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The Saving Work of Christ

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, He reveals with unmistakable clarity the true purpose of His mission. While the disciples anticipate glory and positions of honor, Christ speaks of suffering, rejection, and death. He is not moving toward a throne as they expect, but toward a cross. In Mark 10:45, Jesus declares that He came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. This statement summarizes the Gospel: Christ willingly offers Himself as a substitute, paying the price to free sinners from sin and judgment. True greatness in His kingdom is not found in power or status, but in humility and service. Palm Sunday reminds us that the King who enters Jerusalem does so to die for His people. The question remains: will we seek our own glory, or will we bow before the Servant King who gave Himself for us?

Introduction

As we come to Palm Sunday, we come to a passage that strips away every false expectation men have ever attached to Jesus Christ. The crowds that would soon line the road into Jerusalem wanted a king of visible triumph. The disciples, even this late in the Gospel record, were still thinking in terms of rank, prominence, and earthly greatness. But our Lord speaks here with unmistakable clarity. He is not going to Jerusalem to seize a throne in the way men imagine. He is going there to bear a cross. He is going there to be betrayed, condemned, mocked, scourged, killed, and raised. He is going there to accomplish the very purpose for which He came into the world.

That is why this passage is so fitting for Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday reminds us that Christ entered Jerusalem as King, but Mark 10 reminds us what kind of King He is. He is the King who serves. He is the King who suffers. He is the King who gives His life as a ransom for many. If we misunderstand that, then we misunderstand the triumphal entry, we misunderstand the cross, and we misunderstand the Gospel itself.

Mark tells us that Jesus was "walking on ahead of them." That detail matters. Our Lord is not reluctant. He is not confused. He is not caught in a chain of events He cannot control. He is leading the way. John Calvin, commenting on the parallel passage, says, "Christ mentioned his death... in

order to withdraw his disciples from the foolish imagination of an earthly kingdom. But it is a just and appropriate statement of its power and results, when he declares that his life is the price of our redemption." Christ is determined to make plain both the necessity of His death and the meaning of His death.

This text unfolds in three movements. First, we see the road to Jerusalem and the deliberate resolve of Christ. Second, we see the misunderstanding of the disciples and the pride that still clings to the human heart. Third, we see the mission of the Son of Man, who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. And at the center of it all stands this great truth: the cross was not a tragic interruption of Christ's mission; the cross was the mission.

Text

Please stand in reverence for the reading of God's Holy, Inerrant, Infallible, Authoritative, Sufficient, Complete and Certain Word:

Mark 10:32–45 LSB

And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him:

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will deliver Him over to the Gentiles.

"And they will mock Him and spit on Him, and flog Him and kill *Him*, and three days later He will rise again."

Then James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying 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 that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory."

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. 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 shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.

"But to sit on My right or on My left, *this* is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

And hearing *this*, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.

And calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.

"But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;

and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Our Father in heaven,

We come before You having heard Your Word read, and we do so with reverence, humility, and deep gratitude. For in this passage, You have shown us not only what Your Son endured, but why He came. You have revealed to us the heart of the Gospel—that the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Lord, we confess how often we think like the disciples. We seek our own glory. We desire recognition. We measure greatness by the standards of this world. Forgive us for our pride, for our self-seeking hearts, and for our failure to understand the nature of Christ's kingdom.

Fix our eyes now upon the Lord Jesus Christ. As He walked resolutely

toward Jerusalem, knowing the suffering that awaited Him, grant us grace to behold His obedience, His humility, and His love. Let us see clearly that He was not a victim, but a willing Savior, offering Himself in our place.

Holy Spirit, open our hearts to receive this truth. Remove distraction. Silence unbelief. Strengthen our faith. And cause us not only to understand these things, but to be transformed by them.

We ask that as Your Word is preached, Christ would be exalted, sinners would be drawn, and Your people would be conformed more fully to the image of our Servant King.

We ask all of this in His name.

Amen.

1. The Road to Jerusalem

Mark says, "And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful." There is both amazement and fear in the company. They sense the gravity of this moment. Jesus has set His face toward Jerusalem. He is not wandering there accidentally. He is ascending there deliberately.

Then He takes the twelve aside and tells them exactly what will happen: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again." This is one of the most detailed passion predictions in the Gospel of Mark. Christ names the betrayal, the Jewish condemnation, the handing over to the Gentiles, the mockery, the spitting, the scourging, the killing, and then the resurrection. Nothing here is accidental. Nothing here is unforeseen.

