

HE CAME TO DIE: LEADERSHIP FROM A POSTURE OF
SELFLESSNESS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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The opening words of Mark present Jesus as the absolute authority with a Messianic purpose. The gospel's fast-paced narrative provides numerous examples of Jesus exercising that authority, with the gospel's opening chapters providing ample reason for the disciples' growing anticipation of His enthronement.

Moving ahead to the last chapters of Mark's gospel we see a very different image of Jesus portrayed. Jesus is mercilessly humbled under human authorities in Jerusalem. He has been denied and all His disciples have fled. Anticipated cries of triumph are instead cries of agony echoing from the Place of the Skull. Something of significance has happened between the chapters.

This paper will argue that Jesus commands His disciples to engage in a counter-cultural posture of selfless leadership. I will begin with a gloss of the opening chapters of Mark's gospel, briefly noting demonstrations of Jesus' authority. A summary of the passion prophecies will be used to highlight the counter-intuitive nature of Christ's impending humiliation and act as context for His culture-teaching on the nature of discipleship. Finally, Jesus' teaching on the counter-cultural posture of selflessness demanded of His disciples in Mark 10:43-45 will be detailed, followed by a summary statement of application.

Jesus' Power and Authority

Jesus Presented as the High Authority

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”¹

Mark opens with a context of competing powers and prophetic fulfillment, with Jesus presented as the appropriate high authority. Jesus is given the title “Son of God” (*Υιοῦ Θεοῦ*), a title used of Roman Emperors. His announcement is “gospel” (*εὐαγγέλιον*), a term used “regularly to describe the emperor’s birthday, rise to power and success in battle.”² From the outset Mark is proclaiming “the good news of Jesus rather than that of Caesar; Jesus, not Caesar, is the true Son of God.”³ Add to this the title of Messiah (Christ), and the identification of Jesus as Daniel’s Son of Man⁴, and the reader is introduced to the One who has all power and authority in both the Jewish and Gentile realms.⁵

Confronting Natural and Supernatural

Prior to the first passion prophecy the text describes Jesus as overcoming the forces of Satan, demons, sickness, and nature. Such familiar stories as the exorcism of Legion from the demoniac at Gerasene⁶, healing of the paralyzed man lowered by his friends, and Jesus’ walking

¹Mark 1:1-3, ESV.

²Winn, Adam, “Tyrant or Servant? Roman Political Ideology and Mark 10:42-45,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36, no. 4 (June 2014): 326.

³Ibid., 327.

⁴See Dn 7

⁵Winn notes that “As the Danielic Son of Man, an identification made explicit ... Jesus is granted dominion over all ‘people, nations and languages.’” See Winn, Adam, “Tyrant or Servant? Roman Political Ideology and Mark 10:42-45,” 340.

⁶For a discussion on the imagery of powers in conflict in the details of this exorcism and the Roman Tenth Legion in Palestine during the Jewish uprising see, Ibid..

on water are recounted in these passages.⁷ Through these and many more instances, Mark's gospel "catalogue(s) the various ways in which people are oppressed because they are living under the alien authority of Satan and to detail the power of Jesus to release them from his grip and bring them under the rule of God."⁸

The Passion Prophecies of Jesus

The passion prophecies provide context for some of the most counter-intuitive, counter-cultural, and unanticipated pericopes in scripture. The introduction of Jesus' suffering and death is a "somewhat abrupt introduction after eight chapters in which the Markan Jesus is presented as a figure of extreme power."⁹

The First Passion Prophecy & Teaching

(Mark 8:27-35)

Immediately after Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus began teaching plainly about His impending submission saying, "the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again."¹⁰ Peter begins to rebuke Jesus. Jesus counter-rebuked Peter, associating his attitude with Satan's for thinking on things that please men and not God. Jesus then teaches a counter-cultural message of personal humility and service expected of His disciples involving: self-denial, sacrifice, and followership.¹¹

⁷See Mark 5:1ff, 2:1ff and Mark 6:45ff

⁸Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2009), 40.

