

March 8, 2020

Mark 10:32-52

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

**The Book of Mark** is most likely the first of the four gospel books to be written, sometime in the late 60s CE. In this season of Lent (from we move to the second half of the gospel which focuses around the movement of Jesus towards his confrontation with the powers at Jerusalem. Today's selection is the end of the center, transition section (Mark 8:22-10:52) revealing the heart of what it means to follow the teaching and example of Jesus. It's sandwiched on both ends by a miracle story of a blind person gaining sight – potentially a metaphor for all who hear the gospel and need to “see” in a new way to get what Jesus is really about and is calling disciples to live. Our section today includes the third of three teachings by Jesus of what will happen to the Messiah [8:31; 9:30-32; 10:32-34]. Each time this is followed by clear misunderstanding (a lack of sight) by the disciples [8:32-33; 9:33-37; 10:35-41]. Today James and John respond by asking for the best spots in the kingdom when Jesus comes to power.

**on the way** ὁδός HODOS meaning a road; by implication, a progress (the route, act or distance); figuratively, a mode or means:—journey, (high-)way. is the way in which Mark has Jesus talk about discipleship. It goes back to the way that Isaiah through John the Baptizer announced in the wilderness. It's the metaphor for a life of discipleship, walking in the footsteps of Jesus: responding to the invitation to follow him. It appears with great use in this central section. See 8:27 (and **on the way** he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”); 9:33 (33 Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about **on the way?**”), 10:21 (21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”). Shortly it will be revealed as the way that leads to Jerusalem and the cross. 11:8 (Many people spread their cloaks **on the road**, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.) We know from Acts 9:2 that the early Christians were first named as “the People **of the Way**” – pointing back to this metaphor.

**Messiah** (Hebrew: מָשִׁיחַ) (or Christ from the Greek χριστός) is a savior or liberator of a group of people. In the Hebrew Bible usually a king or High Priest traditionally anointed with holy anointing oil. The Messiah was thought to be a promised human leader, physically descended from the paternal Davidic line through King David and King Solomon, a military and religious leader who would reunite the tribes of Israel, overcome and defeat the enemies of Israel and usher in a Messianic Age of global universal peace, and the world to come. Here Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, but when Jesus then reveals his vocation and destiny as the Messiah Peter rejects it for whatever preconceived notion he had of the Messiah from his experience, culture, and religious education. Jesus subverts the expectations of what the Messiah will be in pronouncing that the Messiah will die, and in choosing to apply the title **the Son of Man** to himself

<sup>32</sup> They were **on the road**, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, <sup>33</sup> saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and **the Son of Man** will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; <sup>34</sup> they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.”

<sup>35</sup> James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “**Teacher, we want you to do for us** whatever we ask of you.” <sup>36</sup> And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” <sup>37</sup> And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” <sup>38</sup> But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to **DRINK THE CUP THAT I DRINK**, or be baptized with **THE BAPTISM THAT I AM BAPTIZED WITH?**” <sup>39</sup> They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

<sup>41</sup> When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. <sup>42</sup> So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. <sup>43</sup> But it is

not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.<sup>45</sup> For **the Son of Man** came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

<sup>46</sup> They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, **was sitting by the roadside.** <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was **Jesus of Nazareth**, he began to shout out and say, “**Jesus, Son of David**, have mercy on me!” <sup>48</sup> Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “**Son of David**, have mercy on me!” <sup>49</sup> Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” <sup>50</sup> So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup> Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “**My teacher**, let me see again.” <sup>52</sup> Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him **on the way.**

#### QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What part of today’s story grabs you?**
- **Who sees and who doesn’t in this text?**
- **What do they see? What do they want from Jesus?**
- **How is it hard to see the vision that Jesus is gives – in the text and for us today?**
- **What do you want from Jesus today?**
- **What invitation to walk, act, speak, or relate to others on the Way of Jesus do you hear in the text today?**

instead. This comes from the book of Daniel, as the title given to the one who comes at the forefront of God’s power to gather the nations for something new.

**DRINK THE CUP THAT I DRINK** : this expression points back to the Psalms where it’s used as a metaphor for suffering or doing God’s will: Psalm 16:5 “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.” Psalm 75:8 “For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed; he will pour a draught from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.” It also anticipates what Jesus will say in his struggle to prayerfully accept the will of God in the garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14:36 “Jesus said, ‘Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.’”

**THE BAPTISM THAT I AM BAPTIZED WITH?** : this seems to point back to the baptism of Jesus in Mark 1:7-8 “ [John the Baptizer] proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”

**Jesus, Son of David**, the title “Son of David” was a messianic one, highly charged with militaristic and royalty connections. “Your house [David’s] and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me [Yahweh], your throne shall be established forever.” - 2 Samuel 7:16 and “For thus says the Lord: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.”- Jeremiah 33:17

What do you want me to do for you? : The text has a curious opposition between James and John and Bartimaeus. In both episodes Jesus is called teacher. But whereas Jesus asks Bartimaeus what he wants Jesus to do for him, the disciples tell Jesus what they want them to do for him. The disciples want places of power, whereas Bartimaeus is looking for mercy. The disciples don’t see what’s right in front of them, and yet Bartimaeus who is blind is able to jump up and run towards Jesus without having physical sight. The disciples are looking for places of greatness from which they’ll be served. Bartimaeus casts off and away his cloak – which is what those who begged in the Ancient World would lay on the ground in front of them to collect any offerings they might receive from their busking or pleas for mercy. He’s casting off the life he’s known.