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Who sits where at your Thanksgiving table?

“If you want to be somebody,
you’ve got to...”

“If you want to stay in control,
you’ve got to...”

“If you want to be safe,
you’ve got to...”

“If you want to get to the top,
you’ve got to...”

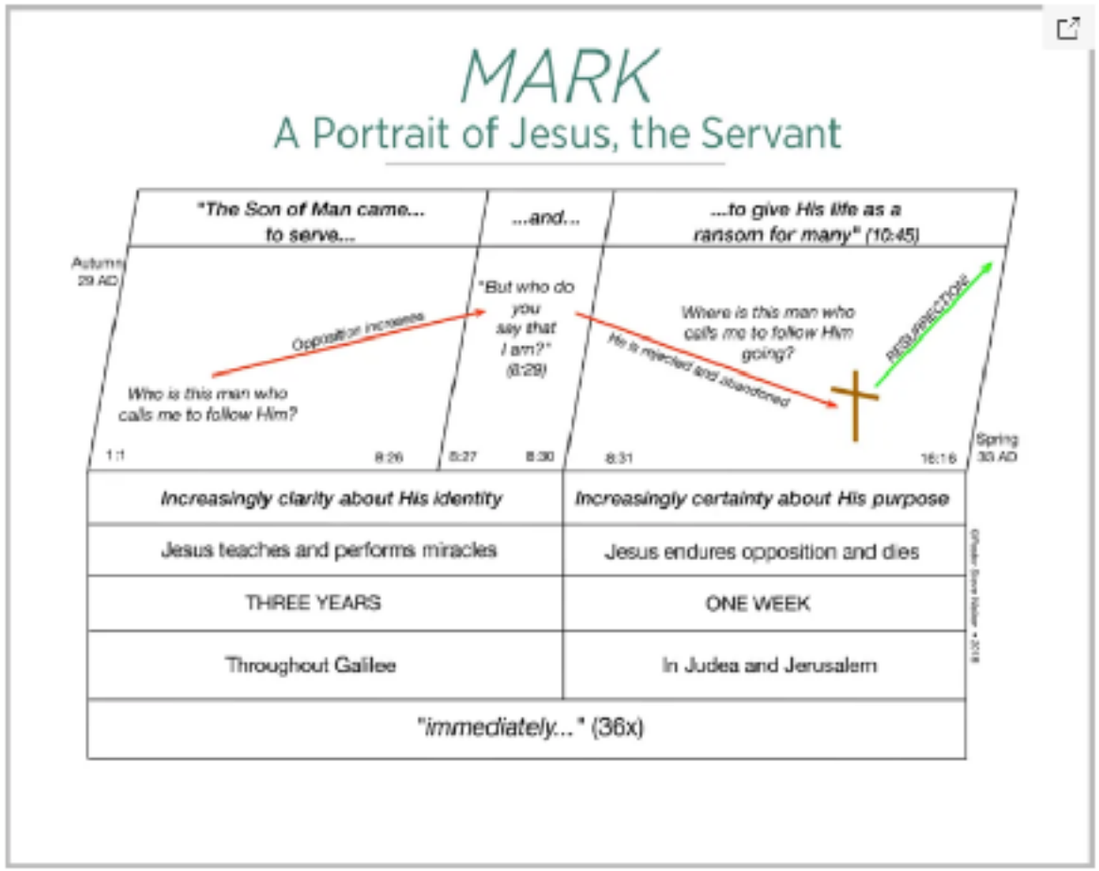


The Missing Lesson

The hinge around which Mark revolves!

Last week, we did not have class. The instructions were just to skip that lesson and move on which I have done. But I have to touch on what we missed because the missing lesson was the hinge around which Mark revolves!

Mark has been building up to a moment, and from this moment, the action shifts. So I need to take a few minutes to “catch up” so we will be in sync. (It is like going to a movie and leaving to get popcorn and coming back and not understanding what just happened.)



But what do you expect to see in Mark. It is not what you expect. In fact, half of the book takes place over three years and the ministry of Jesus. The geographic focus is Galilee. He tells you some about who he is.
But then you come to chapter 8. It is the apex of the book where the question is “Who do you say I am?”
Then, the last half of the book takes place over a seven day period in which Jesus is arrested, crucified, buried, and resurrected.

