it's interesting Because the word here in the original language can be translated a few different ways. It can be translated as they were ignorant. The meaning escaped them or they were not knowing. In other words, they just simply could not grasp what he was revealing to them. Now, why would they be afraid to ask though? Because you have to ask yourself why would the disciples who spent years now with Jesus have developed this relationship, was called specifically by him, why would they be afraid to ask this question? I think it boils down to they were too afraid that they would be responsible for falling with him in that. I think it boils down to they were afraid to truly understand it because Jesus has just said days before this my followers will share in my suffering. You guys remember that passage? My followers will share in my

suffering and now he's coming again saying it's God himself delivering us to humanity, delivering me to humanity and they know as his followers they don't really want to grasp it. They don't want to understand the pain. They don't want to understand how bad things are going to get. They're just too afraid to ask. they could not seek for clarification. So in these first few verses, I want us to apply a couple different things here. And I've reiterated this, but I want to reiterate it again, we must understand that God handed over his son to humanity to pay for the sins of the people that he loved. That was in the redemptive plan. This has been decreed and set down. We've seen the prophecies fulfilled already throughout Mark. We see it again as a reference here to Isaiah with the wording that's used. Jesus is here and was handed over by God himself to pay for the sins of his creation. Things from the dirt he handed over his only begotten son to atone for their sins. We have to understand that we are still responsible for our actions and by his divine perfect justice and judgment we have broken his laws. The men wanted to harm Jesus and so he allowed them to do that and handed his son over to them and humans are responsible for their sin. Humanity is responsible for putting the very son of God to death. But there's something so encouraging here. He was turned over for us. He was turned over and willingly submitted to the suffering that he was called to suffer for us. He gave himself so that he could redeem a people to himself that could not redeem themselves. And that we only understand that by the miracle of regeneration and salvation. Could any human ever come up with this? No. The disciples themselves as we will see in just a moment after hearing this turn the spotlight right back on themselves and in a way so you're not going to be alive anymore so who is going to be the greatest? Who gets to lead us after you're gone? Who is going to be the greatest disciple? It is only by the miracle of regeneration and having an incomprehensible concept explained to our finite minds by God's grace and the working of his spirit alone that we are able to comprehend even a fraction of what it truly meant. Because what we can grasp and understand in our finite minds is nothing compared to the immense beauty of our creator and his redemptive plan. We have only a fraction of that revelation. but it's only by his grace that we can understand it. So we are utterly dependent upon God for those things. Number two. So we've looked at the prophecy of Christ. Now we're going to look at the teaching of Christ. Number two is Christ's teaching. Christ's teaching. Verses 33 through 35. It continues in Mark chapter 9, and they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house,

he began to question them, what were you discussing on the way? But they kept silent. For on the way, they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. And sitting down, he called the 12 and said to them, if anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. So now they traveled through Galilee. They're back to Capernaum. They arrive at what was their ultimate destination. Many think that this is back in Peter's house because Mark chooses to write with a definitive article. It's not they arrived at a house. They arrived at the house. And the house in Capernaum throughout Mark has been Peter's house. So it's very likely they're back at Peter's house. So they've come full circle because if you remember they started in Peter's house with some of the first miracles that Mark records. So he's went out on ministry. We've tracked with him all through Mark. We've traced out their journey and now they've returned back to the home. And we see the theme, the overall theme of Mark that recurs over and over again, the outside and the inside. He has brought the inside group in for extra teaching and coming into a home means there's something he's about to reveal to them. So he asked them a question to start the conversation. He already knew the answer. We know that because he answered their conversation or their question without even having to hear the question from them. But he asked them because he wanted to hear it from them. Do you see him seeking out that relationship with them? The relationship with the people that he has chosen and loves. So he says what were you discussing on the way? And from embarrassment like rebellious toddlers they kept silent. because on the way they discussed which of them was the greatest and they knew deep down that wasn't the conversation they should be having. You don't not share what you're talking about unless you're embarrassed to share that you were talking about it. And I reference them as rebellious toddlers because any of us who have raised kids know that's exactly how kids react, especially when they're younger, don't they? All right, come in here, guys. Who made this mess? They look at you. Or the great respond all that kids have. I don't know. How many times do your kids say I don't know every week? More times than I can count. If I had a nickel I would retire. You have the same mentality from the disciples. I want us to identify ourselves with them because how often do we respond in that way even as adults? embarrassment. We don't want to have to own up to our actions. We don't want to have to come before God and say that we messed up again and so as a gentle loving father he disciplines us to bring us back to himself. But we act so much like the disciples. But there's something else we have to understand here too. Not only do they act as embarrassed



