



PART THREE – COVETOUSNESS, KINGDOM & THE GREAT REVERSAL

By Pastor Ben Froese

Mark 10:28-31

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹ *“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*

³⁰ *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.*

³¹ *But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”*

Mark 10:28-31

INTRODUCTION

“If you are first you are first. If you are second you are nothing.”¹ That’s what Bill Shankly, legendary manager of Liverpool FC, once said.

“Being second is to be the first of the ones who lose.”² That’s Formula One driver Ayrton Senna.

Or, as Ricky Bobby famously puts it in *Talladega Nights*, “If you ain’t first, you’re last.”³

Generally speaking, in sports, the aim is to win. The aim is to be the best. The aim, obviously, is first place.

I think we sometimes believe the same thing about life in general.

However, is it really true that life is a race and the goal is to ‘win’ – to come in first place?

I. Leaving & Following

“...We have left everything to follow you!” (Mark 10:28) – that’s what Peter declares – and Peter is not wrong.

If you flip back to chapter 1 of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is walking beside the Sea of Galilee, sees Peter and his brother Andrew, and says,

¹⁷ *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”* ¹⁸ *At once they left their nets and followed him.*

Mark 1:17-18

That same story – more-or-less – plays out right after this with James and his brother John... their response: “...they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.”

Mark 1:20b

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And now, here they are, perhaps close to 3 years later. They're basically homeless. This rabbi Jesus they've been doing life with has been talking about how He is going to die soon.

Maybe they wonder: Is it worth it? That's a question some of us might ponder as well, especially if we've given up a lot to follow Him.

II. The Benefits of Following Jesus

Jesus replies by telling Peter about the benefits that come from following Him:

²⁹ “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
³⁰ 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 10:29-30

There are benefits that come from following Jesus.

I think sometimes in the evangelical church we try to ignore this... we think, "I should follow Jesus just for Jesus." And you should!

It's true that following Jesus will not always be easy. As a matter of fact, Jesus includes 'persecutions' in His list of what comes for those who follow Him.

But there *are* benefits – a whole lot of them actually – that come from following Jesus.

I can think of many benefits I've experienced as a result of choosing to follow Jesus, and perhaps you can too.

As we look at the text, it seems like the main benefit Jesus points to here, in the context of giving things up to follow Him, is this: *You get to be a part of a new community - the church.*

Back in Mark chapter 3, Jesus looks at the group of people seated around Him – His disciples – and He says:

“...Here are my mother and my brothers!

³⁵Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Mark 3:34b-35

In today's text, what does that hundredfold look like? "*...homes, brother, sisters, mothers, children and fields...*" (Mark 10:30). A whole lot of it has to do with relationships. Community.

Through faith in Jesus, we get to become a part of God's big family. That's why we call each other 'brother' and 'sister' in Christ.

Another key thing to highlight about this family:

Notice: Jesus says the hundredfold includes ‘brothers, sisters, mothers, children,’ but not ‘fathers.’ Why not?

In the ancient world, ‘father’ is the language of ‘superior.’ To say ‘father’ means to acknowledge a hierarchy where some people have a position that grants them status and the power to make life and death decisions over others ‘just because’ that’s how it is. Just because they belong to a certain category of people.

Perhaps what Jesus is emphasizing is that within this new community of His followers, there are no ‘fathers’ – no person who has unchecked authority over others. Only God has that place of ‘rulership’ in the household of God. That’s why Jesus says, in Matthew 23:9,

“And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have only one Father, and he is in heaven.”

A great reversal takes place. Power and status will work a whole lot differently in this kingdom that Jesus is bringing.

The social lines that once said ‘these people are more important than these people’ are broken down through the cross.

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[illegible]

The Apostle Paul says it this way in Galatians 3:

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
Galatians 3:26-28

III. The Great Reversal and Becoming Last

In the last line of this story in Mark 10 that we're looking at, Jesus says this:

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first."
Mark 10:31

The rich young ruler, from all appearances, is 'winning' at life. He has great wealth, thought to be an obvious sign of God's blessing. He's probably made good life choices to acquire that wealth too.

He's also a pretty good person, morally speaking. He has kept the commandments. Or at least that's what he claims. By all accounts, he's 'first.' He's 'winning' at life.

Yet, he ends up on the outside looking in, as far as we know.

There is a great reversal that takes place with God's coming kingdom.

A reversal of expectations about status, humility and reward. Those who are last – the humble, the weak – will be honoured. While those who seem to be 'first' – who seem to be 'winning at life' – will be humbled.

The rich young ruler is painted as a picture of 'the first.' While children (see Mark 10:14b-15) are painted as a picture of the last.

Peter and the disciples will need to decide: Will they be more like the rich young ruler or more like the weak and dependent child?

At this point, the disciples seem to still be in the mode of gunning for 'first,' which becomes apparent just after this story:

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

³⁶ *"What do you want me to do for you?"* he asked.

³⁷ They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."
Mark 10:35-37

Jesus helps us see what it means to become last as He responds:

⁴² 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."*

Mark 10: 42-45

As followers of Jesus, we are to be people who take the heart posture of a servant!

We serve, not to enhance our image and make ourselves look good. Rather, we serve others as those who follow the pattern of Jesus and as those who serve in response to Jesus' low road of service to us all the way to the point of the cross.

ENDNOTES

1. According to the Global Wealth Report by UBS.
<https://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealthmanagement/insights/global-wealth-report.html>
2. R.T. France. (01 Jan 2002). New International Greek Text Commentary: The Gospel of Mark. Eerdmans. pg. 406.
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPfMzskXZvY>

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Open Up

What are some examples you can think of in our culture and society where it's assumed that the goal is to be 'first?' Have you ever seen someone who had power and status get humbled? What was that like?

Dig In

Read **Mark 10:28-31**

1. What are some things that first strike you as you read this text?
2. What are some things you've left behind (or are considering if you need to leave behind) in order to follow Jesus? For those who are followers of Jesus, what would you say are some of the benefits you've experienced from following Him?
3. Jesus mentions "*brothers, sisters, mothers, [and] children*" (v. 30) among the hundredfold that those who choose to follow Him receive. What has been your experience of Christian community in your own life? Can you think of particular people in your life who've treated you like family because of a shared connection to Jesus? How would your life be different if those relationships didn't exist?
4. Jesus says in verse 31, "*But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*" Later in Mark 10, He'll say "*whoever wants to be first must be slave of all*" (Mark 10:44). What might it look like for you to take the heart posture of a servant/slave to all? Are there any concrete, practical ways that God might be calling you to serve others in this season of your life?

Prayer

Take some time to share prayer requests and pray for each other. Also, pray that God, by His Spirit, would enable each person in your group to resist the temptations toward seeking status – and instead, to take the heart posture of a servant to every aspect of life.