

## Servant or Slave Mark 10: 35-45

He was a decorated Air Force pilot. His uniform included the Airman's Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Air Force Outstanding Unit Ribbon, the Korean Service Medal and the Air Force Longevity Service Ribbon. He was no stranger to dangerous missions, and he had no reservations as he volunteered to climb into a single man rocket ship and be blasted into the darkness of outer space.

The mission was a success, until the spaceship came tumbling back to earth. Somehow the electronics failed and Mission Control lost track of the small capsule. Major Tony Nelson splashed down in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, and eventually washed ashore on an uncharted and deserted desert island. It might have been near Tahiti, I am not sure. With no food, no fresh water and no means of contacting Mission Control, the situation seemed hopeless. And then, as he is walking along the beach, wondering what to do next, Major Nelson stumbles upon a mysterious looking bottle. He removes the stopper and polishes off the dirt and grime and lo and behold a huge cloud of smoke escapes from the bottle and when the mist clears a beautiful genie dressed as an Arab princess materializes and proceeds to give him a great big kiss.

The problem is Major Nelson doesn't speak genie and the beautiful genie doesn't speak English. Major Nelson wishes he could communicate with her, and with a blink of an eye a split second later his wish is granted. From that point forward Major Nelson's life is never the same. This beautiful, powerful, and sometimes goofy genie dedicates her life to serving her new master. 139 episodes later reruns of the show I Dream of Genie filmed in the late sixties are still being watched by millions of people worldwide.

Just to show you how backward thinking and narrow- minded people were back then, the genie's belly button was not permitted to be filmed. Not only that, but a TV show about a man also living with an unmarried woman was a no-no. But since the genie clearly slept in a bottle, they were able to get away with it.

It is fair to say that once Jesus became known, throughout history He has constantly attracted a large number of followers. People have been drawn to Him for many reasons. Some, like the woman who touched His garment, sought healing. Others like the five thousand sought to eat another meal of fish and bread that tasted like no other they had ever tasted. Yet others like Judas and those who lined the streets waving palm branches looked to Jesus as a political leader, one who could overthrow the government and set the people free from oppression.

Yet others like Zacheus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the Rich Young Ruler and Nicodemus turned to Jesus because they desired something greater. **Followers of Jesus seek to know the truth.** As we look back now through the NT, it is quite clear that they were in the minority. Though only Jesus can know the hearts and motives of those who call upon His name, there is no shortage of those who came to Jesus with selfish requests. It even happened among His own disciples. Look at verse 35 with me. “We want you to do for us whatever we ask”. That is not what the writer of Hebrews had in mind when he said “approach the throne of grace with boldness so that we receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”.

If you or I were Jesus (and we all should praise God that we are not ) we might have said are you crazy? You want me to agree to give you anything you want? I am not your personal genie, put here to grant your every wish and desire. Even so, Jesus’s reply is filled with grace. Rather than immediately rebuking them for their outrageous and dangerous request, Jesus keeps His composure, and He answers their question with a question. Verse 36- “What is it that you want me to do for you?” (As if He doesn’t already know what it is?) Verse 37 – Jesus we want to be at your side in paradise. Maybe they did truly know who Jesus was!

That seems like a reasonable request. Is that not the hope of every believer? Is that not my hope and yours? Of course, it is. That is one reason we are gathered here in this place this morning. **Followers of Jesus are focused upon heaven.**

James and John had witnessed miracle after miracle, sat at the Master's feet for nearly three years, and it is reasonable to believe they recognized Jesus as Messiah. James and John believed that Jesus could grant their request, in other words they had faith- but the problem is that they did not completely understand the implications of such a request. Verse 38- "You don't know what you are asking... are you able...". Did they truly understand what Jesus was asking of them?

Put another way He was asking them are you willing to be both a servant and a slave? Are you willing even when life and its demands don't seem fair? Are you able to put your own selfish needs aside and do those things nobody else wants to do? Are you willing to wash smelly feet, embrace people with leprosy, and drink from a cup touched by the lips of your enemy? Are you willing to suffer and die so others may have a chance to live- even those who may hate you and say your sacrifice was for naught? Are you willing to die for your choice to follow Me?

Whether they completely understood or not, they believed they did. They each wanted to be right there, with no one separating them. They each wanted to be first in line to meet Jesus in His kingdom. The truth is we don't know if Jesus granted their request. In verse 40 Jesus said it is for those for whom it is prepared, and apparently not an arbitrary decision. What is certain is that place is reserved for those with a servant's heart. The good news is that **followers of Jesus are called and equipped to be servants.**

James and John were able, and so are you and I. Verse 39- We are able, and through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit we have the ability to do those difficult things and more. We are able to put self aside and endure great suffering now because we know that all we are enduring now is temporary and for God's glory. We believe we will join James and John and be at Jesus side in glory. The only question is how close to His side do we want to be? Verse 44 provides a clue to the path that will lead us right there. Amen