

Matthew 21-10-10b

Let's resume our study. We're in Matthew chapter 20. We're looking at this request of James and John, which Jesus says is going to be fulfilled in an unusual way.

He says these seats at the right hand and at the left are for those, they are prepared for those that the Father chooses and they are not his to grant in the same way that the cup comes from the Father for Jesus and the cup is going to come from the Father for James and John. The cup of judgment has always come from the Father. The cup of blessing comes from the Father.

There is another cup. You remember Psalm 23 toward the end. What does David say? I'll prepare us a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

We straightened out that translation a little bit. My cup runneth over. That's a cup of blessing.

So Jesus says, you will in fact, drink my cup. You can leave out the baptism part that's in the other gospel, but to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give. This is such an important thing to remember.

And Jesus exemplifies it. He emphasizes it here. We tend to think in general and somewhat ambiguous terms.

I was listening to a very interesting discussion between a journalist and a man who clerked for Anthony Scalia in the Supreme Court, a guy who came up from humble beginnings and by being a really good student and getting himself into New York University and getting a law degree, was recognized for his aptitude and ended up clerking for a very well-known federal judge and ultimately for Justice Scalia. And so he's got great insight on the court and the role of the Supreme Court in particular in our life. And I thought he made a very telling point.

We look to the Supreme Court for things that should not be decided by the Supreme Court because they are social questions and they are moral questions, difficult questions. Who should be recognized as married? What should a woman be able to do option-wise about a pregnancy? These are only legal questions if the legislature passes laws about them. The role of lawyers and judges in the legal system is to discern exactly what the law says and all of our laws derive ultimately from the Constitution.

So constitutional questions can be decided by the courts where the Constitution does not prevail because these are not legal questions. They are social questions. What do we think ought to prevail in our country? You would want social experts.

If they are moral questions, you would want people who specialize in morals and ethics and in questions of truth and fairness. Courts are populated by lawyers. The Supreme

Court, as this young man pointed out, doesn't have any working mothers.

It doesn't have any soldiers. It doesn't have any law enforcement individuals. It doesn't have any representatives who could speak from various parts of our social fabric.

They're all lawyers. Lawyers are no more qualified. Their opinion is no more weighty and valuable on moral and social questions than anybody else.

They are really, really good at parsing the law at fine points of precedent and determining exactly the extent of authority that a piece of legislation or ultimately the Constitution has. By straying into areas for which they do not have real authority, they undermine their own authority. It is a double-edged sword because, and again, this is a point the young man made.

He was asked by the journalist, well, why do they take on these questions if it's really not in their purview? Well, the man said, you remember what Lord Acton famously, in one of those quotes about absolute power and what it does to those who hold it. And when you've got the power, you can be seduced into using it when you shouldn't. Jesus does not make that mistake.

This is my point. Jesus doesn't get into his father's planning and assigning function. It's amazing that the second person of the Trinity essentially knows his place, knows what his assignment and his responsibility is and what it isn't.

And our government would do well if we could manage to find people who would observe and honor this principle in the judiciary as well as in the legislature and in the executive branch. Any number of our presidents on both sides of the political aisle have abused executive privilege and the executive order to get things done that they want done that are not in their purview. Mr. Trump did it.

Mr. Biden's doing it. Go back as many presidents as you can remember in your life to stray into an area that is not your own, to not respect the boundaries, to meddle, to inveigle, to leverage and insinuate and impel things that are not in our area. This is a big problem.

And I think it's often overlooked in this verse. But when Jesus says the granting of this request is not mine to give, this is God talking here. This is the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, the Lord of glory, the Messiah to Israel, a savior for the church, head of all things to the church, saying, I can't do that, not because he lacks the power, but because he understands the importance of God's plan and purpose and the structure that he has put in place to bring that plan and purpose about.

If Jesus respects it, how much more should we? We've been looking at this principle on Thursday nights in Zachariah. If the Lord needs the Holy Spirit to rule the Millennial Kingdom, how much more do we need him just to organize the thoughts and intents of

our own hearts, much less the kingdoms of this world that will become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. So to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give.

It's Jesus' throne. It's his throne room. You would think he could say who's going to sit at his right hand and at his left.

Don't you think King Saul said, Jonathan, sit here, Abner sit here. Jesus says, I know where my authority comes from. I know who is the plan and the purpose is given by my father, the cup to drink.

Jesus says, not my will, but thine be done with regard to the cup. This has to be foremost in our minds. When we come before God in prayer, we can make requests, but we have to understand who's got the authority.