A Blind Man Who Could See

Mark 8:22–26

Right Answer without Right Idea

Mark 8:27–33

There are two key scenes in that section, both of which speak to the theme of Mark. There is a blind man who is healed.
And then, Jesus asks the question, “Who do you say that I am?” He gets the right answer but as we shall see, the disciples may have that answer but they have the wrong idea.

The Blind Man

Jesus gives him sight...can you see?

It is unclear (men look like trees)

Eyes were opened and now he can see

"He saw everything clearly."

Mark 8:25

In the story of the blind man being healed, it is different than any other of the healings of Jesus.
Jesus spits on his eyes (A strange concept) and laid his hands on him and asks a question, Can you see?
The man opens his eyes but it is not clear. In fact, he says that men look like trees.
Then Jesus lays his hands on him a second time and his sight becomes clear
In fact, Mark says, "he saw everything clearly?"

THE RIGHT ANSWER

Who Do You Say I Am?

Peter confesses...You are the Messiah

And then, starting with Mark 8:27, Jesus starts asking for what do people think of his identity. Popular opinion is mixed. (Remember we came across this when we spoke of Herod..the question is “who is he?”
So he asks his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”
Peter gives the right answer: you are the Christ the son of God.

THE WRONG IDEA

Jesus tells of his suffering and his death

Peter rebukes...

But then, all of this goes awry. (Tell my story of the eggs in the whiskey and the kid getting the wrong lesson out of that…not to eat eggs again.)
Jesus starts to tell them of the future. They are going to Jerusalem and there he will be flogged, abused, and crucified by the Jewish leaders.
But Peter, who has the right answer, stops him in mid sentence and probably said something akin to “Don’t talk like that, we won’t let that happen.”

“But when Jesus turned and looked
at his disciples, he rebuked Peter.
“Get behind me, Satan!” he said.
“You do not have in mind the
concerns of God, but merely human
concerns.””

Mark 8:33

But Jesus upbraids him. You have a human, not divine understanding.
Just as the blind man could not see clearly, it is apparent that when it comes to who Jesus is, the disciples don’t see it clearly either.

What Kind of Messiah is Jesus?

Peter wanted a Messiah
without a cross.

Jesus can only be the
Messiah with the cross.

So Jesus is “helping them
see more clearly.”

The issue is what kind of Messiah is Jesus?
Decades of teaching have told them of a military conqueror who would expel the Romans and usher in a new age akin to the wealth, power, and prominence of Solomon.
Peter wanted a messiah without a cross.
But Mark is emphasizing that Jesus can only be the messiah with the cross.
So as the rest of the book unfolds, Jesus is helping them to see more clearly.



We See the Jesus We Want to See

Then, we become the Christians that conform to that vision.

But we can never be followers of Christ until we see what kind of messiah he is clearly.

It is a vital principle. We see the Jesus we want to see. Our world has all kinds of images…the placid almost apathetic Jesus who just pats people on the head. Some think of him as the next ruler of this world and have constructed elaborate thinking to convince themselves. Some think he is a teacher to listen to or the epitome of the best of human kind.
And when that happens we conform who we are to our vision, not to the reality.
But we can never be followers of Christ until we see the kind of Messiah he truly is.
And that is what happens in this lesson today.



We find a huge shift. The first half of the book is focused on Galilee..Cupernaum, Nazareth, Bethsaida, the Sea of Galilee
But now, the road leads to Jerusalem and the cross. That is the focus of the remainder of Mark.

THE PATTERN OF THIS SECTION

"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."

Mark 8:31

THE PATTERN OF THIS SECTION

"...because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.""

Mark 9:31

THE PATTERN OF THIS SECTION

"We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles,"

Mark 10:33

Each is followed by a failure by the disciples

A Collision



On the Road to Jerusalem...to die on a cross.

Because of that…there is going to be a collision of values and expectations.
Jesus speaks clearly about his death on the cross and is preparing his disciples but they are resistant.

What do people want to make Christian discipleship to look like?

What we face in this lesson is a familiar struggle. What does Christian disciple look like?
For some it is a prayer group, huddled in a corner. For others, as in the Crusades, it is marshaling an army to take back the world for Christ through force, intimidation, or coercion.
Others want to make it to be a seminarian who learns so much that they can spout the various theological views,
This is the struggle.

