

## **A Different Way Of Living: Servanthood**

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**Winning By Losing Series**

**Mark 10:35-42**

**Part 1 of 2**

If you were to ask the average person in America, "Tell me, how would you define what it means to be a Christian?" what words would you use to capture what a Christian is? I think you would get one of four responses:

1. You might get a beliefs definition. Christians are people who believe certain things. Christians believe that Jesus was born of a virgin named Mary, that he suffered and died on a cross, that he was raised from the dead. Christians believe that God is a Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A Christian is a person who believes certain things about God, about Jesus, about human beings, about the way of salvation. A beliefs definition.

2. You might get a religious definition. Christians are people who attend church on Sunday, who celebrate holidays like Christmas and Easter. Christians are people who take bits of bread and juice each week in a ceremony they call communion and who get wet at some point in their lives in a ceremony they call baptism. If you ask people what a Christian is, you might get a religious definition.

3. At least among many people right now, you might get a political definition. Christians are people who hold certain political viewpoints like pro-life, anti-gay marriage, and depending on who you talk with, they might try to classify all Christians as being aligned with one political party or one side of the political spectrum.

4. And 4<sup>th</sup>, there might be a negative definition, if people have had a negative experience with Christians. Maybe they were raised in a home with Christian parents who sang all of the words of the Christian song, but sang them totally off-key, maybe they went to a Christian school in which everything was rules and appearance and externals, or if they went to a church that was intolerant of questions or different opinions, maybe they would have a negative definition. Christians are hypocrites; Christians are legalistic; Christians are rule-keeping, narrow-minded, anti-intellectual.

There is certainly some truth in these definitions. We Christians do have certain beliefs, and we do have certain religious practices, and unfortunately sometimes we have over-identity with one political party and sometimes we have been narrow-minded or hypocritical.

But I would venture to say that if you asked 20 people to define what being a Christian is, it would be surprising if more than one or two said, "Being a Christian is a way of life."

In the gospel of Mark we read over and over the phrase, "on the way" or "on the road." For example, in Mark 9.33,

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Mk 9:33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?"

Mk 9:34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Mk 10:17 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?"

Mk 10:32 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.

Mk 10:52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

The early church was called the way because they were followers of a way of life taught and modeled by Jesus. Acts 9.2

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Ac 9:2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

To be a Christian is to be a person who is committed to follow Jesus' way of doing life.

There is a very provocative little book written by Rob Bell titled *Velvet Elvis*, in which Rob Bell, a pastor, says this:

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*Everybody follows somebody. All of us make decisions every day about what is important, how to treat people, and what to do with our lives. These decisions come from what we believe about every aspect of our existence. And we got our beliefs from somewhere. We have been formed, every one of us, by this complicated mix of people, places and things. Parents and teachers, artists and scientists, and mentors – we are each taking all of these influences and living our lives according to which teachings we have made our own. Some insist they*

*aren't influenced by any person or any religion, that they think for themselves. And that is an honorable perspective. The problem is they got that perspective from...somebody. They are following somebody even if they insist it is themselves they are following.*

*Everybody is following somebody. Everybody has faith in something and somebody.*

*We are all believers. As a Christian, I am simply trying to orient myself around living a particular kind of way...and I think the way of Jesus is the best possible way to live.*

To be a Christian is to be a Christ-follower. In other words, to follow the way of Jesus. And the way of Jesus is very different than the way of this world. Those of us who have committed themselves to follow the way of Jesus know this very well. So we understand, for example, that the way of salvation Jesus offered is different than what we might expect from the world. The world tells us that our problem is that we are confused. And so we think we need good advice from Dr. Phil, or Dr. Laura, or Dear Abby. The world says that we are going in the wrong direction and what we need is new leadership, a new political party in office. The world says that you feel bad about yourself and that you need more positive self-talk; you need to cultivate healthier self-esteem. The world says you are failing and that you need to pick yourself up by your own bootstraps, take life by the horns and believe that you are a winner.