There are people who pray to the Holy Spirit. There are people who pray to Jesus. Look at what scripture teaches.

Prayer is offered to the father in the name of the son and in the power of the spirit. It's clear from Matthew to Revelation. There is no example of anybody praying to anyone, but the father in the church.

It is always in Jesus name and it is in the presence and power of the Holy spirit. That's the order. Don't ask Jesus to fulfill a request that goes to the father.

It's not in his, it's not in his grant. So it is for those for whom it is prepared by my father. The cup that Jesus drank was prepared for him by the father.

Why? Because it accomplishes a larger purpose. And as I said, Jesus is going to give that purpose for the first time in the gospel of Matthew down in verse 28, to give his life a ransom for many, to give his life a ransom for many. So the focus here is you've got people bowing at Jesus' feet, falling at his feet, making requests, talking about his glory, uh, understanding that, but misunderstanding that there is a cup.

There is the cross before the crown. There is the cup before the exaltation. There is the humbling himself before the exaltation.

And Jesus himself remembers that he is going to be seated at the right hand of the father. That is the father's invitation to make and to grant that Jesus sits at his right hand. So when the 10 heard it in verse 24, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.

Why? You're, you're asking for something that we're interested in, that what we're going to be left out. And as mentioned last week, they've already been promised 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. I mean, that's pretty darn prominent, uh, in a, in a 10th century kingdom, uh, to be seated on these thrones.

But Hey, these, these guys are angling for something better. Hey, wait a minute. What about us? You're, uh, you know, is this dibs? You know, whoever asks first gets it, uh, shotgun, you know, they're, I want to be on the right hand.

I want to be on the left. The brothers are displeased. Now look at what Jesus says in verse 25, you know, that the rulers of the Gentiles Lord it over them.

And those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.

Just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. This is such a beautifully symmetrical answer. You can't believe it until you look this closely.

You cannot really appreciate the beauty of this answer. First of all, look at verse 25, you know, that the rulers of the Gentiles Lord it over them. This, this comes from the word Kurios, but notice how do the rulers of the Gentiles get to be rulers grant that we may sit in a high place.

How did the rulers of the Gentiles get there? It's right of succession. My dad was the king. Now I'm the king.

Uh, I won it by conquest. I, I conquered these guys. I put them all to the sword.

I subjugated them and I became the king, Alexander, the great, the conquerors, uh, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids and all the ones that came after Alexander, the Roman Caesars, the Roman generals, uh, all down through history. Rulers in the nations have gotten there either by birth or conquest, right? So when they get there, they Lord it over the Gentiles, those who are great exercise authority over them. They're already the ruler.

And so they Lord and authorize. They strut and gloat. They cover themselves in glory and they impose their will on the people below them.

It's my glory. And it's my will that's in view when I'm a Gentile ruler, right? And who knows how I got here? Luck, circumstance, birth, fortunate spell of weather that enabled the, all of the ships of the Persians to get blown away so that the Greeks can win. Uh, you remember poor Xerxes getting whipped by the Greeks and comes back and he's licking his wounds in the whole Esther phase.

Well, it was weather, weather beat him. Uh, Jesus says, it shall not be so among you. It shall not be so among you, whoever desires to become great.

Unlike the rulers of the Gentiles, this is a very select, lucky group who end up being

rulers many times through no fault of their own. It's not like Nero was a wonderful guy that was elected and won battles. And that's how he becomes the Caesar.

But among us, if you want to be great, you have a shot. If you want to be great, there is a path. Anybody can be great.

This is great. Isn't it? We've all drunk from the same spirit. We're all partakers of Christ.

We've all got the word of God. We've all got the grace of God. We've all got forgiveness and cleansing and enablement and intercession from the Lord himself from the right hand of the throne of glory.

We all have a shot at greatness, but this is greatness in God's eyes. If God is going to grant a wonderful place of blessing and opportunity for service and to truly be at the side of the king for his benefit, to serve him, to help fulfill his will and his agenda and his mission. This is what Abner did.

This is what Jonathan did as the crown prince for Saul sitting at the right hand and at the left confidants, inner counsel, helping to make decisions, helping to discern what needs to be done and for whom it needs to be done. Whoever among you desires to become great, let him be your servant. The word here is do-loss.

Do-loss is a functional servant. It's similar to diakonos. This is not a demeaning position.

This is a useful, functional servant. Many people who are wait staff or who work in hotels, who make things happen on behalf of guests who come are in this category. This is do-loss.