“They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.”

Mark 9:30–32

It starts with Mark 9:30. Jesus is plain. He is going to be betrayed to the leaders and they will kill him. But in three days he will rise.
This takes place late in the ministry of Jesus so they are more than two years but it says they did not understand what he meant and did not want to ask.
They were clueless on the reason Jesus came to earth and what he had been saying for over 2 years. They were still confused.



COLLISION 1

Rank

"They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest."

Mark 9:33–34

The first collision comes at the beginning of the journey. In Capernaum. They come to the end of the day and Jesus has noticed the quarrel that took place among them. He knows but he asks the question to get them to admit it. What were you arguing. But they did not want to admit the truth.
What they were arguing was who was the "mega-disciple."
One of the dangers of Christian fellowship is comparison and pecking order.
I have known people who say, "Some of us take our spirituality seriously." That is a pompous way of being a disciple on the road.

"Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Mark 9:35–37

So Jesus doesn't address it directly. Instead he inverts reality. Good. The greatest is the least and the servant. (Not how they were thinking.) They envisioned importance and admiration, not leathery knees pained from helping in the smallest of ways.

And he illustrated it with a child. Let's clarify something. Children were important but not the center of attention (as we have made them today). They had no status or standing. They were dependent. My grandfather was a child of 11 kids because they grew cotton. Kids were labor. Love them, sure, but remember they are part of the family and expected to carry their weight.

The child is the lowliest that could be thought of…helpless, dependent. If you want to know who Jesus draws, it is people who have that kind of childlike status.

The disciples are looking for position
and yet, Jesus shows them a child who
has none.

The only position in the
kingdom is the last place.

The disciples were looking for position, yet, Jesus shows a child who has none.
The only position of greatness is the last place.



COLLISION 2

Territory

"Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

Mark 9:38

The second comes a few verses later. They come across a man who is driving out demons in the name of Jesus. (The inference is that he can accomplish that but is doing it in the name of Jesus.)
The irony of this is found in 9:12-14 (which we had to skip). The man with the child with a demon came to the disciples and he said "your disciples could not cast it out."
John, who asa young man is far different than the John of Revelation, wants Jesus to stop him. That's our territory, not his.

“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.”

Mark 9:39–41

But Jesus won’t. If the good is done in the name of Christ, let the good be done.

John wants control.

We want exclusivity!

Jesus gives them a task...
to do for someone who cannot repay

John wants control. He wanted exclusivity as we do. We want to control the situation, who gets our approval or not. We get so concerned about whether our way is followed, we may miss the way.
So Jesus gives them a task…a cup of cold water in my name…you want control…here it is. Do something for someone who cannot repay you. Occupy your life with that rather than trying to find out who is your rival.



"As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."

Mark 10:17–18

The third collision comes in Mark 10:17.
This time, it is a man with the right question….what do have to do to inherit eternal life? Jesus gives him the Jewish answer…commandment keeping (the ones he cites are the last five in the 10 commandments which are commandments on how to treat other people…may give a hint to what the man's religion is…Sabbath religion that doesn't escape the Sabbath.)

“You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Mark 10:19–20

The man says he has done that. You could ask, “really” but the truth is this is the low bar. Don’t kill someone, don’t steal, keep your hands off other women and you are good. We sometimes define morality as “not kicking the cat.”

“Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

Mark 10:21–23

Jesus loved the man…he saw a glimmer of what could be for an honest heart.
So he tells him to sell it all and give it the poor and follow me. Understand something, this passage is not intended to be universal. Jesus doesn’t demand homelessness, living out of grocery cart you found a the back of the parking lot, doing dumpster dives to feed and cloth yourself. This was targeted to the man himself and it exposes a larger problem that Jesus addresses.