The way of Jesus is so different than the way of the world. The way of Jesus says our problem is not that we are confused, or that we merely need new political leadership, or that we simply suffer from bad self-talk, or a bad self-image. The way of Jesus teaches us that we are sinners and that we need to be forgiven. We are subject to powers too strong for us and we need to be set free. We have problems too big for us to handle and Jesus came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He came to die as the Lamb of God, to bring us forgiveness. He came to set up a kingdom in this world, to bring us freedom. He came to go the way of the cross to defeat powers and problems that we could not on our own defeat.

Everything about Jesus communicates a different way to us than the way of the world. Jesus doesn't simply speak to us about a different way of salvation; he speaks to us about a different way to extend his kingdom. A couple of years ago I taught the book of Revelation here at the Vineyard. One of the themes that we discovered in the book of Revelation is that victory for Christians is very different than the way of victory for the world. The way the world wins victory is by stepping on and killing our enemies. But Jesus does not send his people to make disciples with a sword. The kingdom of God does not come by force, but by truth and love and sacrifice and the power of God. The way Jesus teaches

his followers to extend his kingdom is by sharing the gospel and going around doing good and praying for our enemies.

Not only do we have a different way to extend God's kingdom, but in today's text Jesus is going to teach us a different way to greatness. I've been doing a series that I've titled "Winning By Losing." The world teaches that the way to win is always to win, to race for the top, to make sure you get your point across, to learn to be more assertive, to be a pusher and a shover, elbowing the other guy out of the way, and to make sure that you always look out for #1. But Jesus offers us a very different way to greatness. It is not by way of self-promotion, but by self-forgetfulness. It is not by looking out for #1, but by looking out for others' needs. It is not the way of serving your own interests, but instead serving the interests of God.

I've called today's talk, "A Very Different Way Of Living: Servanthood." Let's pray.

SLIDE – Mark 10.32-34

<sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> "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, <sup>34</sup> who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

This text is the third prediction by Jesus of his suffering and death. He speaks about what will happen in Jerusalem sparing none of the details including the fact that he will be spit upon.

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Mk 10:34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

We read one of the predictions of Jesus' death two weeks ago in Mark 8.31-32,

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Mk 8:31 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.

Mk 8:32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

And then there is another prediction of Jesus' death in Mark 9.31,

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Mk 9:31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered over to human hands. He will be killed, and after three days he will rise.”

Now Bible scholars are quick to tell us that these predictions about Jesus’ death and his calling to us to follow him in his way of suffering, are book-ended by two healings of the blind. At the back end in Mark 10.46-52 we read about the healing of a blind man named Bartimaeus. And at the front end we read about Jesus healing a blind man at Bethsaida. Let’s read that healing of the blind man at Bethsaida.

SLIDE – Mark 8.22-26

<sup>22</sup> They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. <sup>23</sup> He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?”

<sup>24</sup> He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.”

<sup>25</sup> Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

<sup>26</sup> Jesus sent him home, saying, “Don’t even go into <sup>1</sup> the village.”

Now, this blind man had to be touched a second time by Jesus to see. Sometimes this text is used as a foundation for what we call in the Vineyard “soaking prayer,” the need to go back for additional prayer to find healing. Sometimes this story of a second touch by Jesus is used in charismatic churches to speak to us about a second blessing from Jesus following our initial salvation.

But why did Mark place this story of this blind man who required two touches from Jesus in order to see at the front end of Jesus’ teaching regarding the reason he was going to Jerusalem to be mocked, spit upon, beaten and crucified? Because, I think this story is not only meant to be a record of a literal healing that took place, but it is also meant to be read metaphorically. It speaks to us regarding how far you can go on the way of following Jesus and still be blind.

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You can go far on the way of following Jesus and still be blind.

This man who is partially healed, but his vision is still cloudy, is a picture of the 12 Disciples who committed themselves to follow the way of life taught and modeled by Jesus.

