

**Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)**  
**Mark 10:35-45**

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 10, verses 35-45.

Jesus revealed to His disciples for the third time that after going up to Jerusalem, the Son of Man would be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. He would be condemned to death, and handed over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged, and killed, but after three days the Son of Man would rise again. This time Jesus added many details, so the disciples should have had no reason not to understand. I think they cognitively understood that such a thing would happen, but they had seen Jesus raise the dead and witnessed His great power, and three of the disciples had even seen Him reveal the glory of the Son of God. Therefore, they could not connect the scenes of Jesus being humiliated, flogged, and killed that He described with the Jesus they knew. It would only be when they personally experienced these events and recalled what Jesus had said that they could truly understand. In fact, this is also our situation today when reading the Scriptures - we understand many passages in principle, but our understanding is not profound. Only when we experience situations in life where these Scriptures speak to us repeatedly can we truly grasp their meaning. Therefore, our daily Scripture reading is to help us accumulate more Scriptures, so that in the future when needed, these Scriptures can be recalled to nourish us, help us, and enable us to overcome trials. When these 12 disciples heard Jesus speak again about suffering death and resurrection, this time James and John reacted.

**Verse 35: "Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.'"**

Zebedee was the father of James and John. Their mother Salome was the sister of Jesus' mother Mary, so these two brothers were cousins of Jesus. Perhaps because of this familial relationship, they dared to boldly come before Jesus and make requests of Him. How did they ask? They said, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." They were essentially asking Jesus for a blank check, which was quite bold indeed.

**Verses 36-37: "And He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.'"**

Jesus did not outright reject their seemingly unreasonable request. Jesus wanted to see exactly what they were asking for, which would also reveal where they were at that moment. What did they ask for? They said to Jesus, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." We may be quick to condemn them for trying to take the two best positions next to Jesus. However, looking at Jesus' response, He does not seem to condemn them, so we should be a little slower to jump to conclusions. What they were asking for were the two positions next to Jesus when He comes again in glory.

First, they understood Jesus' revelation about His death and resurrection. They were also sure that Jesus would come again in glory - which would be when Jesus attains His victory. So they were not asking for earthly glory and riches, but for glory in the kingdom to come.

If we refer to the parallel passage in Matthew 19:28-29, right after Peter says "We have left all and followed You, what shall we have?", Jesus explains in more detail. Jesus says "Assuredly I say to you, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The regeneration refers to when Jesus returns to establish His millennial kingdom on earth. At that time, Christ will sit on His

glorious throne, and Jesus' twelve disciples will also sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

So these two brothers understood Jesus' words and believed them. They were also willing to leave everything to follow Jesus. What they asked for was that when the 12 disciples sit on thrones with Jesus, they would sit on the two positions to the right and left of Jesus. You can also understand it as them loving Jesus deeply, and thus wanting to sit closest to Him. We are willing to spend in this life in order to gain glory in the life to come - this should be the attitude of every saint.

In 2 Corinthians 4:17, Paul tells us that the temporary and light afflictions we endure in this life are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They despise the sufferings of this present life, desiring to obtain the glory to come. This sentiment is akin to Jacob in Genesis, who coveted the birthright and blessing of the firstborn. Although he sought it through questionable means, God would deal with that aspect personally. However, his desire for the birthright blessing was pleasing to God. Esteeming the blessing of the firstborn, he fervently pursued it, allowing God to work in and through him, transforming Jacob from a schemer into Israel, a blessing to others. God is displeased with lukewarm Christians as they hinder His work in them. As long as you have a willing heart, offering yourself, and pursuing Him, even if your starting point is low or your methods seem flawed, it doesn't matter. God can work in you and shape you into a servant aligned with His will. When James and John asked for the two positions next to Jesus, it might have seemed audacious, but let's examine Jesus' response.

**Verse 38: "But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'"**

At first, Jesus doesn't directly point out that they don't know what they're asking for. However, because they had a request, it allowed Jesus to further instruct them: that the path of the cross involves sacrifice and commitment, and it's the road to

glory. But the manifestation of glory isn't just in the final position they'll occupy; it's in the process they must undergo. So Jesus asks them if they're able to drink the cup He drinks and be baptized with the baptism He's baptized with. Jesus poses two questions. Let's first consider the first one: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" The cup symbolizes the portion allotted by God, which includes the suffering one must endure, especially the inward suffering that empties one out like a cup.

The second question, "Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" refers to the outward suffering one experiences, as if engulfed by mighty waters. Jesus is about to undergo the baptism of death. He's soon to enter Jerusalem, soon to drink the cup of wrath prepared by the Father, and soon to undergo the baptism of death. Jesus takes this opportunity to prepare these brothers. If they desire glory in the kingdom, they must be willing to drink the cup of suffering in this life and undergo the baptism of death. So when Jesus asks them if they're able to drink it, if they're able to endure it, He's challenging their readiness for the challenges ahead.

**Verse 39: "They said to Him, 'We are able.' So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized;'"**

James and John responded loudly, saying, "We are able." At this moment, they still didn't fully understand themselves, so they didn't fully grasp the implications of what they were saying. Despite their ignorance, Jesus appreciated their willingness. He told them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized." Essentially, Jesus was prophesying here, foretelling the future roles and outcomes of James and John.