That matters because sinners are always tempted to think of the cross as though it were merely something done to Jesus. But Scripture will not allow that reduction. Wicked men truly did what their sinful hearts desired to do. Judas betrayed Him. The priests condemned Him. Pilate handed Him over. The soldiers mocked Him. Yet behind and above all of that is the settled

purpose of God and the willing obedience of the Son. Jesus goes to the cross knowingly. He goes to the cross willingly. He goes to the cross obediently.

Arthur Pink wrote, "Christ came here not to be ministered unto as the Lord of all, but to give His life... The word 'give' emphasizes the fact that He acted voluntarily, without compulsion of any kind." That is exactly right. Christ is not being swept along by forces outside Himself. He is giving His life. The cross is voluntary at the level of the Son's obedience, even as it is certain at the level of the Father's decree.

Spurgeon said in his sermon on Matthew 20:28, "The death of Christ was perfectly voluntary. As He was free to come, or not, so He was not under any constraint to give His Life, but He did so, and that of His own free will!" That is the spirit of this road to Jerusalem. He walks ahead of them because He has come for this very hour. He is the Lamb slain according to the eternal purpose of God, and now the appointed time has come.

And do not miss the title Jesus uses of Himself: "the Son of Man." That title carries both humiliation and glory. It reminds us of His true humanity, but it also reaches back to Daniel 7, where the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven and receives dominion and glory and a kingdom. The One who goes to Jerusalem to be spat upon is the very One who has everlasting dominion. The One who will be condemned by earthly rulers is the One before whom all rulers will one day bow. Mark wants us to feel the contrast. The glorious Son of Man goes the way of suffering before He enters the fullness of His exaltation.

There is also pastoral comfort here. Our salvation does not rest on human guesswork or religious optimism. It rests on the deliberate accomplishment of Christ. He knew the cost, and He went. He knew the shame, and He went. He knew the wrath He would bear, and He went. He knew the price of redemption, and He went. Believer, your salvation hangs not on a possibility but on the settled resolve of a sovereign Savior.

John MacArthur says in his sermon on this passage that Christ gave His life as "the price paid for the release of a slave," and that His death was "a vicarious, substitutionary death on behalf of sinners." That is where this road is leading. Jesus is not merely going to die as an example of courage. He is going to die as a substitute for His people.

So already, before we even get to verse 45, the cross is looming over the whole passage. The road to Jerusalem is the road to ransom. The road to suffering is the road to redemption. The road to death is the road by which life will come to many.

2. The Misunderstanding of the Disciples

What follows is startling. Jesus has just spoken with solemn clarity about His coming suffering, and immediately James and John come to Him with a request for glory. "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." Even the form of the request reveals a problem in the heart. They approach not in lowliness, but in self-interest. Then they say, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory."

How astonishing. Jesus is speaking about the cross, and they are speaking about crowns. Jesus is speaking about suffering, and they are speaking about status. Jesus is speaking about being mocked and killed, and they are already arranging seating positions in the kingdom. This is not merely a failure of timing. It is a failure of understanding. They still imagine that the kingdom of God can be measured by the same standards the world uses: rank, prestige, nearness to visible power.

And before we shake our heads too quickly at James and John, we need to see ourselves in them. The flesh still thinks this way. We want Christ without the cross. We want glory without humility. We want honor without service. We want the benefits of the kingdom while resisting the shape of the kingdom. Sin does not only show itself in open rebellion; it also shows itself in self-seeking religion.

Jesus answers them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" The cup is the cup of suffering and, ultimately, of divine wrath. The baptism is an overwhelming immersion into affliction. Jesus is saying, in effect, You speak of glory, but do you understand the path that lies before Me? Do you understand what it will cost?

They answer, "We are able." But they are speaking better than they know. They do not yet understand Gethsemane. They do not yet understand Golgotha. They do not yet understand what it means for the sinless Son of God to bear the judgment due to sinners. Their confidence is sincere, but it

is shallow.

Spurgeon observed, "He came to make a Substitutionary Sacrifice. The marrow, the very sum and substance of the mission of Jesus Christ is His coming to give His Life that He might stand in the place of those for whom He died." If that is true, and it is, then the cup Christ drinks is unique. Believers may suffer for His sake, but none can drink the cup of atoning wrath in His place. None can join Him in the work of propitiation. None can assist in the purchase of redemption.