But you know, you can go pretty far in following the way of Jesus and still have huge blind spots. Even while Jesus is talking with the disciples about going to the cross, we find in these chapters the disciples are arguing with each other about who among them are the greatest. So we read this in Mark 9.33-34,

## SLIDE

<sup>33</sup> They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?”

<sup>34</sup> But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

And in the text we are going to look at today, the disciples are elbowing each other regarding who is going to end up in first place. It is amazing how far you can go in following Jesus and still have massive blind spots. You know, the problem with so much culture wars talk is that you can't always identify the good guys or the bad guys. Bad guys are sometimes capable of tremendous kindness and good guys of awful treachery and character flaws. We can never project sin and say there it is – in that group; in that political party. As Solzhenitsyn said, “The line of sin goes through the center of every human heart.”

I'm sure over the course of this past week you read with grief the same reports that I did about Pastor Ted Haggard, who apparently fell into immorality. Pastor Haggard was the pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, an enormous church. He was also the president of the National Association of Evangelicals. This story of Pastor Ted's fall has gone around the world.

I spent a wonderful afternoon a year ago in Ted Haggard's office with he and I alone talking about pastoring large churches, and his work at the NAE. We talked about some of the political concerns he had and some of the concerns I had. I found him to be warm, personable, giving of his time and counsel. And, yet, apparently he had this blind spot in his life.

And the Bible teaches that we all have huge blind spots in our lives – not just the 12, not just Pastor Ted. But we read in Jeremiah 17.9 these words:

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Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

If we are going to follow Jesus' way of living, we need to be perpetually reminded of our almost infinite capacity to deceive ourselves. We can convince ourselves that everything is OK between us and God while we are putting our fingers in our ears to the voice of God and while we are closing our hearts to the light of God. So long as we are reasonably healthy, and things in our lives are not too hard, we can easily deceive ourselves into believing that all is right between us and God.

And yet, we are like the disciples – half blind men and women stumbling along in the dark, out of touch with how out of touch with God we are. Have we not regularly encountered good Christians who are filled with bitterness and

unforgiveness towards others, who are justifying their bitterness and unforgiveness because they are the offended party? Do we not often find committed Christians who speak condescendingly and critically of brothers and sisters because they hold a different political view, or a different theological view? How many times do we meet sincere Christians who are deluded about what is obviously an inappropriate relationship – Christians who marry outside the faith, or who fall into an adulterous relationship, or who are living with their boyfriend or girlfriend, or who are carrying on emotional affairs?

There is only one way, friend, to clear up our heart blindness so that we can see clearly, so we can see ourselves clearly, so we can see God clearly, so we can see the issues clearly – the only way for you to clear up your heart blindness or for me to clear up my heart blindness is to in the privacy of our own homes, kneel at the feet of Jesus, and ask Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit to make us sensitive to the things that matter to God. So you pray:

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Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, make me sensitive to big things and little things, significant things and insignificant things that are clouding my vision and getting in the way of my relationship with you.

You can go far on the way of following Jesus and still be blind.

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You can go far on the way of following Jesus and still be selfishly ambitious.

SLIDE – Mark 10.35-37

<sup>35</sup> Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

<sup>36</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

<sup>37</sup> They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

Some of you may ask, “Why believe in the Bible? What makes these accounts of Jesus’ life trustworthy?”

You know, one of the reasons why I find the accounts that we read in the Bible so credible is because the faults and flaws of the leaders of the church are not air-brushed away. The reality is, friends, that everywhere else we look outside of the Bible, people have a tendency to air-brush away the faults and flaws of their early leaders and to write myths about their supposed greatness. So way back in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a man named Parson Weems wrote a biography of George Washington making up stories regarding Washington’s great honesty. You know the story of Washington chopping down the cherry tree and when he is confronted by his father, he says, “I cannot tell a lie.” Washington supposedly

threw a stone across the Rappahannock. And Weems wrote the myth of Washington supposedly praying at Valley Forge.

