



Flipping the Script
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

We are continuing our study in the Gospel of Mark this week. Jesus is speaking about leadership, and as is common in His teaching, what he says about it is flipping the script – turning it upside down. Jesus wants to prepare His disciples and us today for what leadership in His new Kingdom looks like.

QUESTION: What habit have you started or broken recently? What was your motivation?

QUESTION: What is the last thing you experienced that made you laugh out loud?

SCRIPTURE¹

Mark 8:27-35 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way, he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.” He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.”

Mark 9:30-32 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

Mark 9:36-37 He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Mark 10:13-16 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 10:33-38 “We are going to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.” Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” “What do you want me to do for you?” “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” “You do not know what you are asking,” Jesus said.

Mark 10:42-46 “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

OBSERVATION

Jesus is talking to His disciples about three important elements of Kingdom leadership: **1)** Making clear the Good News of Jesus Christ so followers can decide if they want to commit themselves to His journey; **2)** Realizing that leaders must take on the essential characteristics of children to lead in His Kingdom; **3)** Hearing and actively listening to Jesus' direction which requires giving up personal pride, power and authority and replacing them with service and love for others.

QUESTION: What do you think of when you hear the word 'leader'? What did Jesus say about worldly leaders?

QUESTION: What experience have you had in leading others? What was most enjoyable/difficult about it?

APPLICATION

Jesus begins His discussion about leadership by asking His disciples who they think He is. If they are to follow Him, they need to know He is the Son of God. They can't personally invest in the direction He is taking them unless they listen to, and hear with spiritual ears, what His purpose is for Himself and for them. So, Jesus tells them that He is to be arrested, mocked, spit upon and killed – soon – in Jerusalem where His destiny awaits. They are upset and find His words unbelievable because they didn't sign up for this. Peter's rebuke of Jesus tells us that he didn't understand Kingdom priorities. But Jesus is teaching them that their priorities were not in line with His. Leadership requires that everyone's priorities are in sync and those Kingdom priorities include suffering, sacrifice, service, selflessness and perhaps death.

QUESTION: What are you afraid you will lose if you follow Jesus?

QUESTION: In what areas is God calling you to die to self and serve others?

People are consumed with preserving what we value in the world. We want what we want. Typically, we push for independence and freedom and we don't want to be told what to do. We look out for ourselves. Jesus describes the upside down ways of God. If we are trying to make ourselves great, we will inevitably lose our lives; but those of us who lose our lives for Him and the good news will ultimately find life. The only way to achieve greatness in His Kingdom is to understand that Jesus is calling us to follow. We have to answer His question, **"Will we follow Me?"**

QUESTION: In what other ways does scripture show us how God flips the script?

But when Jesus talks about living in His Kingdom, He doesn't use a strong, mature, independent adults as the example – He shows us a child. So, what can dependent, unprofessional beings without influence or power, without any resources of their own, teach us about leadership? Children understand that they have to receive. They don't have to earn anything, yet they trust that they will be fed and clothed. We need to learn from them that there's nothing we can do to earn anything from God. He has never asked us to earn anything. We can't take anything from Him who made the universe and rose from the dead. All we have to do is be willing to give up our independent attitudes so we can receive what is being given. Kingdom leadership is giving our lives to those without status, power or resources. That is what it means to flip the script. Jesus set them straight: If you actually want to be a leader, you must demonstrate childlike faith – that will make you worth following

QUESTION: In what ways have you chosen utter dependence over self-reliance.

QUESTION: What other characteristics of a child do we need to emulate in order to please God?

The third element is about hearing and listening. We may hear, but if we aren't really listening, we may not understand. The disciples certainly didn't understand Jesus' destiny. They were excited about the possibility of reigning with Him in power, position and authority. James and John certainly were looking for that. They didn't want the gory part – they wanted the glory part. Jesus' response to them was **NOT SO WITH YOU!** He instead invited them and now us, into **Holy Weakness**. He demonstrated climbing down from greatness into service -- He expects us to do the same. It takes strength to choose weakness. Being obedient to this phase of leadership challenges everything we are normally told to pursue, but it is the only position from which to pursue God. Jesus says this posture works on our hearts and on the hearts of the people we serve. It is not about being greater – it is about being more loving. **Decreasing ourselves is holy only when its destination is love.**

QUESTION: How do you define weakness? Where do you see weakness in yourself?

QUESTION: What changes do you need to make in your leadership style to be successful in the Kingdom?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, teach us to follow Jesus' example of an effective leader in Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen



QUESTIONS

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QUESTION: What experience have you had in leading others? What was most enjoyable/difficult about it?

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QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ADD

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