human beings or rebellious toddlers. but they have aligned themselves with the Pharisees in their actions. Mark chapter 3 and verse 4. Do you remember what happened then? Jesus and the Pharisees were having a discussion and he asked them a very pointed question in chapter 4 or excuse me verse 4 of chapter 3. He said, is it lawful to do good or to do harm in the Sabbath? To save a life or to kill it? Mark says they kept silent. They wouldn't answer his question. So the disciples here are acting just like the Pharisees did. Not wanting to have to answer the pointed question of their savior. And so they've aligned themselves here and the juxtaposition here of what their argument that they had as opposed to what Jesus taught them in verse 31 is so ironic. So ironic. I have come the son of man has come to be handed over to humanity to be killed. And they're immediately going to argue about who's better than the rest of them. If this passage doesn't display the depravity of humanity, I don't know what will. Because this is undeniably a picture of humanity living in and of its own ways, drawing the spotlight back to itself over and over and over again. How fickle humans are. So as Jesus has taught them on more than one occasion now that suffering is part of his mission and that his followers will suffer with him, they are more worried about recognition and authority amongst themselves than the fact that they will be following their savior along his path. And just like the first passion, what happened with the first time that Jesus prophesied about his passion? Peter in a superior religious outrage rebuked Jesus as if he had done something evil. That was the wording if you remember. And in this particular passion, the disciples immediately turn their attention to themselves and start arguing about who's better than everybody else. And you know what happens with the third one just as a foretaste of that before we get there? In Mark chapter 10, Jesus gives his third passion prediction in Mark, and James and John immediately ask if they can be seated in the highest place of authority and glory with Jesus. All three occasions of our Savior condescending, revealing himself to humanity is met with our pride, fickle attitudes of turning the spotlight to ourselves. And I'm reiterating this because I want us to understand and align ourselves with the disciples and understand we need a Savior because without him we are hopeless. And even the people that Jesus has drawn to himself and chosen while his time was on earth, they still don't get it. And they had him right there. What hope do we have? And that hope is going to be seen in Christ alone. Now, this teaching that you may think of the disciples arguing here I want us to understand a little bit of context here so that we can culturally understand what they're coming from and culturally understand what we're coming from because the two are actually not that far apart. So the idea of seating arrangements and importance and being raised