But the Bible doesn't read like American mythology about our leaders. The Bible portrays leaders warts and all. And I find these accounts to be absolutely credible and trustworthy because the early church would have had no interest in developing a mythology that emphasizes their leaders' faults. Here they are trying to spread a message throughout the Roman Empire, they are trying to say, "We can trust these leaders and their eyewitness accounts of the resurrection of Jesus." Why add to the difficulty of spreading the gospel message by falsely writing that these eyewitnesses were flawed and confused and ambitious unless the stories were true?

Friends, the accounts we read in the New Testament are eye-witness accounts. They have the ring of truth and are credible.

So we read of James and John making a request of Jesus in Mark 10.37,

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

What are they asking for?

Well, it is not certain if they are asking for the best seats at the Messianic banquet, that when the Kingdom of God comes there is going to be a great banquet. We are told that those of us who are followers of Jesus will be invited to eat with him at his banqueting table. In ancient times, the seat to the right and left of the host were the chief seats of honor. It could be that they were saying, "We want to be in the most honored positions when you throw the great Messianic banquet."

It could be that they were asking to sit on the thrones on either side of King Jesus when he is enthroned as the Judge of the world.

But in either case, what we see in James and John is selfish ambition. Now, ambition is not in and of itself a bad thing. There is such a thing as godly ambition. And the great issue of discernment in our own heart is to figure out if my ambition is godly ambition, or if it is selfish ambition. Godly ambition is good; people without ambition will always remain in neutral and never accomplish anything for the kingdom of God. People who have no ambition are people who sit around like bumps on a log, completely unmotivated to share their faith or get involved in serving others. There is an ambition that is right. Paul writes in 1 Tim. 3.1 these words:

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<sup>1</sup>Ti 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

But there is a very negative thing that Paul calls selfish ambition in Phil. 2.3

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<sup>Phil</sup> 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

What is selfish ambition? It is what Jeremiah condemned in Jeremiah 45.5,

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<sup>Jer</sup> 45:5 Should you then seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the LORD, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life.' ”

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Selfish ambition focuses upon self-promotion.

There is an old New Yorker cartoon that some of you may have seen. In it there is a smiling woman who is jabbering non-stop to her sad-faced companion. The smiling woman finally says,

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“Well, that’s enough about me. Now let’s talk about you. What do you think about me?”

Selfish ambition focuses upon self-promotion.

Several years ago there was a very helpful, best-selling business book by Jim Collins titled *Good to Great*. In that book, he talked about different kinds of leaders. One kind of leader is concerned about promoting themselves. And often you will find in the self-promoting leader some early success in a business, but then there is later decline and sometimes collapse. Jim Collins illustrates this type of leader by looking at the career of Lee Iacocca. Lee Iacocca saved Chrysler from the brink of catastrophe in one of the most celebrated business turn-arounds in business history. But then Iacocca diverted his attention to making himself one of America’s most celebrated CEO’s. He personally starred in over 80 commercials. He entertained the idea of running for president. He went around the country promoting his autobiography. Iacocca sold nearly 7 million copies of *Iacocca*, which elevated him to rock-star status. Cheering fans mobbed him when he got off the plane in Japan. But the second half of Iacocca’s tenure was marked by the decline of Chrysler.

Jim Collins compares Lee Iacocca with a man you’ve never heard of – Darwin Smith, who became the chief executive of Kimberly-Clarke in 1971. Darwin Smith

drove a simple older car. He never cultivated hero status. He mingled with the people in his company. He dressed a little unfashionably. His house was simple. And yet, under Darwin's leadership Kimberly-Clarke beat its direct rivals, Scott Paper and P&G year after year.