Jesus tells them that they will indeed share in suffering, but the granting of places of honor belongs to the Father's appointment. Then the other ten become indignant. Why? Not because they are spiritually mature, but because the same pride lives in them too. They are not offended by ambition itself; they are offended that James and John spoke first.

This is why Jesus gathers them all and addresses the issue directly. "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you." The world's model of greatness is domination. The world celebrates the man who climbs over others. The world admires the one who gathers titles, accumulates power, and makes himself important in the eyes of men.

"But it is not this way among you." Our Lord draws a sharp line between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God. Greatness in Christ's kingdom is not measured by how many people answer to your voice; it is measured by how ready you are to stoop for the good of others. "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all."

Geoff Thomas summarized these words plainly: "Who then is? The Lord tells us... it is the person who serves." That is so simple that the flesh despises it. We want greatness to feel impressive. We want it to sound grand. But Jesus says greatness looks like a servant, and first place looks like a slave.

MacArthur says in this same context, "Be a waiter. Be a waiter. Give your life giving people what they need. Spend your life giving people what they need." That gets to the point sharply. Servanthood is not sentimental language. It is practical self-denial. It means that the Christian, and especially any man who would lead in Christ's church, must reject the

world's obsession with prominence.

This would have been a needed word for the disciples, and it is a needed word for the church now. The church is not to mimic worldly models of leadership. Pastors are not called to be little monarchs. Elders are not called to cultivate personal kingdoms. Deacons are not called to serve for recognition. Church members are not called to compete for attention. Christ's people are called to humility, to lowliness, to self-forgetful service, because that is the very shape of the kingdom purchased by Christ.

And let us press this further. Service in Christ's kingdom is not opposed to authority; it defines the right use of authority. Christ does not abolish leadership. He redeems it. The highest leadership in the church will always smell like sacrifice, not self-exaltation. The man who most resembles Christ is not the one who most successfully gathers influence around himself, but the one who most gladly spends himself for the spiritual good of others.

3. The Mission of the Son of Man

Then we come to verse 45, one of the clearest and most precious summaries of the Gospel in all of Scripture: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Notice first that Jesus gives Himself as the pattern for what He has just commanded. Why should His disciples embrace servanthood? Because servanthood is the pathway their Master Himself took. "For even the Son of Man..." If anyone might rightly have demanded service, it is He. If anyone was entitled to immediate homage, it is He. If anyone ever had the right to be surrounded only by honor, it is the eternal Son of God. And yet He came not to be served, but to serve.

Spurgeon said, "He comes, then, not to be served, but to serve!... He does not come to get your service! He came to give you His services, not that you might first do Him honor, but that He might show you mercy!" That is glorious. Christ did not come looking for men who could enrich Him. He came for needy sinners who had nothing to offer Him but guilt and helplessness.

And His service culminates here: "and to give His life." Not merely His time. Not merely His effort. Not merely His teaching. He gives His life. Pink wrote,

"Christ's ransom was paid to satisfy God's justice: a life for a life; the ransom being a penal infliction." That statement brings us straight to the heart of the atonement. The death of Christ is not merely an example of love, though it is certainly that. It is not merely a display of moral courage, though it is that too. It is a penal, substitutionary, justice-satisfying death.

Calvin says, "When he declares that his life is the price of our redemption... we obtain an undeserved reconciliation with God, the price of which is to be found nowhere else than in the death of Christ." There is no reconciliation with God apart from this death. There is no ransom price anywhere else. No ceremony can pay it. No repentance can pay it. No religious duty can pay it. No human priest can pay it. Christ alone gives the price of redemption.

Now what does "ransom" mean? It speaks of a price paid to secure release. MacArthur says the Greek term means "the price paid for the release of a slave." Pink draws the distinction helpfully when he says, "There is an important distinction between 'ransom' and 'redemption': the former is the price paid to secure the latter." So Christ's death is the ransom price, and the freedom secured by that price is redemption.

Release from what? Scripture answers: from sin, from guilt, from condemnation, from the curse of the law, from bondage to corruption, and from the wrath to come. We were not mildly inconvenienced by sin. We were enslaved. We were condemned. And Christ came to pay the price that justice required.

