

Good morning! My name is Ryan, I'm one of the pastors at Midtown Fellowship in Columbia, SC, it's good to be with you this morning.

This morning we're continuing the series you all have been going through by looking at the Apostles Creed. And this morning, we're going to be looking at Jesus, He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. And to do that, I want to take us to Mark 10:42-45.

[42] 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. [43] But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. [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."

Pray.

The symbol at the very heart of our faith is a cross. Have you ever considered how strange that is? Every movement has a symbol. Jews have the star of David, Muslims have the crescent and star. America has the Bald Eagle. The city of Charlotte has a crown.

Have you ever considered how strange it is that Christianity's symbol is a cross? Our faith's symbol is something that is regarded as one of the most brutal forms of execution. The cross, as a tool for executioners, was designed to cause as much pain possible for as long amount of time as possible.

It was something that was so horrible that an upstanding Romans wouldn't even mention it's existence. It was there, but you never talked about it. What Christians have often on church buildings, what some of us wear as jewelry around our necks, or even get tattooed on our bodies is the equivalent of the electric chair.

The symbol of our faith is a reminder of the execution of our founder.

Christians all over the world can disagree about any number of things, but one of the things that make Christianity Christianity is the belief that our founder, Jesus Christ, was executed as a criminal. And it's always been the symbol of our faith. And Mark 10 shows us why. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The first thing I want us to see this morning is that in this scripture, Jesus is teaching us about God.

Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man. And that doesn't really mean much to us reading it in English, but to the original hearers of this word, it would be a lot more. The Son of Man is an old testament reference. It was a title. I know for those of you who have been here the past few weeks, ya'll have talked about this. When Jesus uses this term, this is what he's claiming about

himself. Jesus never claimed to be *just* a good moral teacher. He never claimed *just* to be a spiritual guide.

Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of Man. The one who carries the authority of God. And we can't just ignore that. We can't minimize that, or sweep it under a rug. Jesus is claiming to be the most powerful person in the history of the world. And he says, "I didn't come to *be* served. I came to serve."

That's not how people with power worked back then. And that's not how people with power work today. One of the ways you can tell how powerful someone has is by looking at how many people they have to serve them. How many people they employ. How many people whose lives revolve around their life.

I have a friend who comes from an inordinate amount of wealth. And one time a few friends from school and I were visiting with this person at his family's lodge. And when I say lodge, I mean one of the nicest places I have ever seen with my own eyes, let alone stay at. It's a beautiful hunting lodge in the middle of nowhere. And it was a fun trip for us to hang out and enjoy one another's company, but the lodge comes with a chef. And a sous-chef. And a waiter. And so meal time at the lodge was pretty routine, we ate dinner at 6 on the dot every night.

One night we were sitting down for dinner, and my friend, whose family owns the property, he was finishing up showering so we were all just sitting at the table waiting on dinner. And it's a few minutes past 6, but nothing major. The waiter is there getting drinks for everyone, a few minutes after 6 my friend joins us. Not 5 seconds after he sits down, the waiter goes into the kitchen, and a moment later comes out with the chef and sous-chef and serves us our meal. And they go back in the kitchen, and I turn to my friend and quietly ask if what I just noticed was what I thought it was. The family member is known as the principal guest. And dinner wasn't going to be served until the principal guest was seated.

And I thought, "This is the life God made me for. This is it."

When someone is powerful, they have lots and lots of people at their beck and call. They have lots and lots of people who serve them.

And over the past few weeks, ya'll have talked about this. Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is the creator of the universe, and he's the sustainer, so he doesn't just come and make it and move on. He keeps it going. He's the one who causes the weather patterns. He's the one who ensures that gravity is still going on...or however a scientist would say that.

Jesus is the God who isn't limited. He's not limited by time, he's not limited by ability, he isn't limited by capacity. He's never depleted.

Jesus is claiming to be the One with ultimate power.

People who are powerful often come with a lot of servants. And yet Jesus says he's come **not** to be served, but to serve.

Friends, this is what God is like. This is who God is. When we look at Jesus, we are looking at God himself, and we are learning what he is like.

We have some really messed up thoughts about God. We tend to think about him in really twisted ways.