Darwin Smith was ambitious, but he wasn't ambitious for self-promotion. He was ambitious for his company. And when I think about godly ambition, I think about someone who is ambitious for the growth and promotion of God's Kingdom and God's interests. They want to see the church grow; they want to see their small group grow. They want to see world mission grow and people from every nation made into disciples. They are ambitious to see people reached with the gospel. They are ambitious to see people found, taught, served and healed. What kind of ambition is in your heart?

Selfish ambition is not just focused upon self-promotion.

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Selfish ambition always plays for the wrong audience.

Here is the way to discern selfish ambition in yourself. Ask yourself: "Whose expectations are driving me to succeed?" You may be driven by some goal and you feel like a failure if you don't accomplish that goal. You may be obsessed by having a certain sized business, getting a promotion at work, or going into a certain profession, or obsessed by getting a certain grade, or by performing a certain way at school. You may be obsessed with having a certain size home, or a certain amount of money in a bank account. Is your drive godly ambition or selfish ambition. One way to discern is "Whose expectations are driving you internally?"

In other words, what audience are you playing for? Is the drive inside of you being stirred by the expectation of your parents and your desire to gain your parents' approval? Is the drive inside based on the desire of the expectation of your spouse, your friends, your siblings? Or somehow to prove that you are a worthwhile human being? If so, then the drive is coming from selfish ambition.

But if the drive inside of you is based on what you feel that God is asking of you, if the internal fire is being stoked because God is placing this burden in you, if you say, "God's calling is so strong in my life that I can't shake it; I feel like if I don't keep going after this, I will be disobedient to God," "the reason I'm going so hard is because the Lord won't leave me alone about this," then I will tell you, friend, that you are being driven by godly ambition and that's a good thing. We need more of that in this world.

And...

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Selfish ambition focuses upon titles and roles.

Godly ambition focuses upon serving and caring.

All of us at one time or another have been disappointed because we wanted to be chosen for a certain role, we wanted a certain position, or certain title, and we didn't get it. If you hang around a church long enough, you may desire to have a certain role, or to gain a certain title, but you will be denied that role or title. You may want to be a women's group leader, to play here on the stage as part of our worship team, to be hired for a certain position, but that role may be denied you.

Let me take as an illustration becoming a children's ministry pastor. Let's say you really want to be a children's ministry pastor and someone else is occupying that role. How you respond to not getting that role tests your heart regarding whether you are motivated by selfish ambition or by godly ambition. Godly ambition will say, "Well, I didn't get that role, but goodness gracious, there are thousands of avenues open for me to care for and serve children. And if it is God who is burdening my heart, if I'm being motivated by divine compulsion, then I really don't care about my title. What I care about is serving kids. So I'm going to pray and ask the Lord to open up doors for me to lead children, to care for children, and to bless children, and evangelize children." "I will make myself available to teach in children's ministry. I will volunteer for our after school program called the Zone." You will be amazed at how many opportunities you have to serve the needs of children.

There is a couple in our church who don't have any children of their own, but who for years have reached out to dozens of children in their neighborhood. They don't have a title here; they don't have a role. But they've simply opened up their hearts to the call of God and God led them to care for children.

Listen to me now. If your ambition can be blocked by any other human being, if another human being can close the door on your ambition, if a "no" from a person can stop your activity, then you are still dealing with selfish ambition. No human being can prevent you from fulfilling godly ambition. Because no human being controls God's agenda. So what if you don't get to be on our worship team? Lead worship in a small group. Help lead worship in children's ministry. Get some folks together and worship God in your home. Are you saying you can't worship God and lead some other people to worship God unless you have a title and a role? And if you don't get to head up an evangelistic team, are you saying that you still can't evangelize?

Well you can go far on the way of following Jesus and still be selfishly ambitious.

And finally,

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You can go far on the way of following Jesus and still not appreciate the cost.

## SLIDE – Mark 10.38-40

<sup>38</sup> “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?”

<sup>39</sup> “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, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

Jesus asked the disciples in v. 38,

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Mk 10:38 “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?”

