

Lent Day 13: Do you know what you ask?

By: James Yang

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. ²¹ "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." ²² "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. ²³ Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." ²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Matthew 20:20-28

History offers countless lessons, particularly in the realm of leadership. Time and again, we witness disastrous consequences when individuals believe they know better than everyone else or view themselves as superior because of their social status, wealth, upbringing, culture, or race. One of the most destructive examples in modern history is Adolf Hitler. He believed the Aryan race to be superior and relentlessly persecuted those of Semitic background and anyone who opposed his ideology. The result of Hitler's antisemitic and expansionist views was the genocide of more than eleven million people—six million of whom were Jews, over one million being children.

Much of the suffering in our world stems from a broken desire for power and an insatiable greed for resources. We constantly compare ourselves to our neighbors, striving to outdo them, often resorting to conflict to achieve our goals. But at what cost? Someone always pays the price for our unchecked ambition and fleshly desires. This is why Jesus responds to the mother who sought elevated status for her sons by saying, *"You do not know what you are asking."*

True righteousness is not measured by recognition or prominence. Rather, it is found in a willing and loving heart that serves others without keeping score of personal loss or sacrifice. It is the posture of a servant—giving freely, regardless of how much one has received. Jesus teaches His disciples, *"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."* True greatness in leadership and character is not rooted in ideology or the approval of others. Godly greatness is born from humility and a willingness to lay down one's life—even for those who may betray us—just as Christ did for us.

If today you feel compelled to be first, to surpass your neighbor, or to assert significance over an enemy, remember the command of Christ. Personal leadership begins with humility and a wholehearted commitment to serve both your neighbors and the Lord. Find your true significance not in position or comparison, but in knowing who you are in Him—beloved, cherished, and saved by His grace.

"I am persuaded that love and humility are the highest attainments in the school of Christ and the brightest evidences that He is indeed our Master."

—John Newton