“The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

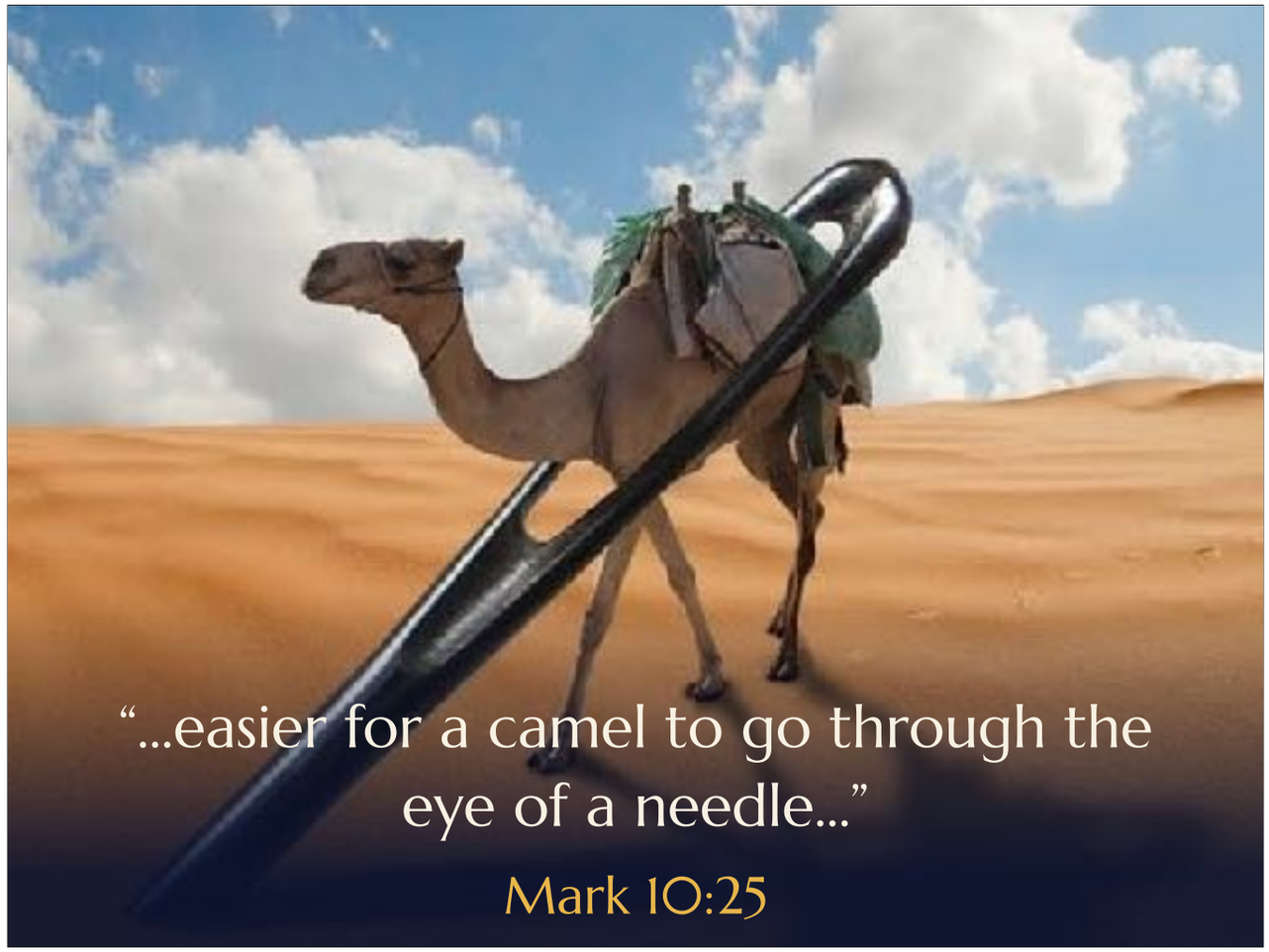
Mark 10:24–25

The problem is not riches but the mindset of riches. The disciples look at the man a paragon of righteousness but Jesus has just laid him bare.

“give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.
Otherwise, I may have too much and
disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’
Or I may become poor and steal, and
so dishonor the name of my God.”

Proverbs 30:8–9

He says the problem with riches is what riches do to people. Riches create an illusion of invincibility. Augur the wise man asks not for poverty (lest he be temped to steal) nor for wealth because it will be tempting to think you are independent of God.

