

“Discipleship” Part 4

Mount of Olives | August 30, 2026 | Matthew 20:25-28

Pastor John Steward

Prayer of the Day

Lord Jesus, if we're honest, we must confess that it seems unnatural for us to be a servant and to serve others. Our culture frowns upon humility, and we too often are more like our culture than like You—a true and loving servant. Forgive us for our narrow-minded selfishness, which is actually repulsive, and please help us to become more like You, showing love and service to all. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 20:25-28

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Message Notes

Matthew 20:26-28

"It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

1 Peter 4:10

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

Memory Verse:

1 Peter 4:10

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

Study Questions – Read Matthew 20:20-28

ICEBREAKER – Getting started:

1. If you could have any job in the world for one day, what would it be—and why?
2. Who is someone you consider a great leader, and what makes them a great leader?
3. If you were given the opportunity to be famous for something, what would you want to be famous for?

4. Which would you rather have: great power, great wealth, great influence, or great respect? Why?

Based on Matthew 20:20-28, answer the following questions:

OBSERVATION – What does the text say?

1. As you read Matthew 20:20-28, what comes to mind? What stands out? What is interesting to you and why?

2. In one sentence, how would you summarize this text?

3. What lesson or message do you think the author is trying to convey?

INTERPRETATION – What does the text mean?

1. What does the mother of James and John ask Jesus to do for her sons?

(Matthew 20:20–21) What does her request reveal about what she believed Jesus' kingdom would look like?

2. What do you think motivated James and John's mother to make this request? Was it ambition, love for her sons, faith in Jesus, a desire for security—or some combination of these?

3. Jesus responds by asking, “Are you able to drink the cup I am to drink?” What does Jesus mean by “the cup”? (Matthew 20:22) How does this change the conversation from position to sacrifice?

4. How do James and John respond to Jesus' question? They say, “We are able.” What does their answer reveal about their understanding of what following Jesus would actually cost?

5. Jesus tells them they will indeed drink from His cup. What do you think Jesus is telling them about the cost of discipleship? (Matthew 20:23) How might this apply to Christians today?

6. How do the other ten disciples react when they hear about James and John's request? (Matthew 20:24) Why do you think they were indignant? Is it possible they were upset because they disagreed with the request—or because they wanted the same thing for themselves?

7. Jesus contrasts His followers with “the rulers of the Gentiles.” What does He say those rulers do? (Matthew 20:25) What picture of leadership does Jesus describe?

8. Jesus then says, “It shall not be so among you.” (Matthew 20:26) What does Jesus mean? How is Christian leadership supposed to be different from the world's understanding of power and authority?