

ARE YE ABLE?

Matthew 20:17-28

I. Prepare for Suffering (vv.17-19).

A. Jesus Marched Courageously Toward His Suffering.

1. This is Jesus's second trip into Judea under fire. **John 11:7-8** *Then after this He *said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples *said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?"*
1. From the crowd, Jesus "took the twelve disciples aside on the road." He had something to tell them.
2. In vv.18-19, Jesus laid out in amazing detail exactly what would happen to Him in the days ahead.
3. In telling them of His coming trials, beatings, death and resurrection, He spoke in explicit language.
4. These numerous and clear teachings show us that His suffering didn't catch the Lord by surprise
5. Even though Jesus had now explained His suffering four times, the disciples were still in disbelief. **Luke 18:34** *And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend (imperfect - kept on not comprehending) the things that were said.*
6. **Luke 9:51** says, And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem; in spite of pending peril. (NASB)

B. Jesus Prepared His Disciples for His Suffering.

1. He told them He would be "betrayed" or handed over "to the chief priests and to the scribes."
3. Notice the specific detail Jesus used. They would "mock and scourge" Him, crucify" Him.
4. Jesus knew full well He would be humiliated, abandoned, suffer unthinkable pain and most importantly, bear the sin of the world. Yet He still "set His face" to go on.
5. **Heb. 12:2** *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

C. Suffering is Inevitable for All Believers.

1. All of us are on different legs of the journey of our lives with Christ. We are young, middle-aged and seniors.
2. Suffering will always be part of the journey of life. From time to time we will all suffer from injury and disease. We all suffer emotional suffering from circumstances like the death of a loved one or the loss of a job. However, God uses these earthly sufferings to strengthen us. **2 Corinthians 4:17** says. "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison," (NASB)
3. Suffering for Christ and the gospel is a great privilege. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:10** "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4. **Philippians 1:29** For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (NASB)
5. Paul prayed in **Philippians 3:10** *that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;* (NASB)
6. **Romans 8:18** *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* (NASB)

II. Pursue Serving (vv.20-28).

A. A Self-Serving Request (vv.20-23).

1. While still on the journey home, while "going up to Jerusalem," "the mother of Zebedee's sons" (James and John) approached Jesus. She came "kneeling down" reverently.

2. In Mark, Mrs. Zebedee is not even mentioned. We assume the three of them hatched this plot together. She came "asking something." In Mk.10:35, they say, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of you." Like children who are afraid their request will be denied, they got their mother to ask a favor from Jesus without stating the nature of the request up front.
3. Jesus asked, "What do you wish?" And she unabashedly said, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in your Kingdom." The arrogance!
4. How immature! The bold "sons of thunder" brashly ask for such promotions. It's hard to imagine that the aged apostle who wrote 1st, 2nd and 3rd John could ever hide behind his mother's apron in such a self-serving attitude. They were like the Pharisees who "And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, (Mt.23:6).
5. Jesus told them, "You do not know what you ask." He asked them if they were able "to drink the cup" that He was about to drink. This means to "drain the dregs." The "cup" was the cup of suffering He had just described. He would be immersed in suffering on our behalf!
6. Their arrogance undiminished, they reply, "We are able." Jesus assured them they would "in deed drink my cup." In Acts 12:2 James would be the first apostle to become a martyr by the sword. John's long life of suffering would end as a lonely exile on Patmos (Rev.1:9).

B. A self-sacrificing Principle (vv.24-28).

3. In the world system, people crawl, brawl and manipulate their way to the top of the ladder. Once there, they viciously defend their perch against all comers. Yet, Jesus said, "It shall not be so among you." There is no room for dictators and power-mongers in the church.
5. Jesus then gives the great kingdom principle of greatness, "but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant" If you want to be great, serve. If you want to be mature, act in love.
6. Jesus picks up the theme of His most recent parable (vv.1-16) when He adds, "and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;" Why? Because "the last will be first and the first last."
7. Jesus next gives His own motivation, His purpose statement. He said, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
8. Don't miss the "just as" at the beginning of v.28. Jesus left the glory of heaven to "serve" and pay the "ransom" price to buy us from the slave market of sin. Jesus' whole journey was a mission trip. He came as a servant. We are to do "just as" He. Serving is to be our priority.