

Sunday, 13 November 2022

Remembrance Sunday

Mark 10:35-45

1. Introduction

We are so thankful for the sacrifice of the many for our freedoms. It's really important to remember of the sacrifices given.

I was very blessed a few years ago, in the hundredth year since the end of World War one to be able to go our to Belgium and France a see some of the sites and cemeteries that are still around. I say it was a blessing in the sense that it was humbling to remember and be in places were real defence for our freedom happened and sacrifice was made. To envision what soldiers went through and the affects of war.

2. I remember standing at the Menin Gate in Ypres listening to the last post and then Amazing Grace being played as they commemorated the 100 years since the end of the war. I must say that was a moment you never forget, remembering the huge loss of life, the brave sacrifice and the freedom won by those who served and died.

Sacrifice is such an incredible things. The reasons that people are willing to sacrifice something for another may vary in degree of suffering and in scope of reward but laying ones life down for another, really is the most incredible act of bravery.

3. Context

As we come to think about James and Johns request in our passage it's important to see Jesus has just predicted, for the third time, the most incredible sacrifice in human history. In Mark 10:33-34 Jesus says he will be delivered, condemned, mocked, flogged, killed, and will rise after three days. Why is Jesus death anymore significant than one of those Soldiers on the battle field in Ypres. Well firstly because of who Jesus is, and then because of what that Sacrifice achieved.

Jesus was both fully human, The Bible says He “has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15). But also he was fully God, Colossians 1:19 says “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him”.

The fact that God was willing to Sacrifice his Son, who was perfect, sinless, in place for us. Sinful man, undeserving of God favours but lavished with his mercy, his removal of deserved punishment, and grace, his free gifts of life. Shows the magnitude of the Sacrifice Jesus went through. You see the chasm between us and God, only intensifies the magnitude of the Sacrifice. Whether you know Christ or not we need to know the divide between a Holy God and Sinful humanity is incomprehensible. Ephesians 2:1 says we are dead in sin. We aren't just struggling in waves of sin trying to swim we are dead at the bottom of the ocean with no hope of life let alone escape. John Gerstner ... compared Paul's description of our sinful state to what horror stories call a zombie. A zombie is a person who has died but who is still up on his feet walking around. It is a gruesome concept, which is why it appears in horror stories. But it gets worse. This upright, walking human corpse is decaying. It is rotting away, which is probably the most disgusting thing most people can imagine. But this is a fair description of what Paul is saying about human nature in its lost condition. Apart from Jesus Christ, these sinning human corpses are “the living dead”.

Because of this divide the Sacrifice of Jesus is vast. What did this monumental sacrifice achieve then. As we remember the sacrifice of many in war and conflicts throughout history we give thanks for the freedom that there sacrifices achieved. What does Jesus sacrifice achieve? Well John 3:16, whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. We give thanks for the freedom won by those soldiers and with gratitude we live in that freedom. But then we look at the world around us. Cost of Living crisis, strikes this week, War still happening. Is it really full freedom, peace and harmony. The reality is we still live in brokenness. But the promise of eternal life and hope gives the true result of the ultimate sacrifice in Christ. Revelation 21 point this hope and reality out, ‘Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”... They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He

will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."... "I am making everything new!"

So as we come to James and Johns request with that background and the wonderful gift of hindsight, it seems even more absurd that they ask for power and position as there main focus.

We are going to spend most of our time looking at Jesus teaching to this incident rather than the request of James and John itself but there are a few things to mention before we focus in verse 42 onward in our passage.

In Matthew 19:28, we do see Jesus pointing out that there will be 12 thrones for those faithful disciples as a reward in heaven. So as we think through the request of James and John, they aren't asking for these position with no context but they have massively allowed pride, power and greed dictate there request. Not grasping Jesus teachings and example. This is shown that if you look into the next part of Mark 10. We see the story of blind Bartimaeus and the question Jesus asks is the same he asks James and John about there request. 'What do you want me to do for you?'. He is almost implying to James and John and all the disciples as he has just taught them. You are spiritually blind. You still have the worlds affairs covering your vision.

There is also an element of sadness for Jesus in hearing the requests and then blasé attitude of James and John to being able to endure what Jesus is about to go through. Only Jesus knows what they will endure for his sake over the next months and years. We see the two ends of the spectrum in James and Johns suffering for Jesus. James is the first martyr for Jesus in Acts 12 and John suffers through life until he was exiled to Patmos and ultimate died of old age back in Ephesus later on. They endured in life and death for the Gospel.

This is when Jesus is to bring them disciples together to teach them.

So let's just remind ourselves of Jesus teaching in verse 42 to 45.

"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. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 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.”

In Jesus teaching we see three points that help shift the disciples, and in turn our thoughts, from that of great power to that of a servant attitude.

4. The Sway of the world (v42)

This last week myself and Nathan were really blessed to attend the FIEC national leaders conference. Firstly on a side note, i'd like to thank the Elders and the whole church for blessing us with the opportunity to go, be encouraged and equipped and to meet other church leaders from across the country. It was really uplifting for us both. We spent our main gatherings together looking at the book of Jude and on the first evening particularly looking at how we 'contend for the faith' in a shifting and developing culture. How we must hold to the word of God as truth even if the culture around us tells we are wrong. And Jesus first point here highlights that issue of being swayed by the world and society around us. Verse 42 points out that the disciples desire for power is based on the premise of what they see around them. 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.' To have power and authority you must push other down and pull yourself up. By whatever means necessary. The Greco-Roman society told its people that to be powerful and therefore worthwhile. You must be head and shoulder above others, that earthly wealth gains you power and authority. This thought process is shared, in part at least, by the disciples. They want to be the top dog under Jesus.