⁹Winn, Adam, "Tyrant or Servant? Roman Political Ideology and Mark 10:42-45," 340.

¹⁰Mk 8:31 ESV

¹¹See Mk 8:34b-35

The Second Passion Prophecy & Teaching

(Mark 9:30-37)

Jesus is again teaching His disciples about His impending submission to human authorities stating that “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.”¹² The disciples find the teaching incomprehensible, but they were afraid to ask Him for clarification.¹³

After traveling to Capernaum Jesus asks what they had discussed on the road. The disciples decline to answer because they had been arguing over which of them was the greatest. Jesus responds with a counter-cultural expectation of personal humility and service by His disciples. “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”¹⁴

Jesus’ Third Passion Prophecy (Mark

10:32-34)

Except for the healing of blind Bartimaeus, the third passion prophecy provides the most detail and the last context for understanding Jesus’ passion and resurrection.

And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”¹⁵

For the first time the location of the impending passion, the Davidic city of Jerusalem, is clearly identified. For those with messianic aspirations, this “announcement of Jerusalem as the goal of the journey suggests that Jesus’ glory was imminent.”¹⁶ Their expectation was for

¹²Mk 9:31b, ESV

¹³See also Mk 9:9-10 where Peter, James and John, descending from the Mount of Transfiguration, cannot understand the meaning of the Son of Man rising from the dead.

¹⁴Mk 9:35 ESV

¹⁵Mk 10:32b-34 ESV

¹⁶William L Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and*

Jesus to fully embrace His Davidic role and exercise overwhelming power against opposing authorities. Instead Jesus informs them that He will be placed in a posture of submission to both Jewish and Gentile authorities to be condemned, abused, and killed.

This final prophecy makes it clear that Jesus will not only be placed in submission to the will of Roman overlords, but also to their own Jewish authorities. The complicity of the Jewish leadership makes “clear the contempt the authorities have for Jesus and how far they are from seeing him as Messiah, for they would only hand the worst of their race over to the despised Romans.”¹⁷ Jesus’ prophecy “carries the humiliating irony that the Jewish messiah, while condemned by his own people, will in fact meet his death at the hands of the Gentiles.”¹⁸

Jesus continues by describing the abuses His submission will include: mocking, spitting, flogging, and death. These terms act to intensify the totality of Jesus’ submission, yet France notes that “each of the four elements is included in the blueprint for the suffering servant of the Isaianic servant.”¹⁹ Jesus provides context, linking His submission to human authorities as an extension of His submission to God’s intentional purposes. These purposes will only become clear to the disciples after His resurrection.²⁰

Notes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 379.

¹⁷Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2001), 286.

¹⁸R. T France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans ; Paternoster Press, 2002), 413.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰All three passion prophecies include a statement concerning the resurrection. Rather than being a source of comfort and communicating ultimate victory, the sayings appear to bring rebuke, cause confusion, or be totally ignored. The details of the passion provided by the third prophecy seem to make suffering and death the greater context provided by Mk 10:33-34.

Aspiring to Honor and Authority

The Brothers' Request

The Markan narrative moves instantly to a request by James and John. This literary technique effectively sets the brothers' request in the immediate context of Jesus' statement concerning His impending passion.

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." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."²¹

This request, immediately following the announcement of Jerusalem as their destination, "show(s) that the brothers regard Jesus as the eschatological Lord who goes to Jerusalem to restore the glory of the fallen throne of David."²² Their request is intended to place them in positions of authority within Jesus' soon to be inaugurated earthly kingdom, and is almost incomprehensibly insensitive considering Jesus has just detailed His impending submission, mistreatment, agony, and death.²³ The form of the request "implies that those who asked thought they had some claim on Jesus, but because they could predict the answer Jesus would give they masked the actual question."²⁴ The implication is that the brothers, whether due to ignorance or compulsion, seized an apparent opportunity for personal advancement.²⁵

It is significant to note that this passage represents the only instance where James and John interact with Jesus without Peter being present. France suggests that the brothers view

²¹Mk 10:35-37 ESV

²²Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 378.