up as higher than everyone else is rife throughout all the rabbinic teachings. All of them write about the way that, in fact, a great teaching of the Jewish people outside of the Torah is designed, there's actually an order in paradise that they've laid out how people will walk out before God in paradise. So these disciples are actually exercising the teachings of those people that are in authority over them. And so the Jewish writing specifically in the community of Qumran which was a Jewish community that we have a lot of extra writings for, they actually laid it out specifically. They have the mindset that we know exactly how the procession before God and glory is going to go. It's going to be the priests first and then the Levites then the rest of Israel ranked by their rigid adherence to the law. You would be ranked by how well you followed the law as your procession came before God in glory. These men are exercising what they have been taught. Their minds are being drawn back to human teachings instead of the teachings of the one in front of them. Now, I would ask you in our post modern world over the last several centuries as the enlightenment has brought humanism to the forefront of how modern people think, has humanism impacted our ability to think of ourselves in light of scripture and Jesus? How often do we ourselves default to what we have been taught and raised by the general culture? Think about how much we have to unlearn when we're converted. Think about how much we have to unlearn that humans are the epitome of everything. That we're the top of the evolutionary ladder and that God has to be subjugated to our ways of thinking and our ways of understanding and our ways of how things operate. No different than what the disciples did here. No different at all. It's just a different teaching. It's just a different style of understanding. But it's very similar in how these two cultures, their culture then and our culture now has raised humans above the creator. And it just shows how much we have to wrestle with our flesh and how much we need Christ to come and change us so that we can submit to scripture through the working of the spirit. Because over and over again our default is going to be the default to what we know and understand and what has been taught. No different than what the disciples did. They simply defaulted to what they had been taught. They're still responsible for it. It's not an excuse that I'm giving you. I just want us to understand how much culture impacts our mindset. And so now what he does is absolutely amazing as Jesus is amazing. In verse 35, and sitting down he called the 12 and said to them, if anyone wants to be first he shall be last of all and servant of all. What a grace this is. They act like stubborn rebellious toddlers. They're not even going to engage with him and what does he do? He sits down in love, calls them around and answers their question anyway. What an example as a father. What a conviction as a father

because I can tell you my default is not usually when my kids don't answer me or don't own up to what they're doing or do what I ask them to do is not as often as it should be to gather them and instruct them. and not express my love the way that I should. And yet by grace, Jesus, despite their rebellion, in spite of them not engaging with him, he calls them around and teaches them anyway. If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and a servant of all. So what he's explaining to them is greatness is not as humans judge it to be. Because there's nowhere in the world in a worldly philosophy that you will see that greatness is achieved by being and lowering and humbling yourself. Nowhere in philosophical world do you see that especially in our post-modern context. There is nothing more opposed to the world than Jesus' teaching than the model of service he exemplified and the call to humiliation, suffering and servanthood that he called his disciples to do. There is nothing more antithetical to the world's viewpoint than that. I want us to understand this because in the Greek here you may have heard this before but the word for servant is diakonos. So in the ending here as it says he shall be called a servant of all. This is a diakonos of all or a servant and this servant is not one that you think of as a slave. This refers to a personal devotion and service as opposed to a slave or someone for hire. So this is someone who is personally devoted to someone to serve them. A diakonos. And the reason why I bring up the Greek language here, the Greek wording here is because this word was used throughout the Greek world. In fact, Plato, one of the greatest Greek philosophers, is held up as one of the greatest Greek philosophers that ever lived. He wrote how can a man be happy when he has to serve someone or diagnose someone? So the context of the culture at that time, the Greek culture is, if you were a servant to anyone, you were the lowest level of human being. No one can be happy serving someone else. So I want you to understand the great opposition that Jesus' teaching here has to the culture of the world of that day. and it's no different than it is today. We've already talked about humanism and the rise of self and the radical individualism that we see in America. You don't serve anyone. You pull yourself up by your bootstraps and you push forward and you raise yourself up and you reach for glory and you climb the corporate ladder and you step on whoever you have to step on on the way and you are great once you have achieved a certain status. How many times have we heard that keeping up with the Joneses? And so what Jesus is teaching here is diametrically opposed to the culture of that time. It's diametrically opposed to the culture of our time. And a quote I found this week says at no point does the way of Jesus diverge more sharply from the way of the world than on the

