

Anglican Church Noosa
October 5, 2025
Mark 9:30-37 & 10:35-45
CONFRONTING JESUS - Jesus the Servant
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It doesn't take long for 8 weeks to pass by, does it. This is week 6 of our 8 week series.

So far we've looked at

- Jesus the Son
- Jesus the King
- Jesus the Healer
- Jesus the Teacher and
- Jesus the Lover.

Today we're focussing on Jesus the Servant.

And our final two weeks are

- Jesus the Sacrifice and
- Jesus the Lord.

I think so far in this series we've seen Jesus in his uniqueness, but also we've seen clear evidence that he is God, as he gradually declared himself to be.

If you've read Rebecca McLaughlin's book, you will have noticed that there was one aspect of Jesus' personhood that we haven't had time to look at.

Another good reason to buy the book.

That topic was Jesus the Jew. It showed who he was in his historical context and experience as a human being, as a man.

And there was no other reason than we only had an 8 week block in our planning and not a 9 week block. So we had to leave one week out.

The topics of Son, King, Healer, Teacher and Lover, have really showed Jesus in his capability, his compassion, his concern, his uniqueness, his gifting.

Today though, we move into an aspect of Jesus that is surprising, even unexpected, and certainly confronting!

Jesus the Servant.

In Week 2, we looked at Jesus the King. I take you back to that week, when we saw that Jesus spoke a lot about the Kingdom, saying,

- Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.
- The time has come, the Kingdom of heaven is here.

Jesus is the King, talking a lot about his kingdom.

So to now be talking about Jesus the Servant, doesn't really compute, does it?

How can the one person be both King and Servant?

Both the one who rules, and the one who serves.

Do you see King Charles having just knighted a dignitary in some grand location, and then the next thing on his to do list is to weed the garden followed by cleaning the toilets, or clearing the dung heap from the stables.

Is that the way it works?

Well Jesus says 'yes'.

In fact Jesus defines his Kingship through his servanthood.

Now while the Jews may have been surprised by this, they actually shouldn't have.

They were expecting a victorious Messiah to come and release them from the terrible Romans. (and remember the word Messiah means the anointed one - the King).

But if Jews knew their Old Testament prophecy, they would have, and should have, remembered the Servant Songs from the prophet Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapters 42, 49, 50, and across 52-53

Isaiah 42 introduces the servant

Isaiah 49 says that the Lord's servant will face rejection from his own people

Isaiah 50 speaks of the servant's profound commitment to God and the suffering he endures because of that

And Isaiah 52-53 (which we read most Good Fridays) is perhaps the most famous, and describes the servant as being wounded, crushed, punished, bruised, despised, rejected, oppressed, afflicted, and as a lamb that is slaughtered.

It is this background that the Jews were ignoring, but Jesus exemplified.

He was the servant King.

When we looked at Jesus the King we noted that the only crown he wore, was a crown of thorns.

The servant songs are foundational in understanding biblical prophecy related to redemption, atonement and humble service. They are a profound proclamation of a selfless figure who serves others and suffers for them.

43 years ago, Graham Kendrick wrote a beautiful song called the Servant King. Listen to the lyrics...

From heaven you came helpless babe
entered our world your glory veiled
not to be served but to serve
and give your life that we might live.

There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear

his heart with sorrow was torn
yet not my will, but yours, he said.

Come see his hands and his feet
the scars that speak of sacrifice.
Hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him.
Each other's needs to prefer
for it is Christ we're serving.

The passages read for us today from the Gospel of Mark show us Jesus as he tries to ready his disciples for what servanthood looks like.

And it's abundantly clear they didn't like it.

In ch.9, Jesus had been teaching the twelve about his future and what it would look like. That he would be handed over, that he would be killed, but after three days he would rise.

But the disciples didn't get it, and they were too afraid to admit that, and ask him about it.

But they kept walking the road to Capernaum, and it seems some of the disciples were having a bit of a barney along the way.

And when they arrived at the house, Jesus asked them what they were talking about, or actually arguing about. He'd obviously noted that it got heated.

And they didn't respond, probably because they were ashamed that the argument was about who was the greatest.

So Jesus calls them all together to hear what he has to say about it.

And he says ... Anyone who wants to be first, must be the very last, and the servant of all.

WOW!