²³The Markan text attributes the request as being from the mouths of James and John. See Mt 20:20-21 where the request is made by their mother.

²⁴Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 286. Note that Witherington graciously implies that the brothers understood and internalized Jesus' teachings from Mk 9:35 and Mk 10:31 concerning submission and selflessness. Bock understands request to be a demand. See Darrell L Bock, *Mark* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 280.

²⁵Bock understands this request to be based on a fixation over power. See Bock, *Mark*, 280..

Peter's position as first among equals as being in jeopardy, and seize the opportunity to establish themselves and exclude Peter."²⁶ They request seats of honor on Jesus' right and left in His Davidic kingdom.²⁷ The sons of Zebedee appear to be engaging in political gamesmanship, seeking positional authority and status over the remaining disciples. If this indeed the case, then these "first disciples, and part of an inner circle of privilege along with Peter, they have made little advancement in their understanding of the core kingdom value of deferential humility."²⁸

Jesus Responds

Jesus' response clearly communicates that the disciples' request is out of line.

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?" 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, 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."²⁹

Jesus' pointed question in response to their request is a condemnation of the brother's pretentiousness,³⁰ and their affirmation of their ability bear the cup and baptism further indicates their lack of understanding.

There are two levels of significance in Jesus' response. Colloquially, to share in someone's cup "was a recognized expression for sharing (someone's) fate"³¹ and baptism represents being overwhelmed by disaster or danger.³² In the Old Testament, "the cup of wine is a

²⁶France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 414.

²⁷While some consider the request to be limited to temporary placement next to Jesus at His inaugural banquet, France believes there is a more permanent position in the kingdom hierarchy in mind. See France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 415.

²⁸Don N Howell, *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 196.

²⁹Mk 10:38-40 ESV

³⁰Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 379.

³¹Ibid., 379-80.

³²Ibid., 380.

common metaphor for the wrath of God's judgement upon human sin and rebellion."³³ As such, it represents Divine punishment for sins taken on behalf of the guilty.³⁴

Jesus responds to their misunderstanding in a twofold manner. First, He indicates that the brothers will share in His cup and baptism per the colloquial understanding.³⁵ Secondly, Jesus responds with a statement of His own subjection to authority. Lane notes that "Jesus' denial of the right to sit men on his right or left hand is consistent with his refusal to accept even the appearance of an arbitrary authority. His prerogatives are limited by his submission to the Father, and Jesus frankly admitted this."³⁶ Jesus' ministry has been characterized, not by His self-determined exercise of personal authority, but by a selfless submission to the will and authority of the Father for the benefit of others. Jesus understood the derived nature of His authority from the Father,³⁷ without presumption, assertion, or competition.³⁸ This stands in stark contrast to the highly presumptive, assertive, and competitive request of the two brothers.³⁹

³³Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 379.

³⁴See Mk 10:45, Mk 14:24 and Is 53:5.

³⁵The early church understood Jesus' response "to mean that these two would be martyred, and it may well imply that, when Jesus says they will undergo such a baptism and such a drinking, but at a minimum it implies that they will suffer for their allegiance to Jesus." Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 287.

³⁶ Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 381–82. See also Mk 13:32.

³⁷ Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 197.

³⁸Stein understands this idea of derived authority and its limited exercise as validation of the pericope's authenticity, noting the early church's tendency to intensify and expand Jesus' authority beyond and ignore limitations in the gospel narratives. See Robert H Stein, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 486.

³⁹Note Mk 15:27 where the positions to Jesus' right and left are occupied by those crucified with Him.