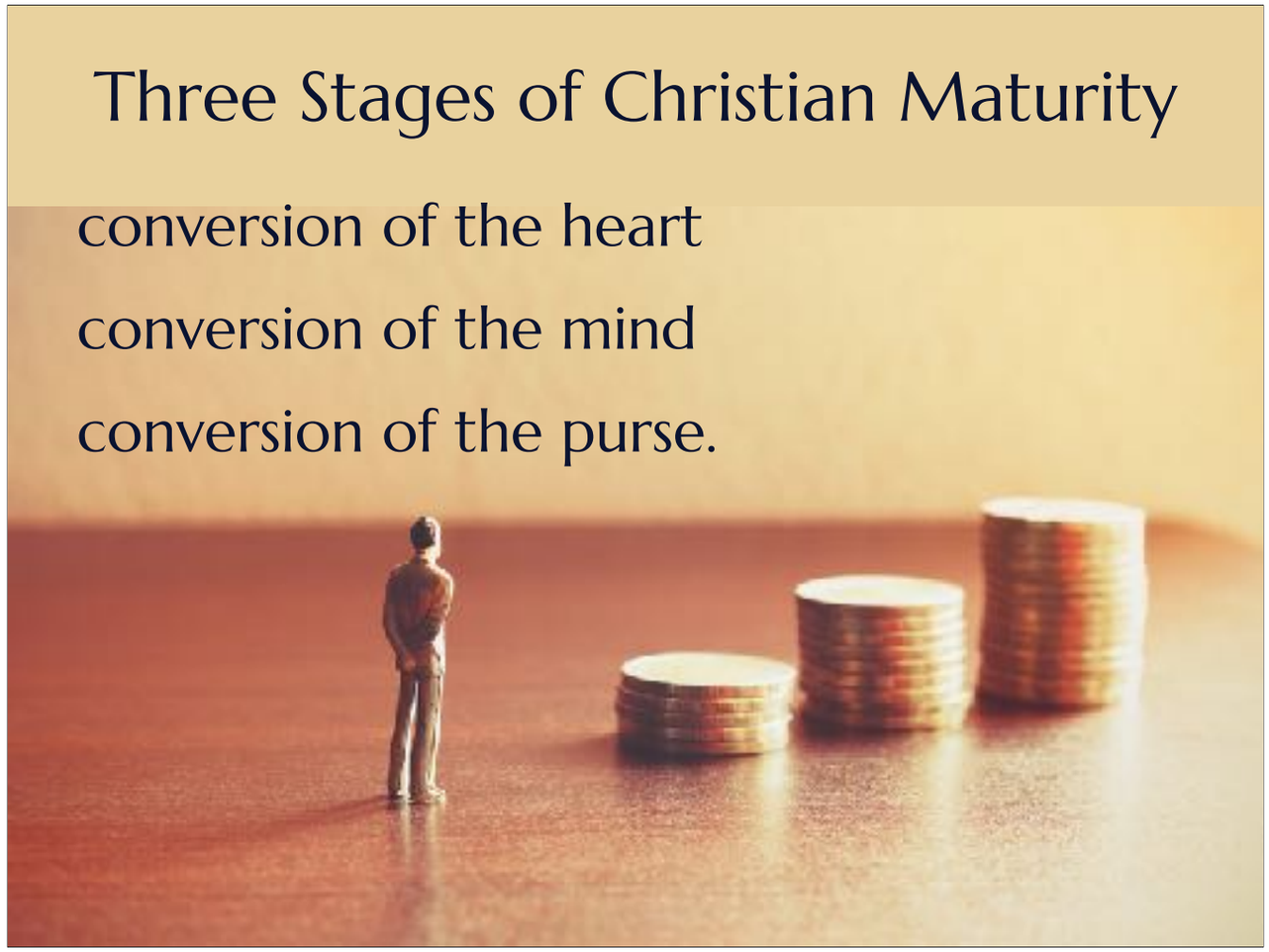


The image Jesus uses is hyperbole (I know of preachers who try to fit this into some kind of literalness but Jesus used hyperbole a lot). It is easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle (that my old eyes can’t even see the slit).

“The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.””

Mark 10:26–27

It is perplexing. If the best is in peril, then how can anyone have any hope.
That is a human perspective. It is impossible if it is done on the basis of men living up to the law…but then Jesus adds…with God all things are possible. In his plan, all can be saved if they way. The answer to the man’s question is not in what we do but in what God does.



Someone has said that there are three stages of Christian maturity.
The first is the conversion of the heart. The second is the conversion of the mind and the final is the conversion of the purse.

“Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.”

Mark 10:28–30

Peter again steps up to boast about how much they have left. Jesus leaves it uncommented but does say that following him requires a title giving over of life to him. Everything is let go of and nothing is grasped.

The rich man is seeking security by keeping what he has.

Jesus gives security by what you give up.

“But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Mark 10:31

The young man was seeking security by keeping what he has.
But Jesus gives security by what you give up. Jesus has been teaching this lesson…take nothing on your journey. It is captured in the picture of daily bread…just enough for today.
The more we keep, the less we rely on Christ. The more we rely on Christ, the less we need to feel secure.
And again, the phrase, the first will be last and the last be first.

“They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him.”

Mark 10:32

And then, again Jesus tells them what is at the end of the road.

“We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

Mark 10:33–34

You have to wonder why he keeps telling them the same thing. It is because in their lives they have not grasped it.
I heard a speaker years ago say something that has captured my attention. Sometimes, when you talk to older people (meaning me), they keep repeating stories. The speaker said if you will ever get the point of the story, they will quit telling it. But the repetition is because you just think it a story, not a lesson.

COLLISION 4

Seats at the table

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

Mark 10:35–37

Which brings us to the fourth collision, that sounds familiar but with a twist.
James and John are bold men who do not mind speaking their mind. Give us what we ask for . What is that? Sit on our right and left in glory.
When the kingdom comes, we want to be the closest to power. In the cabinet, the secretary of defense is on one side of the president and the secretary of state is at the other elbow. The seating chart tells you who is the most important and powerful.
This is the sense that James and John have.

“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,”

Mark 10:38–39

Jesus replies that they are clueless about what that means…They will have to do as he does. (This is about his death and his mission.) They said yes.
They were naïve at this point, thinking some kind of imperial command but they would learn. It would happen. James would be the first of the twelve to be killed for his faith and John the last, would be exiled to Patmos as an old man. Both would drink the cup and be immersed in the suffering of Jesus.

“When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and 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.””

Mark 10:41–44

But the ten were paying attention. They became irritated and angry (because they go there first and that’s what they wanted.)
Jesus corrects them.
What they were thinking was what the world thinks of. It is about “authority, command, demands for conformity to our way of thinking.” It is always a danger to the kingdom of God to take a worldly blueprint and run the church that way because it elevates the wrong things…position, authority, power and control.
Instead, Jesus flips it. The strongest and most important are the ones who serve others, not command others. If you stress your position, you are not low enough to serve. You want to be admired.

“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.”

Mark 10:45

And Jesus proves it. Look at me. I came to serve and I will lay down my life for the world, as a way of paying for the sins of others.

James and John wanted glory

Glory doesn’t come from going up, but by going down.

James and John wanted glory. Positions of importance.
But Jesus said that glory doesn’t come because of going up the ladder but going down to the lowliest position…that of someone willing go give up their lives.

Jesus Turns the World Upside Down!



In this lesson, Jesus turns the world upside down. It’s values, it viewpoints, and its pursuits. Because the kingdom of God is nothing like the kingdom of this world. One of the terrible heresies of the age is that we are citizens of a nation, not the citizens of the kingdom of God.

The Idols of Human Beings Are Not Created with Hands But With Ideas

The desire to be important

Rank — 9:33

The need to control my life

Territory — 9:38

The thirst to be secure and protected

Security — 10:17

The goal of being on top

Seats at the table — 10:35

There are idols we worship and they are subtle. No marble statues or gold cast images. That makes them more sinister especially because they are culturally acceptable.
The need to be important…to stand out.
The need to control my life…to determine what is the best way and go that way.
The thrust to be secure and protected. We don’t mind sharing, as long as it doesn’t make us deprived.
The goal of being on top. To get to the highest level which brings with it admiration, financial rewards, or all of the above.

If you want to be important to God,
serve others.

If you want to have a controlled life,
let Christ guide you...
for you don't know how to go.

If you want a secure life,
seek it in something that death cannot take away.

If you want glory,
do what gave Jesus glory...take up your cross.

If you want to be important to God, serve others.
If you want a controlled life…let Christ guide you because you don't know how to go.
If you want a secure life, seek it in something death can't take away.
If you want glory, find it on a daily taken cross.