



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

62 – On His Right and His Left

Announcements:

3/13 @6:30 -

Men's Discipleship

- *Question 8*

3/15 @7:00 -

Prayer

3/16 @6:30 -

Grace Group

3/19 @8:30 -

Sunday School

3/21 @6:30 -

Women's

Bible Study

ICE BREAKER: Have you ever gotten exactly what you asked for and had that backfire?

READ: Matthew 20:20-23

This is one of those passages where the more time you spend in it the more beauty and detail that you begin to see in it. There are a few ways that we could read Jesus' response to the disciples' Mom and her request in this passage. Her request is fairly straight forward: "I want my son's to sit on your right and left." She wants honor for her sons. She wants the best for them. It is Jesus response that is loaded and full of nuance, and there are a few ways that we could read it. One is Jesus reacting to her audacity: "You do not know what you are asking (so how dare you ask it!)". The other is to see Jesus reacting to her ignorance: "You do not know what you are asking (so why are you asking it?)". The third option (and the one I tend to lean towards) is to see Jesus reacting in love and compassion as this woman really does not know exactly what it is she is asking: "You (really) don't know what you are asking (and it is not what you are thinking)". So today I would like to dive deep into making sure *we* understand what it means to be on his left and right as he enters the kingdom!

The first thing to note is the language of Jesus. He uses a phrase that may sound familiar to us if we know the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: "this cup". He turns to the two disciples and asks them point blank: "are you able to drink from this cup?" (verse 22) This picture continues into his next statement in verse 23: "you will drink my cup." Culturally speaking they should have understood "this cup" to refer to the cup of God's wrath and vengeance. The phrase was one that was in the very fabric of this society. The closest modern comparison that I could think of is Jesus looking at the disciples and asking them if they were ready to go the full twelve rounds. In other words the Mom is coming and asking for a position of honor and Glory for her sons, she wants them to receive blessings and all the good things from Jesus, but Jesus makes sure that no one forgets what he just said: that they will "deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified." It is as if Jesus is saying "have you *really* thought through this, because you don't know what you are really asking, this is not going to be pretty!" But then this leaves us with a question: If she had known what she was asking, would it be right for her to ask?

DISCUSS: Does fully understanding what she is asking change the heart of her question? Should she still ask it? Why or Why Not?

But what I would like to look at next is to see the culmination of this question. She requests: "say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at the right and one on your left, in your kingdom." The next time we read about anyone on the right and the left of Jesus is at the crucifixion. I believe Matthew is intentional with his language here:

READ: Matthew 27:38

There is so much that we could look at here (and we will get there later in Matthew), but I would like to make just a couple of quick points. One is that Jesus knew that his future lay in the hands of Sovereign God. So when Jesus enters his kingdom, Jesus knows that it is not for the disciples to be surrounding him, rather he must be counted with the thieves and robbers. He was to be "despised and rejected by Men" (Isaiah 53) and "numbered with the transgressors" (53:11). So one of the reasons that it was not for these two to be on his right and left was to fulfill the words of the prophet, but another, I would argue, is the grace of God. Jesus bore the full wrath of God on that cross for sinners, sinners like you and me and sinners like the Sons of Zebedee. Then, in the completed work of Christ they find their glory. Their place was not on the cross with him as he entered his kingdom, but rather in service to him ushering in the kingdom. Often we don't get exactly what we ask for because what God has in store for us is greater!

DISCUSS: Do you have any testimonies of God doing for you better than you would have asked? What scriptural backing do we have for this type of thinking?