The Disciples Respond

Mark 10:41 indicates that the remaining disciples become indignant due to selfish motivations, and is indicated for three reasons. First, the disciples have already voiced concern regarding authority and status, actively debating their rank order relative to one another.⁴⁰

Second, no rank order among the disciples is recorded in the text.⁴¹ Assigning priority to Peter or the tripartite inner circle appears to be a presumption based upon proximity to Jesus during significant events.⁴² The brothers' request overtly introduces the formerly private and speculative debate into the open. By making their request to the Master, James and John have effectively beaten them to the punch. It appears that "their annoyance is not over the ambition of the two brothers as such, but over the fact that they got in first and tried to gain an unfair advantage over their colleagues in the competition for the highest places. On this issue they were all equally at fault."⁴³

Third, Jesus' rebuke and teaching which follows their indignation indicates that all were equally in need of additional instruction in selflessness. Lane echoes France when he writes,

In spite of Jesus' repeated efforts since Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi to inculcate in his disciples the spirit of self-renunciation demanded by the cross, the sons of Zebedee have understood his intentions very superficially. Their ambitious request brings discredit upon them, while the indignation of the other ten disciples reflects a similar preoccupation with their own dignity.⁴⁴

⁴⁰See Mk 9:34

⁴¹Tindell also asserts that there is no evidence of a hierarchy between the twelve disciples and the mass of followers. See Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*, 24–25.

⁴²For example, the presence of the inner circle trio at the Mount of Transfiguration. See Mk 9:2-13.

⁴³France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 418.

⁴⁴ Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 378.

Jesus Commands a Posture of Selflessness

Jesus' uses the disciples' selfishness to provide a teachable moment regarding selflessness. He returns the inversive theme of first and last begun during the second passion prophecy in Mark 9:35, and continued into the immediate context of the third passion prophecy in Mark 10:31.

False Leadership: Rulers and Great Ones

Jesus begins His teaching on selflessness by providing a benchmark for contrast.⁴⁵ “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.’”⁴⁶

In His third passion prophecy Jesus detailed a sequence of His submission and humiliation: from betrayal, to Jewish leadership, to Gentile leaders, and then to death. Jesus selects the Gentile civil authorities as a benchmark for contrasting the culturally dominant exercise of authority, and the counter-culture expectation He had of His disciples. Jesus likely chose the Roman authority structure for the most dramatic contrast possible. France notes that “if you wanted to see absolute power in the first-century world it was necessary to look outside politically subject Israel to those who held real power.”⁴⁷

The words used by Jesus and translated as “rulers” and “great ones” do not speak of official offices within the Roman state, but “are general terms for those who are in a position to impose their authority over others.”⁴⁸ The word compound word *κατακυριεύω* (from which *κατακυριεύουσιν*, translated “lording it over,” is derived) appears in the Septuagint sixteen times,

⁴⁵Winn understands Jesus' calling of the twelve together for this teaching as limiting the teaching to those who are already in positions of power, rather than for all followers of Jesus. See Winn, Adam, “Tyrant or Servant? Roman Political Ideology and Mark 10:42-45,” 341.

⁴⁶Mk 10:42 ESV

⁴⁷France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 418.

⁴⁸Ibid., 418–19.

“and generally communicates complete dominance of power over something.”⁴⁹ Both *κατακυριεύουσιν* and *κατεξουσιάζουσιν* (translated as “exercise authority”) contain root words expressing power and authority, exaggerated by a ‘kata’ prefix, “convey[ing] the oppressive and uncontrolled exploitation of power, the flaunting of authority rather than its benevolent exercise.”⁵⁰

There is a strong irony indicated in the use of the words *δοκοῦντες ἄρχειν*, translated here as “considered rulers.” Lane suggests that Jesus is explicitly linking the dominating use of power as “giv[ing] the allusion of ruling, but simply exploit[ing] the people over whom they exercise dominion.”⁵¹ True leadership, according to Jesus, is something other.⁵²

True Leadership: Be Servants and Slaves

Jesus begins with a negative imperative, commanding that His disciples not emulate the intuitive and culturally dominant use of power and status modeled by the Gentile ruling hierarchy, but instead practice a much more counter-cultural form of leadership. Jesus said, “But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”⁵³

Prior to this teaching, Jesus’ counter-cultural perspective on ministry and leadership might well have been echoes of Jesus’ statements regarding the first and the last, terms which are

⁴⁹Winn, Adam, “Tyrant or Servant? Roman Political Ideology and Mark 10:42-45,” 341.