This is service and it's not demeaning at all. It's not leadership. It's not decision-making.

There is a sense in which the enlisted people in military service are the douloi. They are the ones who get things done at the physical level. Officers have responsibility for planning and making decisions and separating good from bad and making assignments and holding a different kind of responsibility.

Where are we going to emplace the guns? Let's look at the map. Let's scout the terrain. We're going to put them here.

I'm talking artillery. And then the troops in the firing battery, they truck the guns there. They unlimber them.

They set them up. They lay the guns. They emplace the ammunition.

They lay the communication lines. They probably do it all on Wi-Fi now, but we used to lay wire for gun communication between the fire direction center and the firing battery, the weapons themselves. This is all done by people who have shovels and wire and

trucks and such.

Officers didn't typically drive. The vehicles are driven by the enlisted men who are trained and do the maintenance on the vehicles. That's doulouis.

It's a rubber meets the road service function. If you want to be great, be someone who is functional. This is the beauty of the service academies is they take prospective officers and put them in enlisted roles so that they understand what it is like to be a man under authority, as well as someone who exercises authority.

It's genius to take midshipmen and cadets and have them spend time fulfilling enlisted roles, living in their living space, eating in their eating space, doing their jobs. It's genius. It's pretty hard to lord it over somebody in a thoughtless and insensitive manner when you have been there for any length of time, the longer, the better.

So everyone has a shot at greatness in God's kingdom by developing the service heart, the servant heart. The servant is not greater than his master. The servant has been working in the field all day and comes in and makes the master's meal before they make their own.

Jesus said, do you pat yourself on the back? This is what's expected of a servant is to put the needs, the wishes, the mission, the plans and purposes of the master first. That's a good and faithful servant. Well done thou good and faithful servant.

You did what I asked. You've been faithful in a few things. I will make you ruler over many things because of your faithfulness in service.

That's the do loss. Now the symmetry of this answer is incomparable. Look at what he says next.

Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. Whoever desires to be first among you. It's one thing to be great.

Twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It's another thing to be first among you. This would be, well, sitting at the right hand and sitting at the left.

Right. If you desire to be first, let him be your slave. This is a different word.

This is bond slave. This is a much lower assignment. So to be first, you've got to sink lower to be first, be a bond slave.

Finally, just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve. This is from the do loss family of words and to give his life. You can be a servant, you can be a slave or you can die on behalf of others.

So the throne is reserved for the one who gives his life a ransom for many. Greater love

hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend. The ultimate in love, the ultimate in humility, the ultimate is self-sacrifice on behalf of others.

That's why Jesus is going to occupy the throne. Those who sit at his right hand, slave. Those who sit at his left hand, servant.

If you want to be great, serve. If you want to be first, go lower, be more humble, more willing, more self-sacrificial. Follow the example of the one who sits on the throne itself.

He is going to give his life a ransom for many. This word ransom is Lutron, L-U-T-R-O-N. And in the papyri that they've recovered from the Greek world, the Lutron was the price that was paid to manumit slaves.

This is the price of manumission. The Lord Jesus is going to give his life to set the slaves and the servants free. Lutron, give his life as a slave redemption price for many.

Isn't that beautiful? You start out with the request at the beginning, looking at the throne and the chairs on the right and the left. And Jesus says, you know how those places are occupied? The throne is going to be occupied by the one who redeems the servants and the slaves who will be qualified by that attitude, that heart, that following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus to be closest to him and to help him fulfill his future function in that kingdom. It's just a thing of beauty.

Well, then you have the story of the two blind men. As they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed him. As they went out of Jericho, it's no accident that this happens on the outskirts of Jericho.

Don't have time to talk about it. You know the story of Jericho. What famously happened to Jericho? People who were trusting in their own strength were defeated by the faith and obedience of the people of God.

That's it in a nutshell, is it not? Marching around seven times. What good is this going to do? God said to do it. I'm going to do it.

Doesn't make any sense to me. But who's got the plan? Who's got the purpose? Who's got the power? God does. And who did they follow when they did that? Who leads the parade around this town so many centuries earlier? Yeshua leads it.

Joshua leads it. What's right behind him? The Ark of the Covenant. Joshua and the Ark.

They go out every day, march around the city. God collapses the walls as they're coming out of Jericho, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord. It is the presence of Joshua.

It is the presence of God. It is faith and obedience in God's instruction that doesn't always seem to make good sense to us. That's not the way to win a war.

That's not the way to achieve glory. That's not the way to conquest. We're marching around like a bunch of submissive people.