We need to be careful and on our guard against the truth that all of us are influenced by our surrounding, by our culture and by the day we live in. If we are to follow Jesus example we must be awake and activate in choosing to contend for the faith and contend that our example of

Christian living is faithful to that of Christ. We must be aware of the Sway of the World.

5. Greatness is found being a servant (v43-44)

Jesus goes on to move from what we must avoid, the sway of the world, to what it looks like to live for him.

When I went out to look at the World War One sites there was a couple of sites and stories I was particularly struck by. One place which really showed the reality of war was that of Delville Woods. The Battle of Delville Woods occurred between July and September 1916. The Battle its self was in thick woodland with deep roots that allowed little preparation for extensive trenches and defences. Both sides suffered costly loses with a mixture of artillery fire and close combat. There were four Victoria crosses awarded at the battle and one of the recipients was a young private called William Faulds. The account of why he was awarded the Victoria Cross was this, *A bombing party came under very heavy rifle and machine-gun fire and the majority of those around him, in his platoon were killed or wounded. This included the lieutenant in charge, who lay unable to move midway between the two lines of trenches. In full daylight Private Faulds, accompanied by two other men, climbed over the parapet, ran out, picked up the officer and carried him back. Two days later private Faulds again went, but this time alone, under intense artillery fire, and brought in a wounded man and then rejoined his platoon.* Another recipients at the same battle was Sergeant Albert Gill, his story is that *'The enemy made a very strong counter-attack on the right flank of the battalion and rushed the bombing post after killing all the company bombers. Sergeant Gill rallied the remnants of his platoon, none of whom were skilled bombers, and reorganised his defences. Soon afterwards the enemy nearly surrounded his men and started sniping at about 20 yards range. Although it was almost certain death, Sergeant Gill stood boldly up in order to direct the fire of his men. He was killed almost at once, but his gallant action held up the enemy advance.'* Both men were willing to offer themselves as sacrifices for others. One survived and one died but both became servants to those around them in life and in death.

Jesus' teaching is that of becoming the lowest for the sake of those around us. He says to his disciples 'not so with you' in verse 43. They are called to be counter cultural and not be swayed by the world. Instead offer yourself as a living sacrifice to God and in that be a servant to the last, the least, the lost in society. Jesus flips the definition of greatness saying it isn't found in wealth and earthly power. No it's found in humbling yourself to the lowest position for the sake of others. When we follow Jesus, take up our cross and follow, we will be the last in the view of the world but the first in eyes of God.

6. Jesus reversal and mission (v45)

Jesus is counter cultural, this is why the Gospel offends because it doesn't change with the times we live in. It doesn't conform to society's norms or trends. No its is steadfast and unchanging full of the truth and the love of God.

To be a servant and a slave to all is to be willing to be seen as different. To be counter cultural in the face of changing world and to hold strongly to the Word of God, contenting for the faith.

If Jesus, God incarnate, Son of God, Sovereign King is willing to be the servant to the lowest and most undeserving of us, then we have no right to attempt to do anything less. We must follow his example.

Application

Jesus Transforms our lives, in term of our eternal hope and salvation but he also calls us to sanctification and a renewed mind. Ultimately our worldview is completely transformed because as believers we take what God says as our command rather than our own thoughts and decisions. He is the commanding officer of our soul and lives. Romans 12:2 sums it up well doesn't. **7.** 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.' Our mind is renewed and transformed as we believe in Christ and as he continues his sanctifying work in us.

And how do we live in our day and age, with a renewed mind, being counter cultural and willingly being a servant to all. Its not easy and if

that was dependent on our own power we would immediately fail. But Isaiah 50:7-9 holds true in helping us live for God. It says this 'Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me. Who will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.' Christ sustains us as 'we set our faces like flint'. He holds us firm in the ocean of the cultural around us, that can feel like it's trying to break us down from every side. Christ example is set for us and the Holy Spirit will sustain us.

Conclusion

Let me finish with one last story from my visit over to France and Belgium. **8.** One truly astonishing site is a place called the Lochnager crater. It is the site of a mine that was dug under the German lines. Once it was detonated it created a huge crater that is 98ft in depth. The explosion was so forceful mud hit a plane over head. One of the signs that was dotted around the crater, had an interview on it was from Harry Patch. Harry Patch was a war veteran and lived to 111 years old, only passing away in 2009. He was one of only 5 survivors from the third battle of Ypres but didn't talk about his experiences till the age of 100. But I found what he said truly telling. When asked was all the sacrifice worth it. When asked was winning the War heroic? He said this... 'It wasn't worth it. No war is worth it. No war is worth the loss of a couple of lives, let alone thousands. T'isn't worth it... The First world war, if you boil it down, what was it? nothing but a family row. That's what caused it. T'isn't worth it.'

And there is the difference with Jesus' Sacrifice. Even though the chasm and depth of the sacrifice is far greater between God and sinful man. And the reward for God is winning sinful souls to himself. Jesus doesn't say it wasn't worth it. Jesus was willing. He knew the magnitude of the task set before him. He knew the pain and sacrifice required. He knows that not everyone will come to him and appreciate that Sacrifice. In most cases the reward for Christ work is humanity

spitting on him, throwing eternal life back in God face. But he is still willing to go, the reward of one wayward son and daughter returning home is worth it.

9. Paul puts it like this, in Ephesians 3:17-21...

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

10. Lets Pray,

Father we thank you that you were willing to send Jesus as the ultimate Sacrifice. We thank you that he was willing to die for all who believe in him. We thank you that he sets the example for us of how to live as servant to all. We pray that through you life transforming work and the renewing of our minds we would remember the sacrifice of many in war but would always hold dearly to work of Jesus on the Cross bringing us to an eternal hope in you.