⁵⁰France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 419. Also see Winn, Adam, “Tyrant or Servant? Roman Political Ideology and Mark 10:42-45,” 341.

⁵¹Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 382.

⁵²In addition to the explicit teaching Jesus is about to offer, the idea of restoration of a true leadership which existed before domination requires a return to pre-fallen man and woman in Eden. Genesis 3:16 and the consequences of sin for the woman to include the dominating rule of her husband over her. Calvin noted, “To be sure, she was previously subject to her husband, but that was a gentle and honorable subjection: now, however, she is cast into servitude.” See John Thompson, Timothy George, and Scott Manetsch, eds., *Reformed Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament I, Genesis 1-11* (IVP Academic, 2012), 163.

⁵³Mk 10:43-44 ESV

relatively open to personal interpretation.⁵⁴ Mark 10:43-44 represents a powerful clarification of the magnitude of first and last that “encapsulates the revolutionary effect of (Jesus’) teaching about the Kingdom of God.”⁵⁵

A synonymous parallelism is used between verse 43b and verse 44 to clarify and reinforce meaning.⁵⁶ “Whoever would be great” is clarified and reinforced by the phrase “whoever would be first.” Similarly, “must be your servant (*διάκονος*)” is clarified and reinforced by the phrase “must be slave (*δοῦλος*) of all.”⁵⁷ The only term new to the discussion of selfless humility is the term *δοῦλος*, acting as “a further extension of the idea of subjection, since a *doulos* has far less self-determination even than a *diakonos*.”⁵⁸ Howell suggests that the words *δοῦλος* and *διάκονος* are used interchangeably for emphasis of a concept rather than for technical merit.⁵⁹ Later in his work he notes:

The two terms ‘*doulos*’ and ‘*diakonos*’ thus complement one another. The ‘*doulos*’ has offered the entire life to promote the welfare of one’s Lord; the ‘*diakonos*’ in humility and love, expresses that surrender by pursuing the welfare of one’s fellow servants. This involves adopting counter-cultural values and assuming the less esteemed positions in order to cede prominence to others.”⁶⁰

The disciples’ difficulty in accepting this counter-intuitive and counter-cultural teaching is elucidated by considering the Hellenistic value placed upon personal autonomy. “To be subject to the will of another is to be stripped of one’s dignity and is thus a condition that is

⁵⁴See Mk 9:35 and Mk 10:31.

⁵⁵France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 415.

⁵⁶For those who question the authenticity of vv43-44, Harris suggests a linkage between Jesus’ teaching and the brothers’ request, suggesting that “great” and “first” tie back to the brothers’ requests for seats to Jesus’ right and left See Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2001), 102.

⁵⁷Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 382.

⁵⁸France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 419.

⁵⁹Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 198.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 14.

contemptible.”⁶¹ From a Hellenistic perspective, the culture into which the disciples were born and raised, self-determination is at the very heart of a meaningful existence.

Winn sees another expression of Roman political power in the use of the word “first” (*πρῶτος*) as a term designating the Roman Emperor. The idea that attaining the position of Caesar by assuming the posture of a slave would be a shockingly counter-culture and counter-intuitive expectation.⁶² As Bock notes, “Although there are Greco-Roman texts that point to the king as a servant, they do not stoop down to the slave level.”⁶³

While it might seem comfortable to dismiss the notion of submission as fanciful religious euphemism or distant metaphor, the corpus of Hellenistic writings does not afford us this luxury. Howell notes that “The *doulos* word group is not used in Greek literature to describe religious devotion.”⁶⁴ What Jesus is introducing, or possibly reintroducing, is truly counter-intuitive and counter-cultural for His disciples. France provides a fitting summary to the implications of Jesus’ teaching, recognizing that:

