

Anglican Church Noosa
HOPE through Lent
Mark 10:32-45 ~ Hope from Jesus' Words
Rev'd Chris Johnson – March 30, 2025

Our theme this Lent is Hope and this morning we look at the hope we find in Jesus' words. Jesus spoke a lot of words and they all bring hope but the passage this morning puts a strange twist on hope. We've just heard Jesus predicting his horrific death on the cross and holding this up as the supreme example of servanthood before James and John, Jesus right hand men. It is hard to grasp, crucifixion and being a servant are not the things we normally associate with hope; it's not surprising James and John don't get it.

James and John are hopeful of positions of status in Jesus Kingdom. Their idea of Kingdom is power and glory. In the ancient world it was about one king being stronger than another king and defeating him in order to expand his Kingdom. Kingdom is about being strong powerful and ruling over others. Jesus put it this way in verse 42, *"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles, lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."* But then he goes on to say, *"Not so with you!"*

God's Kingdom is to be characterised by servanthood; servanthood even to the point of laying down your life for another. Again, Jesus put it this way in v45, *"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."*

So today I want to talk about hope through servanthood.

Firstly let's start at the macro level, the Kingdom level, literally. Our Prime Minister this week called an election for the 3rd May. The Kingdom of Australia is about to elect its king for the next three years. Praise God that we live in a democracy where we elect those who rule over us.

If you are anything like me you will probably find much of the bun fight over the next six weeks frustrating, monotonous, exhausting, and it will probably get you angry at times.

But I encourage you to step back and think about it for a minute. We actually get a say. You can vote for who you like and not vote for the ones you don't like. Not only that,
You can post your views on social media,
You can write a letter to the paper,
You can join a political party,
You can stand for office,
You can persuade others to support you and become a member of parliament,
at whatever level, you can have influence in the making of the laws of this country.

The alternative doesn't bear thinking about. Did you see the reports this week of the Palestinian people marching through the rubble of their ruined cities protesting the rule of Hamas. What bravery, what courage, what pain they have to go through, to change those who rule over them.

In Australia we can change our government peacefully through the ballot box. Why is that? I want to suggest you this morning it's because of this principle of servanthood given to us by Jesus.

The simple principle is this, it is not the rulers who are the bosses but the people who actually are the bosses. The rulers are there to serve the people. The rulers actually have to apply for their job again every three years. And the people are the bosses who decide whether their service has been up to scratch or not, and whether they get a job for the next three years.

Have you ever noticed that those in Cabinet are called Ministers. They are Cabinet Ministers. They are there to minister. And what does the word minister mean? It's the Latin word for servant. Cabinet ministers are there to serve the people.

And the leader of the country, what is he called? He is the Prime Minister. He is the prime person there to serve the people.

In so many other countries around the world it is the ruling class who lord over the people and assert their authority through violence and intimidation. It may be a communist dictatorship or a right wing military dictatorship or a religious elite dictatorship or just underworld crime bosses who control everything. So many countries in our world are governed by the principle that might is right and the people who have the might have the right to put it over the rest of the population.

Why are western democracies different? Why are we having an election in Australia in May? I put it to you that it's because of the teaching of Jesus, all of his teaching but especially the focus in Mark Chapter 10, *"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, 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."*

Doesn't that fill you with hope! Christianity is about your personal salvation, yes of course. But it is also about the transformation of the political structures of this world as well. It is about a completely new mindset for those who have authority. And it's called servanthood. Where it is exercised it brings hope.

Servanthood however is not just about the political structure, or the behaviour of politicians. It needs to permeate every level of society down to you and me as individuals.

It means that businesses are there to serve the needs of their customers, not to rip them off and take advantage of them. It means that union leaders are there to serve the needs of their members and not to use them as pawns for their own political power plays. It means that in families husbands and wives look out for each other's needs rather than just their own, and parents serve their children by stepping up as parents and teaching them God's ways. For us in the church it means following Paul's advice to the Philippians, *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vane conceit. Rather in humility we value others above ourselves not looking to our own interests but to the interests of others."*

There is hope in Jesus' teaching on servanthood. But my friends do you sense something is slipping. As society moves further and further away from its Christian roots the idea that we are here to serve one another seems like a dream we can only half remember. As people jettison Christ there is a growing selfishness, intolerance and anger. Please pray for a deep repentance in our land.

But what is repentance? I don't want you to hear me saying, "try harder to be nice toward another." That's not what repentance is about. The Christian understanding of repentance is

found in the final verse of our reading, v45, *“Even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

The giving of his life as a ransom is all about the cross. It's all about Jesus telling them that he will be handed over to the chief priests to be condemned mocked, spit upon, flogged and finally killed.

So Jesus will willingly march into Jerusalem to give his life as a ransom.

The word ransom simply means redemption. It has the idea of a price being paid to set a slave or a prisoner free.

In Jesus' case the price was enormous, crucifixion. But that is because the debt was enormous, the sins of humanity.

That means you and me. Your sins and my sins. Yes I'm sure there are many other people who have worse sins than you, but we all have this gravitational pull towards self rather than service. In our natural condition we tend to look out for number one. It maybe something simple like having our eye on the biggest piece of our favourite cake and hoping no one else takes it first, or having that unkind thought toward someone who's upset us, or maybe something quite serious where you've given into temptation in a big way and it's caused a lot of damage.

We are all sinners. We all carry a debt before our holy God. But Jesus pays that debt on the cross in order to set us free. This is what verse 45 is all about, *“giving his life as a ransom for many.”* It's about redemption. Buying us back. Bringing us back to God.

But how does this help us understand repentance. Christian repentance is about transferring trust from myself to Christ. From trusting in my own goodness for my salvation to trusting in Christ's cross for my salvation. It means a complete change of focus and direction in life with the cross and serving others now at the centre.

In a little while we are going to baptise Hamilton and Regan / Zara.

The baptism promises are

I turn to Christ.

I repent of my sins.

I reject selfish living and all that it's false and unjust.

I renounce satan and all evil.

And after the baptism I will sign them/her with the sign of the cross to show that they are marked as Christ's own forever.

Everything about baptism is about the complete reorientation of life with the cross at the centre issuing in a life of discipleship and service.

Let me tell you a story about Abraham Lincoln to illustrate.

In the days before the ending of slavery, Lincoln bought a slave girl with the sole purpose of giving her her freedom. She did not realise why he was buying her; she thought it was simply another transaction in which she was involved as a thing. So he paid the price for her; and then handed her her papers of freedom. She did not even understand. “You are free”, he said to her gently.

“Free?” She said. “Can I go wherever I want to go now?” “Indeed you can,” he said. Then she said “If I am free to go anywhere I will stay with you and serve you until I die.”

We see here a payment being made to set the slave girl free. But then out of gratitude she wants to serve the one who gave her freedom.

We were slaves to sin, but Jesus pays the price to set us free and in his case it's not just a monetary payment but giving his very life on the cross. Out of gratitude we want to serve him and in the end his service is perfect freedom.

Mark 10:45 is such a powerful verse and worth memorising, *“For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

I trust you can see how this message on the cross and servanthood brings hope.

Servanthood in families brings hope. Family members look out for one another's needs and sacrifice to meet them.

Servanthood in the community brings hope. People volunteer in their church and community organisations to serve the needs of their communities.

Servanthood in our nation brings hope. Politicians enter into vigorous debate about policy direction; but the point is they debate, they don't intimidate opponents with violence. They are there to serve the people.

James and John had a lot of trouble grasping this message of servanthood. Will you grasp it this morning? The crucified and risen Lord Jesus died to liberate us into service. And his service is perfect freedom.