MacArthur says, "To whom was the ransom paid? To God. To God. God is the judge who had to be satisfied... Jesus dies a vicarious, substitutionary death on behalf of sinners." That is exactly the point. The ransom is not paid to Satan, as though Satan held some rightful claim over the elect. The obstacle is the holy justice of God against sin. Therefore the death of Christ is Godward. It is a propitiatory sacrifice. In giving His life, Christ satisfies divine justice and turns away wrath from His people.

There is another layer here that should not be missed. Jesus says He came "to serve," and then immediately explains that service in terms of the giving of His life. In other words, the deepest service Christ rendered was not merely washing dusty feet, healing diseased bodies, or feeding hungry crowds, though all of those acts displayed His compassion. The deepest

service He rendered was bearing the judgment His people deserved. The cross is the highest expression of holy love because at the cross mercy and justice meet. God does not save by ignoring sin. He saves by punishing sin in the sin-bearing Substitute.

That is why the glory of Christ shines so brightly in this text. He is the sovereign Son of Man, yet He takes the place of servants. He is the righteous One, yet He stands in the place of the guilty. He is the Lord of glory, yet He submits to mockery, spitting, scourging, and death. And He does all of this not because men are worthy, but because God is gracious. Salvation, then, is entirely of the Lord. The initiative is His. The purpose is His. The accomplishment is His. The glory is His.

And because His ransom is real, the freedom He secures is real. The conscience can be cleansed. The guilty can be pardoned. The condemned can be justified. The unclean can be made holy. The far-off can be brought near. The slave can go free. This is not poetry without substance. This is the accomplished redemption of the crucified and risen Christ.

And Mark records that He gives His life "for many." Pink notes that the preposition here is substitutionary, meaning that Christ dies in the room and stead of His people. Spurgeon, preaching on Matthew 20:28, said, "The very sum and substance of the mission of Jesus Christ is His coming to give His Life that He might stand in the place of those for whom He died." This is not vague benevolence. This is substitution. Christ dies for many, in the place of many, to secure the release of many.

And who are these many? They are the people given to the Son by the Father. They are His sheep. They are His church, purchased with His own blood. "Many" does not weaken the atonement; it magnifies it. One Son of Man gives His life, and by that one life many are ransomed. One obedient Savior secures a multitude no man can number.

This is why verse 45 is such a precious summary of the Gospel. It tells us that Christ came willingly. It tells us that Christ came humbly. It tells us that Christ came sacrificially. It tells us that Christ came substitutionally. It tells us that Christ came effectually, actually securing the redemption of His people.

And it also tells us how we must think about Palm Sunday. Yes, Jesus enters Jerusalem as King. Yes, He is worthy of all praise. Yes, He fulfills the Scriptures as the promised Messiah. But Mark 10 teaches us that His royal

mission reaches its climax not in public applause, but in atoning death. He enters the city in order to be the servant-ransom of His people.

Conclusion

Palm Sunday is often remembered for the crowds, the palms, the hosannas, and the visible excitement of the moment. But if we listen carefully to Mark 10, we are reminded that Jesus understood that week very differently than the crowds did. They wanted immediate triumph. He came for substitutionary sacrifice. They wanted visible glory. He came to drink the cup the Father gave Him. They wanted a king who would overthrow Rome. He came as the Servant-King who would overthrow sin, death, and hell by the sacrifice of Himself.

So what must we do with this text?

First, we must behold the sovereign resolve of Christ. He did not stumble into the cross. He went there knowingly and willingly for the salvation of His people.

Second, we must repent of worldly ideas of greatness. The disciples wanted the highest seats. Jesus points them to the lowest place. If we would follow Christ, pride must die. Self-promotion must die. The craving to be noticed must die. Greatness in the kingdom of God is found in humble service.

Third, and above all, we must rest our souls upon the ransom Christ has paid. If you are outside of Christ, then hear this plainly: you cannot ransom yourself. Your works cannot free you. Your sincerity cannot free you. Your morality cannot free you. But there is a sufficient Savior who gave His life as a ransom for many. Flee to Him. Trust Him. Cast yourself upon Him.

And believer, if Christ has ransomed you, then you no longer belong to yourself. You have been bought with a price. The pattern of your King is now the pattern of your life. You serve because He served you. You stoop because He stooped for you. You live for others because He gave His life for you.

