

## Summary

Jesus turns the world's view of blessedness upside down again when He asserts that the greatest is a servant. In anticipation of our serve Saturday (April 28, or has this date been changed?) It's counterintuitive because, after all, who doesn't want to coast through life on a cruise ship with no work to do and with servants bringing sumptuous food? Jesus doesn't forbid or disdain the seasons of rest and refreshment, but deep joy in life emerges from deep purpose. This is a message that challenges listeners to a new paradigm of servant-leadership and purpose-driven living that is overflowing with the good news of giving oneself away.

## Getting to Know Each Other

1. Jesus uses the example of washing feet in John's gospel to illustrate his teaching on service and love. It is a surprising question, but also revealing: would you rather wash someone else's feet or have them wash yours? Why?

## Getting Into the Bible

### Matt. 20:20-28

*<sup>20</sup> Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. <sup>21</sup> And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." <sup>24</sup> And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. <sup>25</sup> But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, <sup>28</sup> even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

## Background

Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish Messianic hope. In other words, he wants to convince his readers that Jesus is the king who has been promised throughout the Old Testament; the one who would come to rescue His people and rule over all. For our purposes it is helpful to see Matthew's gospel in 5 main parts:

- 1) Introducing Jesus as the promised Son of David, Son of Abraham and Son of God (1:1-4:11)
  - 2) Chronicling Jesus' ministry of teaching and miracles, primarily in Galilee (4:12-16:20)
  - 3) Recording Jesus' shift in focus to His coming death and resurrection in Jerusalem (16:21-20:34)
  - 4) Recounting the Passion Week in Jerusalem where Jesus died on the cross and rose again (Matt. 21:1 – 28:15)
  - 5) Concluding the Jesus account by highlighting the command to make disciples of the nations (Matt. 28:16-20)
2. Use the following questions to study the sermon's core passage:
- a. What's your estimation of the mother of the sons of Zebedee? Do you share the sentiments of the disciples in vs. 24? What does Jesus' assessment of her appear to be?
  - b. What surprises you about this exchange?
  - c. What are some ways to summarize the core teaching of this passage?

3. Our passage (Matt. 20:20-28) is the 3<sup>rd</sup> occurrence of a 3-part cycle, which shows up from Matt. 16 to Matt. 20. Explore the relevant passages below and use these questions to explore the message Matthew has for his readers.

- a. What do these passages have in common with our sermon scripture? What recurring themes appear in these texts?
- b. How is Matthew using this three-part cycle to make a big point? What is the significance of this message to the disciples of Jesus? What about us?

## Part 1

### Read Matt. 16:21-28

*<sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." <sup>23</sup> But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

*<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. <sup>28</sup> Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

## Part 2

### Read Matt. 17:22-23; 18:1-6

*<sup>22</sup> As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, <sup>23</sup> and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.*

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" <sup>2</sup> And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them<sup>3</sup> and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup> "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, <sup>6</sup> but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.*

## Part 3

### Read Matt. 20:17-28

(Note: vss. 17-19 is included here in connection with the sermon passage).

*<sup>17</sup> And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, <sup>18</sup> "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death <sup>19</sup> and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."*

<sup>20</sup> Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. <sup>21</sup> And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." <sup>24</sup> And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. <sup>25</sup> But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>27</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, <sup>28</sup> even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

4. Now that we have seen Matthew's 3-part cycle leading the reader from Galilee to Jerusalem, we are ready to truly appreciate the way he concludes this section. How does this episode with the two blind men impact us? What contrasts does it set up with the disciples? Who has the clearest vision of Jesus?

#### **Read Matt. 20:29-34**

<sup>29</sup> And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. <sup>30</sup> And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" <sup>31</sup> The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" <sup>32</sup> And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" <sup>33</sup> They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." <sup>34</sup> And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

#### **Application**

5. How does this statement sit with you? ... Rather than condemning our desire for greatness, Jesus gives us instructions about how we can truly pursue it.

6. How does the following quote shed light on the unique ways our culture pressures us to exalt ourselves?

*"Scholar Donna Freitas conducted a large-scale study on social media and students on more than a dozen college campuses. 'Facebook is the CNN of envy, a kind of 24/7 news cycle of who's cool, who's not, who's up, and who's down,' she writes in The Happiness Effect, a book that reports her findings. 'Unless you have rock-solid self-esteem, are impervious to jealousy, or have an extraordinarily rational capacity to remind yourself exactly what everyone is doing when they post their glories on social media [that is, positioning and bragging], it's difficult not to care.' I'm a huge advocate of social media, but it's no wonder that time on Facebook is predictive of feeling crummy about our lives."*<sup>1</sup>

8. Has your group been able to identify a way they are serving (together or as individuals) for the day of service on Saturday, April 28? What are you excited about and how do you see the Lord sending you out?

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<sup>1</sup> Hyatt, Michael. *Your Best Year Ever*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018. Pgs., 41-42.