There was a child in the house, and he took the child in his arms and he said ... if you welcome children, you welcome me. And if you welcome me, you welcome God.

What we think of others, matters.

How we treat others, matters.

Now we lose some of the force of this illustration with our 21st century attitude to children.

To us it's natural to welcome a little child into our midst.
We rejoice when someone has a baby.
We love to have children in our services.

But in Jesus' day, children had a very lowly place in society. Even the children of the master were treated the same as the slaves' children. They were of no account at all. It wasn't even the Victorian attitude that children should be seen but not heard. Rather children shouldn't be seen at all.

So Jesus is declaring something quite radical here.

And we need to remember that Jesus came to earth as a little child. Not only did he welcome children, but that's how he chose to enter history.

Now what's the point of Jesus saying this?
Is it just that we should be nice to children?

No.

It's that in the Kingdom of God, it's not the great who matter more, it's not your status that God looks at.

No, every person is equally important.

In fact the least important take on a special importance, because they're the test of whether you've really joined the Kingdom or are just standing on the threshold.

It's as we welcome and accept the least important people that we show that we welcome and accept Jesus, and the Father who sent him.

I guess what Jesus is saying is that in this new Kingdom he's bringing in, things are different. Jesus turns things upside down.

Status goes out the window.

You have to rethink how you relate to others.

And Paul takes this up in his letters, doesn't he?. In Romans 12:3 Paul says - *do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.*

And in Philippians 2:3-4 - *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

But let's get back to the disciples.

In the very next chapter, sadly, James and John had let Jesus' little lesson slip, because very brazenly they went up to him and said ... we want you to do for us whatever we ask.

Well, how do you think this is going to work out?

But Jesus plays along and says, what do you want me to do for you?

And they asked for the two prime positions of glory, beside Jesus, in his glory.

And when Jesus questioned them about it, they continued in their brazenness, saying... you can count on us, we can do it.

The other 10 caught on, and weren't very happy, and again Jesus calls them all together for a little sit down and reality check.

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.

It's very easy, isn't it, to overlook the sacrifices of others.

To say that we can't feel anything, as they suffer on our behalf.

That's as great a temptation for us, as we think about Jesus' death, as it was for the disciples.

You see, our remembrance of Jesus and what he did, is so often sanitised, isn't it?

We celebrate communion with nice bread and pleasant tasting port or grape juice.

There's a natural rejoicing at Easter and Christmas.

It's easy to overlook the true nature of the incarnation, of Jesus becoming human.

We overlook the fact that Jesus swapped the glory of being one with God for a smelly stable. That he willingly suffered the indignity of appearing in the form of a baby, and growing as a little child, with no rights, in a poor village, in an oppressed nation.

The images we have are warm and friendly, probably a well-lit stable, a beautiful baby, an innocent mother, and deserving shepherds.

Yet the reality was far different.

Jesus came as a nobody.

He was rejected and despised by anyone of note.

He suffered the most painful and undignified death you can imagine.

But ... it's easy to think about the good things, like James and John did, rather than the reality of how those things were achieved?

I think it's incredible that Jesus didn't have a go at them, for their blatant ignoring of what he'd said previously.

But instead, he points them to the cost of discipleship.

Although they may not have understood what he meant right then, I'm sure they did later, after the resurrection, as they considered what it would mean to continue as his followers.

Because the reality was far from glory. It meant suffering and death.

All disciples are called to take up their cross and follow Jesus.

Do you count yourself as a disciple of Jesus?

Are you convinced that he is the Son of God, that he is the King, that he is the Healer, that he is the Teacher, that he is the Lover?

Well, we need to remember that all those things are wrapped up in his servanthood.

The decision for us is the same as the decision Jesus asked his disciples that day.

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.

Are we ready to suffer and die for what we believe?

Do we value our closeness to Christ so much that we're willing to stand at his right and left hands as he's tortured and put to death? Or are we interested only in the glory of being with the conquering King in his kingdom?

What Jesus is saying is you can't have one without the other, but, the one makes the other worth going through.

You see, the standards of God's Kingdom are the complete opposite to those of the world.

In the world we expect those in authority to wield that authority, and to enjoy the status of their position.

But, in the Kingdom of God, those who are great are the ones who serve others. The first are the ones who act as slaves of the rest.

Why is that?

Because that's who Jesus is.

And we are called to be the same. Amen.