Certainly, Jesus is speaking about the suffering and death that he is to suffer. The Old Testament sometimes refers to the cup as the cup of God’s judgment. Jewish literature in Jesus’ day used to speak about cup of death.

Sometimes we say, “I want to follow you, Jesus. I want to follow your way of doing life.” But we don’t understand that there is a cost to following Jesus.

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The Cost to us

Gary Thomas in his wonderful book titled *Authentic Faith* tells us a very transparent story about a conversation he had with his wife. He had just purchased a brand new mini-van a few weeks earlier. It was the first brand-new car he and his wife had purchased in 15 years. Before that they drove around in mini-vans that had been driven half-way into the ground by other families, mini-vans that were littered with previous families fast food wrappers, dirt, and crayon marks.

He got this brand new mini-van and his wife said, “I think we should loan our new mini-van to this family in our church who are planning to go camping this next week.” Gary Thomas said, “The thought of another family taking my new mini-van and driving a thousand miles on it to a campground just made my stomach turn.”

But his wife kept persisting that this was an area where they could help another Christian couple out with. Finally, Gary Thomas said,

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“Well, if money weren’t an issue, I wouldn’t mind letting them borrow our brand new van. Its just this is our only vehicle and I want it to last. We’ve been trying to keep the mileage down. And now we’re going to have somebody drive over the mountains with our new van?”

His wife said, “Do you want me to call them and say ‘no.’”

Gary Thomas took a deep breath and said, “Well, go ahead and call them.” But he was sulking about it all day. Finally, the Holy Spirit spoke to him and said, “You said if money weren’t an issue you would be happy to lend your van out.” Gary Thomas said, “Yes, that’s right. If I had 2-3 vans, if I wasn’t worried about paying for the maintenance, it wouldn’t bother me at all to give my van away.”

Then the Holy Spirit said, “So you are willing to act like a Christian only so long as it doesn’t cost you anything. Is that it?”

So you are willing to act like a Christian only so long as it doesn’t cost you anything. Convicting words.

You know, if we are going to go far on the way of following Jesus, it really is going to cost us. It is impossible to follow after Jesus and not pay a cost. The cost for you might be professional advancement. You may have to turn down a promotion because it is going to take you away from God’s will for you and your family. You have to turn down a promotion because it is going to take you away from an area of ministry that God has for you, a group of people you are investing in at your workplace.

I remember a very simple cost the Lord required of me when I was teaching at OSU. I was in an office quad – four really old offices. The chairman of the department said, “Because you are about to get tenure, I’m going to move you to a big new office.” The Lord said, “Don’t move to that new office. You’ve got a ministry with the three men in this quad and you will lose your influence if you take that new office.” So the Lord had me turn it down.

Certainly one of the costs in following in the way of Jesus is bringing our wallets on the way of following. If you are going to follow the way of Jesus, you’ve got to settle the issue of money in your life. Jesus said in Matthew 6.24,

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Mt 6:24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

If you are a servant of God, you cannot moonlight for money. This week I received an incredible note from a young woman who used to attend our congregation. Here is what she wrote:

*This morning I was sitting thinking about the blessed to be a blessing campaign and just wanted to write a little note to you hopefully as an encouragement. When the campaign started almost 2 years ago, I was still in college at OSU and felt like you all really sold the vision on the community center so well to the church. You'd have to be crazy not to want to get involved. I felt like our entire church body was excited about this project. I know you had said this over and over again with the giving, but it was funny how when I stepped into the convention center that night with a dollar amount in my head, God more than doubled it when it came time to write it down on a pledge card. I remember thinking, "I have no idea how I will be able to give this," but I kept thinking, if God gave me this number, it will happen. For the first year, it was fairly easy to pay each month and it was exciting to hear about all the developments. This past summer I graduated and moved to Maryland and went on full time staff with a ministry. Then I really thought it would be hard to be faithful in giving, but I kept remembering you teaching up front and encouraging us to be faithful in giving, not because you just wanted us to, but because God was pleased when we honored our commitments. And through God's provision, I have been able to give each month what I pledged and it has been such a joy. I was thinking about this morning how much I am excited about the community center and I live 7 hours away! I miss Vineyard Columbus so much but I really still feel connected by giving and the whole process has taught me so much about giving out of our wealth (or lack there of!) to the kingdom. I really love writing out a check each month and it reminds me to pray for great things going on there. I hope the opening of the community center has been a success and I'm excited to visit it when I am home for the holidays. I am so glad Vineyard Columbus took on this project, it will change the world, and it has already changed me and has blessed me!*