The natural expectations of society are reversed, and leadership is characterized by service, by being under the authority of others, like a *diakonos* or *doulos* ... Nor is this just a matter of recognizing a higher rank within a recognized hierarchy: it is to everyone that precedence must be given.⁶⁵

Imitatio Christi

Jesus concludes His teaching with a call for emulation of the model of selflessness that He has already modeled, and will dramatically model as His prophesied passion commences

⁶¹Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 198

⁶²For a discussion on the Roman Republic’s ideal of appropriate authority as leading for the benefit of the citizens of the republic see Winn, Adam, “Tyrant or Servant? Roman Political Ideology and Mark 10:42-45,” 345. Such an understanding would make Jesus’ teaching resonate with those who saw the dissonance between the purpose and practice of the Caesars.

⁶³Bock, *Mark*, 282.

⁶⁴Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 11.

⁶⁵France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 419.

almost immediately after this teaching. Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”⁶⁶

Mark 10:45 is undoubtedly the key verse of the Markan text. These few words sum up the mission and purpose of Jesus’ earthly ministry and provide the final context for understanding His impending passion. Previous passion prophecies indicated in general terms what would happen. The teaching following the third prophecy ends with a purpose statement from Jesus’ lips indicating why these things must happen.

Jesus death is “presented as service to God and as a vicarious death for many in virtue of which they find release from sin. . . . it expresses the element of voluntariness or self-sacrifice in the death of Jesus who offers Himself in obedience to the will of God.”⁶⁷ By exercising greater submission to God’s will, and voluntarily submitting to lesser authorities’ will, Jesus can free those who place their faith and trust in Him from the greatest bondage; that of sin, self, and the resulting separation from God.

Considerations in Application

John Maxwell articulates five levels of leadership. The first and most basic leadership style is based on position. People follow this type of leader because they simply have no other choice. This leadership style often fits with the prevailing sense of leadership authority, particularly those experiencing oppression. Levels two through five of leadership are based on the followers’ decision to follow. The reasons include relationships, results, and reproduction. The highest, most effective, and most enduring leadership style is respect. People follow this leader because of “who you are and what you represent.”⁶⁸ In the case of disciples of Jesus

⁶⁶Mk 10:45 ESV

⁶⁷Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 383.

⁶⁸John C Maxwell, *Developing the Leader within You* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1993), 123–24.

Christ, the model of servant leadership provides a pathway of influence as others are served, until they follow, not based on who we are, but Who we represent.

Robin Wilson, writing on the topic of servant leadership, comments that there are three potential challenges that servant leaders must face. These challenges include: the challenge of being an empathetic individual, the challenge of becoming vulnerable and risking the sharing of oneself, and the challenge to exhibit great perseverance and strength.⁶⁹ Jesus' demonstration of obedient selflessness and humility is the perfect example in addressing all three of these challenges.

Conclusion

I have argued that Jesus commands His disciples to engage in a counter-cultural posture of selfless leadership. Through consideration of the text's use of titles for Jesus, and the descriptions of His miracles, Jesus is presented as the One who has power, authority and status. Yet Jesus submits to lesser authorities: the one who betrayed Him, the Jewish authorities, the Roman authorities, and eventually death itself. Something happened between these two portrayals, and that something was Jesus' submission to the Father's will.

The disciples, those closest to our Lord during His earthly ministry, failed to understand His message. Their infighting for prestige, power, and status should give us pause as we consider our own hearts. Jesus didn't rebuke them for wanting to lead, but rather instructed them concerning the posture to which Kingdom leadership must conform. Jesus demonstrated selfless submission to lesser authorities, according to the will of the Father, to ransom those who were lost, and deliver them from slavery to Satan, sin, and self. Those who are His, and especially those who have recognized positions of leadership accountability, must likewise serve with selflessness. In obedience, we incarnate His model of selflessness, and with His help, assist others in experiencing the freedom of service to which He calls His own.

⁶⁹Robin Wilson, "Servant Leadership," *Physician Executive* 24, no. 5 (September 1998): 26.

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