

Mark 10:32-45  
The Ransom for Many

<sup>35</sup> And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” <sup>36</sup> And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” <sup>37</sup> And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” <sup>38</sup> Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” <sup>39</sup> And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” <sup>41</sup> And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. <sup>42</sup> And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “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>[a]</sup> <sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave<sup>[b]</sup> 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.”

Let us pray:

*Lord Jesus Christ, you have given us some truly magnificent words in this passage – this passage carries us into the heart of why you came and what you did for us your people. We need the assistance of your Spirit to open up this passage, to make its teaching clear and heart-rendering and life-transforming. Give us understanding of what you did to save us, and then help us to respond to you as those blessed to be purchased by your blood, we pray. Amen.*

We have been following Jesus through those great events as recorded in Mark’s Gospel. Mark was a close associate of the Apostle Peter, so what we really have here is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that Peter preached. Mark listened carefully and heard it often and he was God’s instrument in writing down these events.

The last few Sundays we’ve seen Jesus on the Mountain of Transfiguration where Moses and Elijah met him and God spoke from heaven, “*This is my beloved Son, listen to him.*” Then we saw him deliver that poor boy who for several years had been tormented by a vicious demon that was trying to kill him. Then last week in chapter 10 we saw Jesus make the prediction for the third time that he was on his way to Jerusalem to suffer, to be killed, and then rise from the dead after three days.

Our passage today is set in the context of Jesus’ 12 disciples. It is a contrast between their short-sighted, selfish outlook on the things happening around them and Jesus’ long-term, unselfish, and God-directed perspective on what was happening among them and among humanity. Of course, we tend to take the same outlook of the disciples, but we need to hear what Jesus says.

What we see here is that the disciples were jockeying for power and recognition. The brothers James and John want to be appointed as chief lieutenants when Christ would come into the glory of his kingdom. But the only thing Jesus could offer them if they wanted to align themselves with him was a baptism and cup full of suffering.

When the other ten heard what James and John were doing, they got mad because they didn't want the two brothers to get ahead of them.

Jesus, saw that all 12 of them had the wrong attitude – they had selfish and self-glorifying attitudes – and he had a heart-to-heart talk with them. It was what we call a “teachable moment” – a perfect time to teach them something important. He talked to them about the way people always act. He used the Gentiles as an example – their rulers over them always try to exercise their authority over those under them – they want to show how important and powerful they are and order other people to do what they want them to do. They want those under them to serve them, to wait on them, to bow down to them.

But Jesus says in v. 43, “ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>[a]</sup> 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave<sup>[b]</sup> of all.”

Jesus reverses the order in which people normally think and operate. In our worldly way of relating to people, we think that the one who orders other people around and who people wait on is the great person, the person to be admired and imitated – the person we would like to be if we could. King Charles of England would be somebody like this. I understand that he takes his own cook with him wherever he goes so he can have what he wants to eat and doesn't have to eat what is served him by his host. But Jesus says, that's not how we should be or desire to be. If you want to be great, that is, great in my kingdom, says Jesus, “...you must be a servant,<sup>[a]</sup> 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave<sup>[b]</sup> of all.”

You want to be a great person, says Jesus, then be the servant and the slave of others. Don't lord it over other people, but serve them, wait on them, help them – put aside your own selfish ambitions, your desire to look important in other peoples' eyes, and humble yourself and serve them. Mother Teresa of India, who gave her life to ministering to the poorest and sickest people on the streets of Calcutta, India, is an example of a person like this. We don't have to take in her Roman Catholic theology, but we can appreciate her service.

Then what Jesus does in verse 45 is to use himself as an example of servanthood and service, and in doing so he makes one of the most important and profound statements about the purpose of his coming to earth. He says in v. 45, “*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*”

Jesus calls himself here, “The Son of Man.” This was his most common way of speaking about himself and it is not so much a statement of his humanity as a statement of his

deity. It was taken from that great text in Daniel 7:13-14 where we see one “like a son of man coming up to the throne of God and to this Son of Man were given dominion, and glory and a kingdom so that all nations would serve him and his kingdom would last forever.

In verse 45 Jesus says four important things about why he came, the purpose of his coming to earth.

### **I. He came...**

This is a simple statement, but it is fundamental and foundational. Jesus didn’t have to come to earth, but he came anyway. He was quite comfortable and secure in heaven as he fellowshiped with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But he left heaven and came to earth for a reason.

Recently President Joe Biden went to Ukraine. Just the fact that he came had tremendous importance for that nation. It was a concrete way of showing that our president and our nation are standing united with the people of Ukraine against the brutal Russian aggression.

And so Jesus came. Where was he before he came to earth? John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

The “Word” here, of course, is Jesus. He is the One who communicates to us the character and will of God.

**So Jesus came.** Where did he come from? He came from the Father’s side; he came from the presence of God, he came from heaven to earth. Philippians 2 says,

“...though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

You see here Jesus was in the form or nature of God, he was equal with God the Father, but he did not cling to his divine prerogative, his divine privileges, but he laid those aside. He hid them, so to speak, in his back pocket and proceeded to go out into the world clothed in our full human nature, except he did not sin before God, as we often do.