Rick Warren, in his incredibly popular book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, talks about two kinds of people – kingdom builders and wealth builders. He said,

#### SLIDE

Both are gifted at making their businesses grow, making deals and sales, and making a profit. Wealth builders continue to amass wealth no matter how much they make, but kingdom builders change the rules of the game. They still try to make as much money as they can, but they do it in order to give it away. They use their wealth to fund God's church and his mission in the world.

Let me ask you a personal question, friend. Can you honestly say that your approach to money is to be a kingdom builder and not a wealth builder. Have you brought your wallet along with you on the way of following Jesus?

Rick Warren goes on to say,

## SLIDE

At Saddleback Church, we have a group of CEOs and business owners who are trying to make as much as they can so that they can give as much as they can to further the kingdom of God. I encourage you to talk with your pastor and begin a kingdom builders group in your church.

And let me make you this offer. If you are a person in the church who is a business owner, or a professional, or you've come into some inheritance, some wealth, and you say, "You know, I would love to be a part of a group of men and women who have been given wealth by God so that we might challenge each other to use our wealth for the purpose of building God's kingdom," I will personally meet with you. If you've been given a gift of making money, and you say, "I want to transform that gift of making money into a gift of giving money," you email me. It may be that the Holy Spirit has been tapping you on the shoulder for some time regarding using your ability to create wealth to make a difference for the kingdom.

But you know, the cost of the kingdom was not only demanded of us. It has also been demanded of Jesus.

## SLIDE

The cost to Christ.

We read in vv. 39-40 these words:

## SLIDE

Mk 10:39 "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, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

You know, the reader of the gospels can't help but see a cruel twist in these words of who will be at Jesus' right and left. When Jesus says that this is up to the Father, we who know the gospels can't help but think of who was at Jesus' right and left when he came into his kingdom. It wasn't his close friends at Jesus' right and left. It was the two thieves. Not his trusted confidants. The words of James and John about being on Jesus' right and left must have gone through Jesus' soul like a spear.

You know, it is one thing to die surrounded by your family, your close friends, all your loved ones being by your bedside. It is quite another thing to die alone in a nursing home, a thousand miles away from your family, surrounded by indifferent nursing home aides, strangers, people who don't care about you at all.

The cost to Jesus was that he didn't get to pick who would be at his right and left. It was appointed by his Father in heaven.

The way of Jesus is the way of the cross. It is not the way of the self-determined life. It is not the way of "I get to choose the way I'm going to live and die." The way of Jesus is my life and my death are in the hands of God. And it is up to God to determine where and how and with whom and in what capacity he wishes to spend me for his glory. I have decided to follow Jesus and there is no turning back. Let's pray.



***I. You Can Go Far On The Way Of Following And Still***

**Be Blind** (Mk. 8.22-26; 10; 45.52)

***II. You Can Go Far On The Way Of Following Jesus And Still***

**Be Selfishly Ambitious** (Mk. 10.35-37)

- A. Selfish Ambition Focuses Upon Self-Promotion
- B. Selfish Ambition Plays For The Wrong Audience
- C. Selfish Ambition Focuses Upon Titles And Roles

***III. You Can Go Far On The Way Of Following Jesus And Still***

**Not Appreciate The Cost** (Mk. 10.38-40)

- A. The Cost To Us
- B. The Cost To Christ