Let's first consider John's response. Over a week later, when Jesus was crucified, the disciples scattered in fear, except for John, who remained by Jesus' side. There, Jesus entrusted Mary to John, assigning him the responsibility of caring for her.

John proved to be extremely faithful, taking Mary into his own home and fulfilling his duty to care for her on behalf of Jesus. During the time of the Acts of the Apostles, each apostle began their ministry fervently, expanding the kingdom of man. Yet, while everyone else was busy, it seemed like John was sidelined by God. Several decades passed, and after the other apostles had passed away or retreated, God finally called John to fulfill his ministry. His life was long and solitary, a cup allotted by God, and even into his nineties, he was exiled to the island of Patmos to work as a stonecutter—a baptism he had to undergo. When he initially said, "We are able," though it was a statement made in ignorance and perhaps presumption, God allowed him to spend a lifetime witnessing that indeed, he did drink from Jesus' cup and underwent His baptism.

Let's now consider James. God's cup and baptism for James were much clearer and direct. A few months after the incident with Jesus, the Holy Spirit was poured out, and the apostles began their work. They quickly established the church in Jerusalem, with James playing a significant leadership role. In Acts 12, when King Herod began persecuting the church, James was the first to be arrested and the first apostle to be martyred. This was indeed the cup prepared for him by God, and he underwent the baptism of death. Although he served for the shortest time among the twelve apostles, he became an example to the others. Except for John, the rest of the ten apostles also eventually faced martyrdom one by one. Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled—James and John did indeed drink from their cup and undergo their baptism.

**Verse 40: "But to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."**

Jesus tells James and John that they will indeed drink from their cup and undergo their baptism, as these are preordained by the Father. However, who will sit at Christ's left and right hand is not within Christ's authority; it belongs to God the Father, and He has already prepared it. It is the Father who decides to whom this honor will be granted. Here we see Jesus Christ's utmost respect for His position,

demonstrating the harmonious cooperation within the Trinity. We also see that during the kingdom period, it is God the Father who holds complete authority; the positions of honor are not to be contested by humans but are gifts of the Father's grace.

**Verse 41: "And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John."**

Why did the other ten disciples become indignant with James and John? Because they themselves also wanted to compete for those positions, but James and John spoke up first. They themselves wanted it but didn't dare say it out loud, but when others voiced it, they became indignant and resentful. So in reality, all twelve of these disciples were the same - they were still living in the flesh.

**Verse 42: "But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.'"**

These ten disciples shouldn't have kept their feelings bottled up inside; since it was already expressed, it presented Christ with an opportunity for a teaching moment. Jesus gathered the disciples together and explained to them that on earth, rulers exercise authority over their subjects, and there are officials who assist these rulers in managing the people. It's evident that in the disciples' understanding, they equated the kingdom of God with earthly kingdoms. Therefore, Jesus specifically highlighted this point: on earth, there is a hierarchical system with distinctions of rank, where the greater ones oversee the lesser ones, and the esteemed ones control the subordinate ones. This is the situation on earth.

**Verses 43-44: "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all."**

Jesus clearly tells them that among them, it's not to be this way. Of course, "among you" at that time referred to the twelve disciples, but it can also be extended to the church today or even to the future kingdom of Christ during His millennial reign. The management model in the kingdom of God is entirely different from earthly systems. We cannot apply earthly management methods to the church. Whoever desires to be great in the church must be a servant to all, and whoever desires to be first must be a servant of all. Therefore, saints in the church are to learn to serve. The more people you serve, the greater you become; the more people you supply, the more you lead. The church is a living organism; it is the body of Christ, where every member holds equal importance and serves according to their calling.

**Verse 45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

This verse is indeed the most important in the entire Gospel of Mark. Jesus sets Himself as the example for all to follow, stating that the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. A follower of Jesus Christ must emulate His example: when we come to the church, it's not to be served but to serve others. To what extent should we serve? Jesus said He would give His life as a ransom for many. He poured Himself out completely, paying the ultimate price with His life to accomplish redemption. It's through the redemption brought by Jesus Christ that we receive grace, forgiveness, and become children of God through faith. These are all outcomes of Jesus Christ's service to humanity during His time on earth. Today, the church is the body of Christ, and therefore, it must emulate the example of Christ. As we mentioned earlier, in Chapter 10, Jesus leads His disciples on the path to the cross, which is a narrow road to eternal life and the kingdom of God. According to the examples listed by Mark, we can identify four conditions to enter the kingdom of God: First, we must seek the good will of God. Second, we must turn and become like children, pure and sincere. Third, we must forsake everything to follow Christ. And fourth, we must faithfully serve as Jesus did. The kingdom of God is a realm where God's authority reigns supreme, and these four conditions for entering the kingdom are lessons we must learn

throughout our lives. They help us to renounce our old selves, our natural inclinations, and ultimately allow the Holy Spirit to fully control us. When God's authority reigns unimpeded in us, we will receive our reward in the kingdom when Christ returns.

Let us pray together: Lord, bless the church we are in and our church life, that we may experience the reality of the kingdom today. Just as You led the saints onto the way of the cross in those days, likewise work within each saint through the Spirit today, filling the church with a scene of loving one another and serving one another. Grant the church a good spiritual environment: may the young ones have a rich spiritual supply to grow healthily; may the experienced ones be willing to let go of everything to serve wholeheartedly. Uplift Christ in the church, allow the Spirit to operate freely, so that the church may become a beautiful testimony of Jesus Christ. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.