



Date: 20<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Theme: **Humility and Servanthood**

Bible Readings: **Mark 10:35-45**  
**and Isaiah 53:4-12**

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## PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Hold in prayer each member of your group in the week before your session. When you meet, you might like to encourage them to share different translations of the Bible passages. Perhaps have two or three different versions of the Bible available.

## PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

At home, remind yourself of the earlier passage in [Mark 9:32-35](#).

Then read the passage from the Isaiah the prophet: [Isaiah 53:4-12](#), followed by [Mark 10:35-45](#).

Consider what links the three readings.

Imagine that you have been asked to devise a seating plan for a big celebration (e.g. a wedding, or a birthday party). Think about who it is for. (Perhaps your family, a large group of your friends, or even the royal family!) *What would you have to take into consideration when deciding who will sit where?*

*What about those who serve the guests? Do they have a place at the table?*

## STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

Great God,  
you are awesome beyond measure.  
We are so small in comparison,  
yet you welcome us into your presence; into your family.  
Reveal yourself to us today, as we search the scriptures, as we share together.  
Help us to see a glimpse of your true nature and your purpose for each of us.  
As we bow down before you,  
God of the universe, the God of love beyond our understanding,  
help us to worship you in the name of Jesus, our Servant King. Amen.

## FINDING OUR ROOTS

**Opening discussions** (perhaps in smaller groups of 2-4 people):

From your preparation, share with the group any difficulties you experienced in coming up with a seating plan which pleases everyone for a celebratory meal. (*Or did you find it easy? How would it be with a different group?*)

*If you were in a position to be able to employ a personal servant, what qualities would you look for before you offer them the role? Would you expect them to demonstrate humility? What would that look like?*

*What do you think are the differences between a servant and a slave?*

## READING THE SCRIPTURES

Read together the Bible passage: [Mark 10:35-45](#)

### Background Information:

The conversation takes place as Jesus and his disciples journey towards Jerusalem. Jesus has just foretold, for the third time, (in **verses 32-34**) what would happen when they entered the city. He doesn't spare them the horror. Almost as if they haven't heard what Jesus said, two brothers, James and John, ask him for places of honour when he comes into his kingdom. They seem to take lightly what Jesus says about humiliation, rejection and death. They focus on glory. They believe, like Peter, that Jesus is God's chosen one, but their expectation of the Messiah is very different to that of Jesus.

At royal banquets, the guests would recline to eat. The places of honour either side of the king were reserved for his closest, most important advisors. This is what James and John are requesting. The king himself would offer the cup to his guests. In the Bible, the cup was often symbolic of life experience (e.g. [Psalm 23](#), 'my cup runneth over'). It would soon represent the 'blood of the new covenant' ([1 Corinthians 11:25](#)) or even the cup of suffering ([Luke 22:42](#)). The word 'Baptism' can be misleading for us. It means to dip or be submerged, but not necessarily with water. Jesus is asking if they could endure the overwhelming suffering he is about to experience. The disciples think of the cup and the baptism as blessings of the messianic banquet, not the sacrifice and the humiliation of the crucifixion.

In verses **42-44** Jesus tries to explain how the kingdom of God works differently to the powers of this world. Honours will be given to those who are **servants** to others (the Greek word is *diakonos* = those who wait at tables) 'and whoever wishes to be first among you must be a **slave of all**' (Greek: *doulos* = slave). Slavery was commonplace at that time. Freedom could be bought with a 'ransom' (**v.45**).

## DIGGING DEEPER

Looking at verses 35-37, at first sight it looks like James and John are asking for powerful positions out of selfish ambition. *But what other motivation might they have? What do you make of this request?*

*In our prayer time, is our focus too often on asking God for what **we** want rather than other elements, such as praise, thanksgiving or confession? How does worship at church help us to focus on God?*

*In our church, how are we being called to serve? What sacrifices are we being asked to make?*

*What do we think Jesus means when he says he will be a 'ransom' for many? (verse 45).*

One of the definitions of being humble is 'having a low opinion of oneself or of one's claims' (Chambers) *Are you comfortable with this definition? Are there dangers in this?*

*Who were the ones who actually occupied the places to his right and left, when he came into his 'glory'?*

If you have time, read [Philippians 2:5-11](#) as a meditative prayer.

## PRAYING TOGETHER

Merciful God, create in us a clean heart,  
and show us how to do your work in humility, away from the eyes of others.

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve;

To give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds;

To toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward,

save that of knowing that we do your will.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

*(based on a prayer by St. Ignatius of Loyola)*

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION (at home)

Read the passage which follows: [Mark 10:46-52](#), the story of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, healed. **Imagine you are Bartimaeus**, seeing the world with renewed eyes. You follow the disciples into the city. You are a witness to the crucifixion, perhaps even to the resurrection. *What do you make of it all?* Perhaps write a meditation or create a piece of art work reflecting on Bartimaeus' experiences.