question of greatness. Because in Jesus' mind which is the only truth that we should be concerned about, greatness is achieved by being the servant of everyone else. So he corrects the disciples here in a gentle loving fashion as a father should and explains them the truth and the only truth they should be concerned about which is his revelation to them. So there's a couple points of application here. I want us to understand a couple different things. When we turn the focus to ourselves and it happens so often, doesn't it? How often do you turn the focus to yourself in your daily life? Like every day, all day, every day. That's the biggest struggle that we as humans have is our pride and our selfishness. We want it all to be about us. But even in the face of that, as often as that happens, when we don't admit our faults, despite the fact that he already knows them and paid for them, and when we want to act like stubborn toddlers, he, by his grace, gathers us unto himself and with a patient, loving, steadfast, never failing hand as only a perfect father can do, teaches us nonetheless. Despite our failures. Despite our hard-heartedness. He gathers us by his grace and he loves on us as only a perfect father can do. And so I want to encourage you today despite the feelings of selfishness, despite the failures that you have looking at yourself and not looking at others, he is still going to wrap you in his loving arms and teach you nonetheless through the work of his spirit ever making you more like his son. And you can rest in that. You can rest in what Christ does as a loving father. And the second point that we have to have here is we must serve as he served. We must exemplify what a follower of Christ is called to exemplify and that is to put ourselves dead last in every situation and raise everyone else up above ourselves. I'm going to quote it again. You've heard me quote it a lot. Matthew 22, 36-40. My favorite passage. Let's think about it. You guys remember it? No, just me? Okay. Matthew 22, 36 through 40. The scribes have come and asked Jesus, Master, what is our teacher? What is the greatest commandment? And he replies to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And then he gives them a bonus and says, and the second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself. Do you come anywhere in that equation for love? No. You are in the back seat. You are going to love God with all of you and your neighbor as yourself. You don't even come into the equation except to be the one that is producing the love which only comes from grace. And so what that means is we have to serve everyone around us. That includes your spouse. Serve your spouse. Humble yourself. Hold them up

as more important than you. For when both of you are doing that are either of you being selfish and causing a problem? No. Is that much easier said than done and extremely hard? Yes. Anyone that's married knows that. Marriage is the most sanctifying relationship on earth because you have to put yourself behind the other person every moment of every day. But we are called to do it. What about your children? Do you serve your children? What about the young people around you in the body? Or the young people here, do you serve your siblings, teenagers? Or do you see yourself as the one in charge and the one who needs to be served? I would challenge all of us here because this is what the text has said over and over and over again. It's time we examine ourselves and say, am I serving rather than being served? If you are a follower of Christ, you are called to be last. we are called by Christ to be servants. Because our vocation in the eyes of God is one of servanthood. And there is no better place to give than from a position of being a humble servant to all those that we encounter. And we're going to talk more about what that means in an outward outside the church But right now I want us to focus inside the body and inside our familial relationships you are to serve. Your goal of coming to grace covenant church as a follower of Christ should be what can I give to those around me not what can I take from the body. Every time you interact with someone in the body that should be your goal. But there is no better way to exude the love of Christ and what he's done for us than to live our lives in that manner. And so there's an illustration that I like to use. Because people come, especially to pastors, and that's part of our responsibility, but they come and say, hey, I want to understand what decision I should make. What is God's path for me? And I try my hardest to always bring them back to this question. What seat are you on the bus in your solution? Or what seat are you in the car? Are you at the back seat? Are you putting God as the driver and other people in front of yourself? Because if you're the last person that you're considering in your decision and there's no black and white answer in scripture on what you should do, do it. Do the one that puts you in the last position. That is a good rule of thumb. If it's not black and white in scripture where it says don't murder someone, obviously don't murder someone. But if there's decisions that you have to make, where should I go to school? What car should I buy? Where should I buy my house? Consider God first, others second, and yourself last and make the decision. It's a good rule of thumb to understand putting yourself in a servanthood mentality. So number three, so we've looked at Christ's prophecy, we've looked at Christ's teaching, and now we're gonna look at Christ's illustration as he so effectively

