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SERMON TITLE: The Most Worthy Sacrifice
SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:32-45
DATE: March 6, 2022
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Isaiah 53:7-12.

Did you ever have a parent or a grandparent that repeated something to you, ad nauseum? You knew, no matter what, this was something that they really wanted you to understand.

I had nice grandparents. I knew one thing was certain: when we went to their home in East Texas on a Thursday to spend the night, I knew there would be a homemade cake waiting which my grandmother had made. She always said, "I made you a cake—go eat it!" She did not care whether I had eaten dinner or not.

I loved my grandma. . . But it gets better.

Friday morning after breakfast, my granddad would announce we were going to Frank's Corner Grocery and load us into the back of his pickup—tailgate down. Driving the back way to town, he allowed us to sit on the edge of the tailgate. We could even drag our toes on the dirt road while he drove. The boys would jump off and on. Upon arrival he gave us all the change in his pocket and told us to go buy all the candy we wanted while he bought us soda pop. We kids were in heaven.

These two things were consistent and regular.

Now as a grandmother, my granddaughter would probably say I am as consistent in telling her to do her homework, brush her teeth, and make her bed. ☺

Though she was not inclined to do them as a child, these things have always been expected. But I also take her to Sonic or for Andy's ice cream after dinner.

Jesus, as Mark tells the story, was consistent and regular in telling the disciples two things:

1. He would be betrayed, condemned, and killed. Three days later he would rise from the dead.
2. He came to serve, and we must serve, too.

Every time Jesus told the disciples this (and this was the third time in three chapters), he also told them this is what was expected:

1. The first time (when Peter rebuked Jesus), Jesus said, "my followers **must** deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mk 8:32-34)
2. The second time (when the disciples argued about who was the greatest) Jesus said, "whoever wants to be first **must be** last of all and servant of all." (Mk 9:31-35)

3. The third time they are on the road to Jerusalem, and James and John asked to sit at his right hand and left hand when he gained his throne as king. Let's read it.
READ Mark 10:32-45

Did you catch that word again?

"Whoever wants to be a leader among you **must be** your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you **must be** the slave of everyone else." (v. 44)

None of the disciples liked this thought. I suspect most of us do not. Yet, Jesus consistently mentions this and each time our human nature resists this requirement.

There are certain expectations of us as followers of Christ. These are daily responsibilities, similar to doing your homework, brushing your teeth, and making your bed. It is the habit or mindset of the Christian, and understanding it will make our walk easier, actually. Serving will lead to a worthy life.

We can discover this by understanding the unfolding plan.

This third time of telling the disciples he would suffer; Jesus adds new details:

1. This would happen in Jerusalem.
2. Jesus would be tried not only by the leaders of Israel, but also by the Gentiles—the Romans.
3. Jesus would be sentenced and condemned to death. It is a legal term used for a formal trial in which he would be declared guilty and executed. His death would not be random. It would come through the criminal justice system.
4. He faced being mocked, spit on, flogged, and killed by both the religious authorities and national rulers.

Why does it matter that Jesus gives all these details? It tells us that he understood that his death was not incidental. It was a plan. We read about it in Isaiah's prophecy written 700 years earlier.

Jesus did not resist the plan because he understood the outcome: through his sacrifice we would be saved.

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10:45)

Tim Keller points out that Jesus Christ's purpose was to die and be a sacrifice. Jesus did not come just to set a good example. He was not just trying to make us "be good." He was stepping in to actually rescue us, something no other religion offers.

Jesus came from heaven and as God's Son, he deserved honor. He should have been served. But instead, he served by being "a ransom for many." The word "for" (ἀντὶ in Greek) means "on behalf of," "in place of," "instead of." Jesus stood in place of you and me to be a "ransom." Ransom (λύτρον in Greek) means "to pay the price of release for a slave or prisoner."

You might not think you are a slave of anyone, but Keller describes the slavery we suffer as a "cosmic evil." It is so prevalent that it took a "cosmic ransom" or price to release us, one that we could not possibly pay for ourselves.

It took God-sized initiative and power to free us because evil is everywhere; sin is in everyone. It took the horrendous once-for-all act of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus was only able to accomplish it by being willing to serve, rather than be served.

This is Christian theology. The Bible says:

1. **He came to earth, being sent by God** – that means he existed before he was born and deserved to be served as God's Son.
2. **He came not to be served but to serve others.**
3. **He gave his life as a ransom for many.**

That is what Mark 10:45 teaches. This will be our freedom from sin.

Isaiah predicted many years before:

"And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to **be counted righteous**, for he will bear all their sins" (Is 53:11b).

Why did Jesus have to do this? Why didn't God simply forgive us all?

If God did that, would anything change? If your husband or your wife or family member or friend forgives you, does that result in your being freed from that sin?

Let's say you have a bad temper or you lie or you spend too much. Are you changed just by someone saying "you are forgiven?" Would your sin be erased if God just said, "Oh well, it doesn't really matter."

No, the entire cosmos is held prisoner to sin. It won't just go away with a word. Nothing would change; no release would occur. No, it takes something much greater to overcome sin. It would take a great sacrifice to break the power of sin.

"The Son of Man **came** not to be served but **to serve others** and **to give his life as a ransom** for many." (Mark 10:45)

Love really is about sacrifice. In fact, sacrifice is at the center of true love.

When you get married you have to give up part of your life for your spouse. You make vows to love, honor, and cherish no matter what comes (for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, until death parts you). That takes intention, sacrifice, and commitment. The best marriage is when you remember your vows and serve one another. **It is costly.**

Think of the sacrifice you make when you have a child. You can no longer think only of yourself. Your resources have to be shared; your time, your attention, and your cash. When you have a baby, you sacrifice your own life to pour your efforts into equipping your child to be a solid member of society. **It costs you.**

The only way Jesus could redeem us was to give himself as a ransom. He had to sacrifice himself and teach us to serve. It would not happen with just a word; **it cost him greatly.** That's the only way forgiveness works.

It takes great will, intention, and love to save us from death. It takes a stunning commitment—service beyond measure to free the cosmos (the entire world) from sin. We must understand the charge to serve will carry on Jesus' understanding of the good life. It is not a life of self-indulgence and risky behavior. It is not accomplished by the desires of childhood to always eat dessert first and never brush our teeth or falling out of the back of a moving truck and running to hop back on.

It's you and me serving one another and our city even though it is costly. It is serving our spouses and families even when they are not committed. This is the kind of love of Jesus. Do this and it will make your life most worthy.

AMEN