On Palm Sunday the King comes. But He comes not to take from sinners. He comes to give Himself for sinners. He comes not first for a throne, but for a cross. He comes not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and sovereign God,

We thank You for the truth of Your Word and for the clarity with which You have revealed the mission of Your Son. We thank You that Jesus Christ did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. We thank You that what we could never accomplish, He has accomplished fully and perfectly.

Lord, we confess that even now we are prone to drift back into the thinking of the world. We seek comfort, recognition, and ease. We resist humility. We shrink from service. Forgive us, and by Your grace, reshape our hearts according to the pattern of Christ.

Help us to live in light of the ransom that has been paid. Remind us that we are not our own, but have been bought with a price. Teach us to serve as Christ served, to love as He loved, and to walk in obedience as He walked.

For those who may still be outside of Christ, we ask that You would draw them to Yourself. Let them see the sufficiency of the cross, the beauty of the Savior, and the urgency of repentance and faith.

And as we leave this place, fix our hearts on the King who entered Jerusalem to die, that we might live.

We ask all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our King.

Amen.

Membership Covenant Ceremony (Reid Family)

Beloved, as we come now to this portion of our worship, we are reminded that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a loose association of individuals, but a covenant people, redeemed by His blood and bound together in Him. The Scriptures declare in Ephesians 4:4–6 that “there is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” And again in Acts 2:42, we see that the early church “was continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.”

Membership in the local church, therefore, is not merely a formality, but a

visible expression of our unity in Christ and our shared commitment to walk together in obedience to Him. It is a covenantal bond in which we willingly submit ourselves to Christ's lordship, to His Word, and to one another for mutual edification, accountability, and care.

This morning, we have the joy of receiving the Reid family into this covenant fellowship. As your elders and elder-candidates, having met with them and heard their testimony, we commend them to you as those who profess faith in Christ and who desire to walk in obedience to Him within this body.

To the Reid family, we now ask: having confessed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and having been baptized as believers, do you willingly and joyfully affirm your agreement with the doctrine and practice of Christ Reformed Baptist Church as outlined in our constitution, and do you commit, by the grace of God, to walk together with us in covenant faithfulness?

[Pause for response]

Having heard their affirmation, we now turn to the congregation: do you, the members of Christ Reformed Baptist Church, receive the Reid family into this covenant fellowship, committing yourselves to love, pray for, and walk alongside them in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace?

[Congregational vote]

Let us now, as one body, reaffirm together the covenant that binds us in Christ, using the responsive reading provided.

Responsive Reading for Church Membership Covenant

Leader:

We who desire to walk together in obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Word, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, do solemnly join ourselves together in holy union and fellowship.

Congregation:

We humbly submit to the discipline of the Gospel and commit to all the holy duties required of a people in such spiritual communion.

Leader:

Do you promise to walk in holiness, godliness, and brotherly love, rendering your fellowship delightful to God, pleasing to one another, and lovely to the rest of God's people?

Congregation:

We do, with God's help.

Leader:

Will you watch over one another and seek to avoid sinning against one another, stirring one another to love and good works, and admonishing one another with meekness according to the will of God?

Congregation:

We will, by His grace.

Leader:

Do you covenant to pray for one another, for the increase and growth of the Church, for God's presence among us, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and for His protection over us?

Congregation:

We do, trusting in His faithfulness.

Leader:

Will you bear one another's burdens, cleave to one another, and have fellowship with one another as members of the Body of Christ in all circumstances?

Congregation:

We will, as God enables us.

Leader:

Do you commit to bear with one another's weaknesses and failings with tenderness and love, guarding one another's honor and not revealing faults except as Christ commands?

Congregation:

We do, relying on His wisdom.

Leader:

Will you strive to grow together in the truths of the Gospel, avoiding disputes and divisions, and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

Congregation:

We will, for the glory of God.

Leader:

Do you promise to meet together on the Lord's Day and at other times as the Lord gives opportunity, to worship, edify one another, and work together for the good of the Church?

Congregation:

We do, with joy and thanksgiving.

Leader:

Will you support the work of the Church, sharing in the provision for your pastor and ministers, as God blesses you with the good things of this world?

Congregation:

We will, acknowledging God as our provider.

Leader:

These and all other Gospel duties, do you humbly submit to, purposing to perform not in your own strength, but in the power of our Blessed God, to whom belongs all glory now and forever?

Congregation:

We do, trusting in His strength and grace. Amen.

Leader:

May God be glorified in this covenant and in our lives together as His Church.

Congregation:
Amen and Amen!