The key concept here is **intention**, that is, purpose, intentionality. He came to earth to do something specific – it was not just a casual Sunday afternoon drive around the park. But it was a Monday morning heading off early to the job to get the work done, the project that needed to be done.

Gal. 4:4 says But when the **fullness of time** had come, God sent forth his Son, born **of** woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

So Jesus came because the Father sent him. God the Father sent him. It was no accident that Jesus came to this earth. He was sent by his Father who had a job for him to do – it was, as verse 5 says, “...to redeem those under the law...” To “redeem” here means to buy back something or someone who is in slavery – to pay a price to set them free.

Jesus came because God the Father sent him, and he came because he had a mission to accomplish.

Verse 45 goes on to say that He came not to be served,

## **II. ...but to serve.**

The Son of Man, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was God almighty from all eternity, came down to earth wearing the clothes of humanity. Jesus took upon himself our nature so he could serve us.

One preacher (John Piper) put it like this:

This is the heart of Christianity. This is what sets our faith off from all other major religions. Our God does not need our service, nor is he glorified by recruits who want to help him out. Our God is so full and so self-sufficient and so overflowing in power and life and joy, that he glorifies himself by serving us.

Jesus was not like the conquistador Hernando Cortez who entered Mexico in the early 1500's not to serve the Aztec native Americans but to conquer them and bring them into subjugation to the King of Castille in Spain. Jesus was not like an earthly conqueror, but he had a different strategy – it was love and servanthood that were the marks of Jesus' method. He did not shed one drop of blood by the sword but was a spiritual conqueror: in his humility and service he conquered sinful human hearts and brought them into subjugation to the Lord God Almighty.

Jesus came...

Jesus came to serve...

## **III. Jesus came to give his life as a ransom...**

What is a ransom? It is money or something else valuable that is paid for the release of someone or something in captivity.

Sometimes criminals will kidnap someone and demand a ransom from the family in order to release the victim. This happens a lot along the Texas-Mexico border as criminal gangs seize people who have come to the border hoping to get into the U.S.

They will seize a family member and then demand that a ransom be paid before they will release that person.

The greatest amount of ransom ever paid according to the Guinness Book of World records was that paid for Atahualpa, the last emperor of the Incas, to the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro in 1532-3 at Cajamarca, Peru, which constituted a hall full of gold and silver, worth in modern money some \$1.5 billion (£1 billion).

To give you a less spectacular example of the concept of ransom is when I was growing up you'd get these "green stamps" when you'd buy food and then you'd lick them and paste them into a booklet and when the booklet got full and when you had several booklets you'd go to this redemption center and exchange the booklets for an item, like a toaster oven or an iron. You would "redeem" the item with the green stamp booklets. So the words ransom and redeem are related. Ransom is the noun – the thing you give to buy what you need – and "redeem" is the verb form of the word – the action.

We often speak of Jesus as being our Redeemer – he pays the price needed to save us from our sins. This action that he does is called "redemption." The price Jesus pays, the ransom, to rescue us from our sins and the punishment they deserve is his own blood. Jesus' blood is the ransom paid to set us free from the condemnation and punishment of our sins.

The concept of ransom and redemption is first seen in the OT. We read an example of this in Exo. 21; 28-30:

<sup>28</sup> "When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall not be liable. <sup>29</sup> But if the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not kept it in, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. <sup>30</sup> If a ransom is imposed on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed on him.

So, in other words, if the owner of the ox is guilty of neglect by letting this ox loose so it kills someone, he will suffer the death penalty. Yet he can escape the death penalty if he's willing to pay the sum of money that is levied on him – maybe it's \$1,000. or maybe \$5,000.00 but whatever it is, he must pay that ransom price if he wants to escape being executed.

On the other hand, we read in Num. 35:31:

Moreover, you shall accept no **ransom** for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death.

So there was no ransom allowed for premeditated murder. The murderer had to die.

Psalm 49 talks about ransom.

Truly no man can ransom another,  
or give to God the price of his life,  
for the ransom of their life is costly  
and can never suffice . . . (Psa. 49:7-8)

This text seems to be saying that it is impossible for one person to ransom the life of another person – the price is too high. But then further down in Psalm 49 we read in verse 15: But God will **ransom** my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.” So God is the only one who can ransom a human soul from death.

Here is a beautiful verse the propheties what Jesus would do for his people. Only he has the power, only he can pay the price, and when he does that he receives us to himself.

God ransoms people from death so they can be with him. God is in the business of ransoming human beings from their sins and the death penalty that they deserve, and the way he does this is through the shed blood of his Son.

1 Tim. 2:5-6 - For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all,

Tit. 2:14 - who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Eph. 1:7 - In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

See the connection between ransom, redeem and redemption.

Acts 20:28 - Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Why did the Lord Jesus Christ die on the cross and shed his blood? He did it so that his shed blood would be the ransom price to release us from the debt of our sins.