If God showed up this afternoon at your house, what do you think is the first thing He'd want to talk with you about? Do you think he'd talk to you about how you need to be spending more time reading the Bible? Is that the first thing you think God would want to talk with you about?

Or maybe you think He'd say something along the lines of, you need to be more generous. You are getting really caught up in your stuff and in your savings account, and you just really need to give more of your money away.

Be more moral. Be more spiritual. Be more religious.

We often assume that God's message to us would be something along the lines of, "here's how you can do a better job of serving Me...."

Jesus shows us that when God comes, he talks about the ways he can serve us. That's what God is like. God is interested in you. God cares for you. God doesn't see you the way you imagine. He sees us as people worth serving.

God has come into this world to serve us.

And if that is surprising to you, then I bet the way he does it is going to be a surprise as well.

The first thing we learn in verse 45 is what God is like. The second thing I want us to see is what we are like.

Jesus said, "Even the Son of Man didn't come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Globally last year, 67.1 Million people died. That works out to just over 2 people passing away every second. And yet Jesus is claiming his death is going to be one-of-a-kind. He says that his death is going to be a benefit to us. He says his death serves us, because his death is a ransom.

Jesus is saying that the greatest way he can serve us is to die. Because in his dying, he will be giving his life to us as a ransom. We've all heard stories or seen Dateline, we know the idea of a ransom.

If someone is taken captive, oftentimes the captors will ask for a wire transfer of money and then the captive will be released.

So, what is Jesus saying when he says that he gives his life as a ransom for many?

He's saying that if his life is a ransom, then you and I are not free. However you think, or even however you feel, Jesus is saying that you and I are not free. We are captives. We need ransoming.

There are lots of things in life that you and I have control over. We choose when to get up each day, we choose where we're going to go, what we're going to eat. Today you all chose to come and be here.

So in some senses, you and I are free. Yet in a deeper spiritual sense, we are not free.

John 8:34 says it this way: "Anyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."

And all of us, in a thousand different ways, have given ourselves to a way of living and a way of being that we cannot now undo. We are not free.

And on top of that, we are also indebted. Because of our sin, Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. A wage is something you earn for what you do. You and I have earned death for our sin.

On the cross, Jesus took onto his body all of the consequences of our sin. The death Jesus died is the death that we all deserved to die.

Romans 3 says it this way, look with me in verses 23-25.

[23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

On the cross, Jesus took onto his body all of the consequences of our sin. The death Jesus died is the death that we all deserved to die.

And what I want to tell you this morning is the good news that Jesus Christ Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. But that's not the end.

By dying and then being raised up from the dead three days later, he defeated death. So while you may not be free right now, you can leave here today free.

How do we respond to this? We do this in two ways.

1. We let God serve us. He came to serve. And you can put your faith in him, you can trust that he is one who came with all power, and yet he is one who came to serve.

We just need to come to him. I bet someone might be thinking, "yeah, I hear you, but there's a particular sin, and it's too big." Or, "I've fallen into it too many times, and there's no way God can forgive me for that sin."

There's nothing lacking in the ransom Jesus has given for us, because there's nothing more precious than the life he has laid down for us. No sin is too much for this savior. Jesus says for even the son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Will you let Jesus serve you this morning?

We're not here to do something big for Jesus. We're here to let Jesus serve us. To serve us with his crucifixion. To serve us with his death. And to serve us with his burial.

The second way we respond to this is this.

2. We let the cross lift our hearts to joy.

We see that the very reason that our faith's symbol is a cross is the joy that it brings. How does it do this?

I don't know how many of you have any catholicism in your background, or how familiar you are with the Crucifix, but in Roman Catholic Churches, the crosses are adorned with figures of Jesus hanging on them. But there's a crucifix in Melide, Spain, in the northern part of the Iberian peninsula, that's different. (Show on Screen)



In the crucifix in Melide, Christ is reaching down. It's a picture of him reaching down to all of us who are enslaved. All of us who aren't free. All of us who need someone to make a ransom for us.

The joy of that cross is that through one of the worst forms of execution imaginable, God offers us life.

And as Jesus serves us, the cross doesn't become just the symbol of our faith, it becomes one of the greatest joys of our hearts.

Let's pray.