Exactly. As they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Every word is significant here.

What do the blind men hear? Who do they hear is passing by? Jesus, right? What's the word that they hear? Jesus is passing by. Yeshua is passing by. Jesus is passing by.

Do they cry out and say, Well, if Jesus is passing by, hey, Jesus, oh, Jesus, Jesus. What do they say? Son of David. Oh, Lord, son of David, be the most natural thing in the world.

If you hear in the crowd, it's Jesus. It's Jesus to call him by that name. But they don't.

What do these blind men know that the crowd doesn't recognize? And this is a harbinger of what's coming. Son of David is a unique and special appellation that means what? Messiah. There is only one son of David.

It is the prophesied Messiah to Israel, David's greater son, who's going to prop up the fallen tent of David. He's going to bring back the Davidic line when they say son of David. They're not thinking, you know, I heard somebody talking about the genealogy and this Joseph and Mary that were down in Bethlehem.

You know, they they actually descend from the tribe of Judah. And on one side in the, you know, David, the line through that and Nathan and all the none of that son of David, they are saying Messiah. Oh, Lord, Messiah, have mercy on us.

This is what gets Jesus attention. The multitude warned them that they should be quiet. Why? What's the harm in a couple of old blind guys calling out to Jesus? Jesus is well known for healing those who need healing and giving sight to the blind and the lame walk, the deaf here, the demon possessed or released.

What's the problem? Why is the crowd shushing them? It's not that they are calling out. It's what they are calling out. Son of David, this, this is an incendiary turn.

The Romans are nearby. If you're saying, hey, the king of the Jews is in the area, you're going to cause trouble. We're all going to get in trouble.

Hush now. Quit saying son of David. That's why the crowd warns them that they should be quiet, but they cried out all the more.

Have mercy on us. Oh, Lord, son of David, you got to like Bartimaeus and his companion here. We know his name from the other gospel, but they will not be shushed.

They are not canceled. They are not silenced. Social media does not shout them down.

They say what they want to say, and they say it louder. And that's a good response when you're saying the right thing. And because of that, in verse 32, Jesus stood still and called to them and said pretty much the same thing he said to Salome and James and John, several verses ago, what do you want me to do for you? They said to him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

Now, why does Matthew record Bartimaeus's friend context, context, context, switch the questions, put Bartimaeus's question in the mouth of the sons and put the son's question in the mouth of the blind men? They know Jesus is the King, just like James and John and Salome know that Jesus is the King, right? What do you think would have happened if James and John and their mother had come to the Lord Jesus and said, we've got something to ask you. Jesus says, what do you wish me to do for you? That you open our eyes, that you help us to see that we can come to a better understanding. Can you imagine the difference in the response Jesus would have given? And can you imagine here are these blind men, some of the lowest on the social ladder in Israel, despised shushed by the crowd that they had said, Lord, and there's two of them.

Why? Because there's a chair in the right hand and a chair on the left. You're supposed to compare these questions. We are supposed to think about the contrast.

Both times, Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you? Both times there are two men, both times there's something that's in their heart. And the question of the blind man, although it is physical for them is metaphorical and spiritual for us. What is the right question to ask? What is the question? Does Jesus say, are you willing to drink a cup? Are you willing to follow me the rest of the way out of there? Are you willing to come to Jerusalem? Will you drop everything you have and follow me? There's no condition.

There's no sermon here. They said that our eyes may be opened. Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes and immediately their eyes received sight.

And they followed him, followed him spontaneously because they see, they already know who he is. And now they see him even better. Their eyes are open.

They don't just see him. They follow him. Well, we have a lot more to say about that.

We're heading for chapter 21. I want to get there because look down at verse five, look down at 21.5. Does it look familiar at all? Tell the daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming to you lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the full of a donkey. If that doesn't sound familiar, you haven't been with us on Thursday night.

So what a wonderful cross pollination of our two studies that we're about to enjoy here in chapter 21. But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, it is such a persuasive example for us to see the record of these questions that were put to your son, the Lord

Jesus and his responses, his understanding of place and of purpose and of your will, both for glory and for assignment to endure suffering for the sake of a greater cause to experience it so that we can inherit in later times.

And we pray that as we reflect on these truths, that God, the Holy Spirit will help us to see how we can put them into practice in our thinking, in our conversation, in our interactions with each other, our witness to the world, that others will see Christ in us and be drawn to that light, even as the situation in the world darkens and the crooked and perverse generation descends even deeper into that darkness. We pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen.