

One of the difficulties of preaching your way through a whole book of the Bible, is managing to **always** have something 'new' and 'exciting' to share... And so for a preacher, it becomes terribly inconvenient when Jesus seems to be following a similar theme for a while (or when He keeps coming back to the same issue)...

No preacher wants to come across as being 'repetitive'; No preacher wants to come across as being 'repetitive'; ....

And not many people want to turn up this week, and get pretty-much-the-same message as last week or **3** weeks ago... But sometimes, that's exactly what we need... I reckon, too often, I'm like those original disciples... Sometimes Jesus would teach them something – and it might be really confronting,,, and yet, when we read a bit further on in the Gospel, sometimes it's the very next scene, or perhaps a few pages on, and we realise, they haven't learned their lesson at all...

And something I've discovered, is usually when we see a repeated theme in the Gospels, (when Jesus seems to be hammering the same thing over and over again), well yes, it is because the disciples aren't getting it... But I think it's **also** because He's telling **us** something that **we** need to have hammered into us... It's not only the disciples who were thick... **I'm** thick, and I need it hammering into me. And you may be the same (or not).

We might know it in our heads, but we haven't yet, properly put it into action...

And I think that could be the challenge for us today... It's not just a matter of "That wretched preacher, harping on about

that same thing again”... It’s a matter of shifting what we may already know in our heads – to our hearts, and putting it into action...

So, what’s Jesus been hammering into us? Well it’s been about denying ‘self’, and not trying to promote ‘self’ – it’s been about humbling ourselves, and being as a servant to others...

Last week, Jesus summed things up with “<sup>31</sup> ... many who are first will be last, and the last first.”.... A couple of weeks before that, the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest... And Jesus had told them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” Another time, He took a little child, and said, “Don’t hinder little ones like this – the Kingdom of God is such as these”.

Jesus has been hammering this lesson into the Disciples... Do they get it yet? No, not at all...

And so, He continues today... Let’s begin:

<sup>32</sup> .... they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.

Now, I’m not really sure “who was amazed” and “who were afraid”... Maybe the 12 apostles were amazed, and the larger

group of followers were afraid, or visa versa.. I don't know, and it probably doesn't really matter...

But what Mark's revealing here, is there was a real sense of foreboding expectation... Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem – the religious capital – there's this sense of expectation – what's going to happen when He gets there... *But if the robot was there, he would've been going "Warning. Warning. Danger Wil Robinson"...* (& if you don't get that, your parents probably do)

But there is a sense of imminent danger ahead...

Already in the Gospel, there's been a number of times when the religious heavy-weights from head-office have travelled all the way up North, to catch up with Jesus, and basically have it out with Him... And every time, their intentions were very clear – they were going to confront this young up-start, and reveal Him as the fraud they believed He was... But of course, every time they came up against Jesus, they came out of it, looking a bit silly... I mean, like they were ever going to prevail in a theological debate against the Son of God...

And so, they'd returned to head-office with their tail between their legs, and they planned and plotted, how they could best do away with Jesus...

And that's why the people were amazed that Jesus was now heading to the capital – He was heading into danger...

And the words of Jesus, well, they really don't do anything to allay those fears... But they also reveal something about the crucifixion that we often don't pick up on... You see, when it comes to the crucifixion, we usually focus on the physical

pain and torment and the physical death of Jesus,,,. But particularly in the Gospel of Mark, some of the greatest cost to Jesus (in the crucifixion), was the humiliation...

Jesus said:

**"See, we are going up to Jerusalem**

And they weren't alone. Thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) of people were on their way to Jerusalem – it was the pilgrimage to the Passover... (peak hour traffic)

**and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles.**

And what an insult that was: The Chief priests, were God's representatives – they were the ones who were meant to be serving God,,,. And yet they're the ones, who would put the Son of Man on trial, and condemn Him to death...

But under the Roman Law, they didn't have the authority to carry out an execution, and so the next step, was to hand Jesus over to the Gentiles...

And that was another humiliation – to hand the Son of God, over to the gentiles – a godless people – heathen / idolaters... The fate of the Son of God, in the hands of the heathen...

**<sup>34</sup> And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him.**

That's all about humiliation... The Lord our God – the One to whom it is right to give worship; and honour; and praise; the one before whom, the creatures in the throne-room of Heaven

fall down, by day and by night, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"...

And here we have the heathens:

- Spitting on Him;
- Mocking Him;
- Flogging Him;
- Taunting Him;
- Baiting Him;
- Ridiculing Him...

I don't know about you, but I personally would rather bear physical pain than be humiliated... - how much more, do you think that the God who deserves worship, suffers at the injustice of humiliation???

But of course, that won't be the end: **And after three days he will rise."**

Now, in the context of this ominous revelation, of what lies ahead for Jesus – this path of suffering and humiliation that He's going to endure: How would we expect the disciples to respond???

Well, here Jesus is, talking about all that He's going to give, and the Disciples have a bout of pettiness... What were they thinking???

The 2 brothers, James and John, came up to Jesus, and say to Him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us, what we’re going to ask...” And Jesus says, “Alright, spit it out, what do you want?”

**37** And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

Now, I don’t really know what they meant by this... Most preachers I’ve heard, see it as James and John, not at all understanding that Jesus is going to die, and still picturing that:

- Jesus is going to be the great military leader;
- who rides into Jerusalem;
- the people mobilise behind their leader;
- He kicks the Romans out; and
- He becomes the Messiah King of Israel – the one that they’d been waiting for ...
- And so, the 2 brothers (James and John), are lobbying Jesus, “We want to be your generals” – chief advisors – most trusted confidants – 2IC 3IC...

That’s pretty much the understanding that we often get told,,,,,  
But I’m not really sure that that’s what’s going on here...

It **could** mean that – that they were lobbying Jesus, so that when He takes the throne as King of Israel, that they would be His 2 most trusted commanders....

**But** these 2 brothers (along with Peter), had already caught a glimpse of the glory of Jesus... These are 2 of the 3, who had gone up a mountain with Jesus, **and Jesus was**

**transfigured before** their very eyes: His clothes became radiant – intensely white; And Moses and Elijah were there; And the voice of God said, “**This is my beloved Son; listen to Him**”...

They’d already **witnessed** the glory of Jesus... I’m not so sure that they were merely focusing on the concept of a physical kingdom??? I’m sorta thinking “not”...

When they asked to sit on thrones beside Jesus when He comes in His glory, I sorta suspect they had the right idea about what it meant for Jesus to come in glory,,, but even so, they had a very **wrong** idea about “greatness” and “spiritual greatness”...

It’s interesting that Jesus didn’t say, “No, Of course not!!!” ... What **did** He say?

**“You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptised with the baptism with which I am baptised?”** <sup>39</sup> And they said to him, “We are able.”

Jesus was going to suffer and so were James and John... (Acts 12) King Herod had James killed with the sword; John was imprisoned, and exiled to Patmos... ..

But even though they too, would be persecuted, that didn’t guarantee that they were going to be the ones who got the privileged positions alongside Jesus... And in fact, the very

fact that they were lobbying for those positions, probably would've put them at the bottom of the list...

But, the other 10 disciples weren't really that much better – They were just cranky at James and John, because they'd beaten-em-to-the-punch... James & John had tried to get in ahead of them, and get their seats booked before they missed out...

<sup>42</sup> And Jesus ... said ..., "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

<sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

<sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

What was going on here, was they were seeking **significance**, and **power** or influence...

It's a very human trait, to crave significance ...

- We want our lives to mean something;
- We long to have some form of recognition;
- We want to be acknowledged and appreciated;

- To be known as someone who's achieved something that's actually worthwhile;

And it's not **only** worldly desires... Even when it comes to serving God, most of us want to be able to achieve something of significance...

- We still crave significance (but a spiritual significance);
- We long to have recognition;
- We still have this human craving, to be acknowledged and appreciated...

I don't know if you realise this, but particularly for people like pastors of churches, and missionaries and what-not – for those who have left their jobs to serve Jesus, a trap **we** can fall into – a trap that **I** fall into, is to crave significance – we need to know that what we're doing, is worthwhile...

And we look for some kind of affirmation, that what we're doing, **is** significant...

- In some churches, there's a hierarchy, where you climb the ladder - & become more and more prominent in the organisation... more and more power and influence...

You climb from:

- Mr
- Rev
- Right Rev
- Rev Dr
- Most Rev
  
- Lay person
- Deacon
- Priest

- Bishop
  - Cardinal
  - Pope
  
  - Youth pastor
  - Pastor
  - Senior pastor
  - Conference speaker
  - Author
  - International speaker
- Lots of pastors will tell ya, “Numbers don’t matter”... They lie... When you get a bunch of pastors together, it’s usually not long until they’re comparing numbers...

Being from a little church out in the Bush, I could never win that competition (if anyone sees it as a competition)... But even so, **I** crave significance...

E.G.

In Bush Disciples here, my main ministry – the most time that I spend, is in the teaching ministry, and I spend a fair bit of time preparing for the message each week... Is it worth it???

I remember some times (a few years ago now) where I might’ve spent 3 days studying; praying; preparing,,, And some folk might be away, and there might’ve only been about 10 people in the congregation... - is it worth it?

But I keep reminding myself that God is doing something significant with Bush Disciples. And most of the time, we don’t even see it. And it’s something that **we** never planned... Hello Bongen Church of Christ – we’re glad you can use these messages... And hello to the **hundreds** of

people who will listen to this one message over the next couple of years...

Sometimes, I go to the BD website stats to have a look at the downloads... And even though we're a tiny church, (most people have never heard of us), and we're based in a little town, that most people will never visit,, And in a month, individual messages are now being downloaded up to 30 or 40 times in the first few weeks...

And even though most of the people who are using this Bible teaching – we don't even know **who** they are or **where** they're from – the audio downloads from the podcast, continue to increase, nearly every month, it increases... Do you know what's happening??? God is doing what God does... He uses this simple teaching, and He's touching lives with it, and they then tell their friends how they can access it as well, ...

And when I see those stats, I get a bit of affirmation, "What we're doing here **must** be significant." And I know that some of you see this as a great encouragement for you too – The Lord is using this ministry, beyond what we've ever imagined... Isn't it great to be a part of something significant...

But it's a bit pathetic really – the way we crave this significance – the way I crave significance... - it's pathetic...

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to be humiliated and crucified... He **came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

And we crave significance,,, We delight in recognition; We find a sense of worth in stats....

That's tragic...

You see, whether it's "Living in the world", or whether it's in "Serving Jesus", having a quest for significance – having a quest for greatness – is pointless – it's an empty pursuit...

- In the Kingdom of God, greatness isn't achieved by tallying up our successes;
- It's not achieved by recognition;
- It's not even achieved by doubling the size of a church; or
- Excelling as an international speaker; or
- By racking up the number of downloads on a podcast...
- Greatness isn't achieved by the number of Facebook friends you have; or
- The number of 'likes' you get on whatever your social media platform is...

In the Kingdom of God, greatness comes in the form of servanthood...

"But, where are the limits?", you might ask..

- What happens when you feel, you've given enough?
- What about me?
- It's my turn.
- I've given enough;
- It's time for me

No it's not...It's not a time for craving significance, and nor is it a time for grasping for power or influence...

Some of the most dysfunctional churches I've encountered, were dysfunctional because individuals in that church wanted to 'have things their way'... They enjoyed the influence – they enjoyed having power...

Jesus drew a comparison between national systems of government and the church... Those who are considered rulers – they lord it over them, and the mega-rulers, exercise their authority over them – essentially what they say, goes...

**43 But it shall not be so among you.**

In the Kingdom of God, we don't get to be great by grasping for power or influence or significance, and we don't get to be great by **exercising** power, and by grasping to be the one who 'calls the shots'... **whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.**

Godly leadership in the church, is all about servanthood...

Jesus has been telling us this, over and over again... We just need to move it from our heads to our hearts, and put it into action... I'm here to serve you in the Name of Jesus... And you're here to serve each other in the Name of Jesus...

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

We know very well, that the first will be last and the last will be first...

But Lord, we ask that you would help shift this from our heads  
to our hearts.

Lord, help us to **be** servants, as You were a servant...

Lord, forgive us for all the times when we've craved for  
significance;

For when we've grasped for power or influence;

For when we've looked for the top sports;

Lord, let us be a people who serve...

Not seeking recognition in this world;

And not even seeking reward in the life to come,

But being people who serve, for the sake of the other...

Lord, we thank You, that **You** came as a servant,

And you gave Your life as a ransom...

You gave Your life, to buy us back...

Lord, may we now honour You with our lives,

In Jesus' Name,

Amen....