



HOME GROUP QUESTIONS FROM SERMON 7th January 2024

SERVICE

Ambition and desperation in the service of God

Matthew 20 v20-34

²⁰Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹And 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." ²²Jesus 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." ²³He 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." ²⁴And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. ²⁵But 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. ²⁶It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

²⁹And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. ³⁰And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, ³¹ have mercy on us, Son of David!" ³²The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" ³³And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁴They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." ³⁵And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

These questions relate to the morning sermon (8.30 10.30 and 12.00 services) on Sunday 7th January 2024 (available on the church website). Feel free to pick and choose questions as appropriate for your group – they are there to facilitate good discussion / reflection.

Question 1: What ambitions did you have as a child?

1. AMBITION - TWO MEN WHO THINK THEY CAN SEE (v20-27)

1.1 They think the route to glory involves climbing over the heads of others (v20-22) "Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹

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.' 22 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.'"

Question 2: Surely this mother just wants the best for her boys! What's wrong with that?

1.2 Instead the route to glory involves serving the needs of others (v24-27) "And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. 25 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. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"

Question 3: If this teaching was taken seriously, would it have thrown ancient society, with it's top-down patriarchy, into complete turmoil?

2. DESPERATION - TWO MEN WHO KNOW THEY ARE BLIND (v29-34)

2.1 Helpless – (v29) "...sitting by the roadside..."

2.2 Visited – (v30) "...Jesus was passing by..."

Question 4: Have you been aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit this Christmas, or at some other time recently?

2.3 Asking – (v30-31) "...and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!' 31 The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!'"

Question 5: What does it mean for God to have mercy on someone?

2.4 Respected – (v32) "And stopping, Jesus called them and said, 'What do you want me to do for you?'"

Question 6: What do you want Jesus to do for you?

2.5 Twice-blessed – (v33-34) "33 They said to him, 'Lord, let our eyes be opened.' And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him."

Question 7: What does it mean to be twice-blessed by Jesus?

A PRAYER

Loving Lord, thank you that you came to show me the perfect life of service. Forgive me when I think I can see the route to glory through the eyes of my own personal advancement. Thank you that though I am blind and helpless, you have visited me with your life-saving presence. "Lord, have mercy on me, Son of David". Touch my eyes in pity and power. Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the blessings you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, may I see you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly, day by day, in the power of the Holy Spirit and for Your dear name's sake, Amen.