Under the Old Covenant, animals were killed: sheep and goats and bulls and their blood was offered to Yahweh God to atone for, to pay for, to be the ransom price for their sins. But the problem was that this blood of animals could not really remove the sins of a higher creature – human beings are on a higher level of created beings. They are intelligent creatures with a moral sense of right and wrong – creatures whom God holds accountable for their sins. He doesn't do that for animals so their shed blood is just a temporary stop-gap measure and an illustration of a the blood sacrifice God requires that is effective for removing human sin.

What blood sacrifice is sufficient to remove human sin. Maybe one man, if he was sinless, could offer his life as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of his friend. But if

that were even possible, what about all the other sinners who might want to be saved? Another perfect man would have to be found who would be willing to die and offer his blood as the ransom-payment-price for someone else.

So we can see that the only possibility that one death, one person's shed blood, could suffice as the ransom price for a large number of people would be for God himself to come to earth, take upon himself our humanity, and then die in the place of the millions of sinners who want to be saved. Only God himself could possibly have the ability and power to do this.

What do you think? Has God ever done this? Has he ever been so kind as to leave the perfection and beauty and glory of heaven and come down to earth and take upon himself our humanity, our full human nature, and then live a perfect and sinless life, and then submit to death so that his blood could be poured out and offered up to God as the ransom for the sins of his people? Do you know if this has ever happened? If it did happen, wouldn't it be the most wonderful even in the history of the world that ever happened among humans? Because you see that is our greatest problem as human beings: what to do with our sin. Our sin is what separates us from God, it's what angers God, it's what brings his wrath down upon our heads.

Whenever we shake our fist in the face of God and say, "God, leave me alone to do what I want to do. Don't bother me. Don't interfere with my sin..." If we have this kind of attitude – and we all have at one time – we are putting ourselves in a dangerous position before God – we have moved ourselves into the realm of his judgment on our sin, his punishment for our rebellion.

But God is merciful. God is love. God is just. So he sent his Son to die on Calvary's cross to offer up his blood as the ransom price for all who will repent of their sins and place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Hear what Heb. 10:11-12 says:

<sup>11</sup> But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

The OT prophet Hosea went to the slave market and there he bought back his adulterous wife Gomer and took her home to himself. He paid the price needed to purchase her. Jesus paid the price to take us home to himself.

This is what God does for us. Even in the book of Hosea in the OT we read:

I shall **ransom** them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Hos. 13:14

This whole concept of the ransom price that was required to release us from the guilt of our sin is woven into the very fabric of the Gospel. The scripture says  
 "...**without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.** Heb. 9:22

**1 Pet. 1: 18-19** - <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Christ was sinless; therefore, his blood had power to cleanse sinners. Christ was sinless and Christ was divine. His blood was like yours and mine in that it was physical, it was red and it was liquid and it contained platelets and was of a certain type, like A or B, but it was also more powerful than our blood, much more powerful, a thousand times, a million times more powerful and effective because it was the blood of the Son of God that had divine power to pay for and to wash away human sin.

Rev. 5:9 – “Worthy are you to take the scroll  
 and to open its seals,  
 for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
 from every tribe and language and people and nation...

What was it that ransomed people from around the world? It is the shed blood of Christ.

So we've seen that...

Christ came...  
 He came not to be served, but to serve  
 He came to give his life a ransom  
 And lastly,  
 He came to give his life a ransom for many.

Jesus' shed blood on Calvary's cross does not pay for or remove the sins of people who do not believe in Christ or who do not bow before his Lordship.

Jesus came on his mission to die for and purchase the very ones upon whom he set his love from before the foundation of the world. His death was effective to redeem his own people.

In the OT when a person brought an animal to the temple to be sacrificed for his sin, it was not applied to his next-door neighbor, or to some pagan worshipping an idol, but only to the person himself or herself.

When Jesus died on the cross he died only for the sheep, he did not die for the goats. There is only one group of humanity that he died for: his own beloved ones whom he loved before creation.



Jesus did not suffer on the cross for the sins of those people who would never come to faith in him. His blood was not wasted on unbelievers, but it was effective to ransom and redeem his elect people.

Jesus came to earth to live and die and pay the ransom price necessary to secure the forgiveness of our sins.

Christ *died* to save us. "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We were "justified by his blood" (Romans 5:9). "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10). "He bore our sins in his body on the cross" (1 Peter 2:24). "Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).

Christ came...

He came not to be served, but to serve.

He came to give his life a ransom.

He came to give his life a ransom for many.

It's the blood; yes, it's the blood of Christ that is our hope and salvation. Are you hoping in that blood? Do you believe in the Son of God? Do you embrace with all your heart and soul the Lord Jesus Christ and what he did on Calvary's cross to pay the ransom you owe to God for your sins? If you do, you are a forgiven person, a redeemed person, and you will receive a rich welcome into Jesus' presence when he comes again to receive you unto himself. Thanks be to God for his grace and mercy in Christ!

Lord Jesus, you have done great things for your people....

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