does over and over, especially in Mark, he illustrates with his actions the teaching that he wants us to understand. So in verse 36 and 37 at the end of our text today, it reads, and taking a child, he set him before them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, who receives one child like this in my name receives me. And whoever receives me does not receive me but him who sent me. So as unusual as it is in Mark we actually get to see him teach and verbally instruct first and then use an illustration. So he's taught. He's explained it to them. But now he's going to reinforce it by taking one of the children in the home. We assume it's Peter's home. He brings him up on his knee or gathers him to his arms as an example. Now, in our culture we may think okay, I understand I think where this is going is that we need to approach Christ like a child. That's not what this text is instructing. There are other texts in Matthew where it says come with the faith of a child. There are those texts but this text is not explaining that we are to be like the child in this example. We are to be like Jesus accepting the child and humbling ourselves to accept those who are considered least among those around us. Because culturally we live in a very different culture in the west. regarding children than what that culture regarded children. In the west, especially in America, we elevate childhood. We elevate children. They have a standing. They have a position. Some parents even sacrifice everything about their lives for their children, right? But in that context of that day, that was not the case. In the Greek culture we'll talk about the Jewish culture in a moment because this is a combination of both but in the Greek culture they weren't given children weren't given a place at all. In fact, due to high demand for human labor and high infant and youth mortality rates the standing of children in the eyes of the culture was the lowest of the low. If you were a child and hadn't proven yourself to be able to number one stay alive and number two work for what you have you weren't considered a really honestly human. And then you've got the high mortality rate of young low life span of the adults. There were many orphans. Children were seen more as a nuisance than as a positive. And so the lowest degree of cultural society in the Greek side saw children more as a nuisance and as something to simply just have around because that's what we have to have to continue to build out life and have human labors but there was no status given to them. In the Jewish culture not only were they impacted by the Greeks around them but the Jews themselves saw children not according to their own value but simply according to their proximity to a man. So in the Jewish culture the patriarch was the higher authority and that children were simply seen as not having arrived or being

the very last. So what Jesus is saying here and understanding the cultural context of what he is doing, he is taking someone who is considered both by the world at the time and by the Jews as being subhuman. Not animal level but just not culturally relevant to the other humans around them. So he is saying in actuality by his actions, he is demonstrating what he has just taught them in verse 35 that you have to be a servant of all. He takes a child and brings them up onto his lap and instructs them to accept the lowest of culture, the lowest of humanity around you in my name. The humility that the disciples would have to have to live that out would cause them to be looked down upon by the culture around them. And that's seen throughout the start of the early church. What impacted the Roman empire exclusively in their writings about the Christian church as it grew was their ministry to the orphans, the widows, and the needy in society. That's what impacted the Romans. That's how the church impacted was their service to those who no one else would serve because the church lived out the servant mentality that Christ called them to. And so the lesson he's teaching now with this illustration is taking the lowest among them and raising them up above themselves. So the lesson here is not that we are to approach Jesus like children. This text doesn't say that. We are to approach the children like Jesus. humbling ourselves, lowering ourselves, bringing ourselves to serve those whom no one else will serve. And Christ teaches this emphatically in multiple places while he's on this earth. He gives illustrations about how to respond to the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned, the child, and the needy one. Over and over and over again as Jesus teaches his disciples to respond to the world around them he teaches them to humble themselves and to be servants. because those who humble themselves and receive the lesser in Christ's name receive Christ and those who receive Christ receive the father. Understand what Jesus is telling them because in the Jewish context the Jew thought they had status because they were children of Abraham. I have access to the father because I'm part of the chosen nation. And what Jesus is telling them is no, you don't have access unless you have it through me. And you don't have access to me unless you are humbling yourself as a servant. And only those who are humbled as servants are those who have been impacted by grace through faith. by the work of God himself. Do you see how this has built itself up through Mark? As he's taught about faith and the gift of faith and how his passion is coming and he's called them to servanthood, and now he's physically showing the example of what a servant who's been impacted by Christ, how they will live out their lives. So he's shown them what they are in himself and then called them to act like it. Very similar to what Paul does in Ephesians where in the first three chapters he has the indicative of who you are in Christ. Do

you guys remember going through Ephesians together? The indicative of who you are in Christ in the last three chapters as because of who you are in Christ, this is how you are to live. So please don't hear me saying if you don't humble yourself as a servant, you can't earn your salvation. No, what I'm saying is because Christ gives you the gift of faith, gives you the gift of repentance, gives you that grace, you then will have the ability to be the servant that he's called you to be. I encourage you to look at your

life and see what other ways you can exude the servant mentality that Christ is calling us to, not to earn righteousness, not to keep God happy with you, but as an act of praise and joyous revelation and glory given to God who saved us. Your motivation for your actions comes out of gratitude, not as a sense of earning something. And so, an application on this third point, it's not about our position. It is not about holding ourselves in higher esteem than those around us. We must examine ourselves and understand that we are to put all those, even the ones that the world says are worthless and less than wholesome, the needy and defenseless, those are who we are supposed to humble ourselves below and serve as greater than ourselves. So in the church we saw in the

last application that we are to humble ourselves before those in the body and put others first before ourselves and our families but now we are seeing that he applies this even to the world. Those we come in contact with we are to hold them higher than ourselves and this is very hard to do as someone who likes to drive in traffic and have his way. I can tell you it's very hard to put others before yourself. or at work when you're hungry and you want to take lunch but someone comes and asks you if they can take lunch first. And this may sound like miniscule trivial things but what I'm encouraging you to do is understand that by living out the servant mentality at all times people will go what's wrong with you because there's nothing more antithetical to the way the world lives. There's nothing more different than lowering yourself and raising others up because that's not how the world thinks. We just established that didn't we? And so by God's grace in living out what he's calling us to as servanthood and even the small miniscule ways that we interact with the world around us, God uses that to plant seeds of being different than what the rest of the world thinks and the gospel spreads. Now, you still have to share the gospel. You still have to verbally tell them to repent. That's part of the gospel. But do you understand the difference that it makes in the world's eyes? When we exude those things that are antithetical to their way of thinking. I would encourage you this week

to not fall into the trap that the disciples did. They've fallen into over and over again. As Jesus talks about the suffering that he's going to have and his followers are going to have with



it to turn the spotlight on ourselves as they did. Let us not fall into that trap but look at one's position and prestige. Look out for one another's position and prestige instead of our own. Lifting others up above ourselves.

In conclusion, Jesus is continuing to teach on suffering and will continue to do that in the coming passages. He's going to continue to reiterate the suffering that's coming as he approaches Jerusalem as his face is on the final lap of his ministry as he approaches the suffering that he's been called to. So I would encourage us as this

idea and this theme continues to stop worrying so much as so many in the church today do. They worry about the followers, the clicks, the likes, the hearts, how much they can get from book sales and all the things that comes from seeking the applause of others but to humble ourselves and be servants. So let's exemplify the calling of the Lord in our lives by serving those in our family, those in our body, and those in the world that God has providentially brought across our paths for that's the calling of the master. It said it right here. Black ink or maybe red ink on white paper. We are called to be servants so let us go out resting in what Christ has done, rejoicing in his free gift of grace and wanting to praise him by being the servants he's called us to be. Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for your grace for allowing us to come and hear your word today and I pray that it impacts each one of us as you have intended it to impact us that we might by your good graces be the servants that you call us to be. Help us to acknowledge our utter dependence on you to be able to do that because we can't pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, Lord. Our flesh is still there. And our default is to go back to what we know and what our flesh understands. Help us to be antithetical to our flesh. Help us to do all this not as a way of looking to earn more righteousness for you have clothed us in the righteousness that can never fail. We don't need any more righteousness for Jesus has given us what we need. Help us to look at fulfilling your call so that we might bring glory to you as a way of thanksgiving and praise for what you've done. We're so thankful for you, Lord, and for your grace. I pray that as we approach the table today in just a that we will remember the suffering that you went through so that we might be here today. In your holy name I pray, amen.