

A Life that Matters

Mark 10:35-45

The movie, Pearl Harbor, tells the story of two friends, Rafe and Danny, who survive the attack on Pearl Harbor and enter World War II as fighter pilots.

In training before the war, Rafe McCawley is one of America's top fighter pilots. When America initially holds back from entering the war, Rafe volunteers to help the British in their fight against the Germans.

When Rafe first arrives at the English airfield, he walks by British airmen (Spitfire fighters) shot up from the previous day's battle and is greeted by the commander of the British squadron. As the commander shows him the plane he will fly, a messenger announces to the commander that two more British planes have just been shot down.

The commander turns to Rafe and asks, "Are all Yanks as anxious as you to get themselves killed, Pilot Officer?"

Rafe does not hesitate: "I'm not anxious to die, sir," he says. "I'm anxious to matter." (Pearl Harbor, Touchstone Pictures, 2001, rated PG-13, written by Randall Wallace, directed by Michael Bay, 00:31:05 to 00:32:20, DVD: Track 9; www.PreachingToday.com)

I suppose that's what most of us want with our lives. We want a life that matters. We want a life that means something. We want a life that makes a difference.

The question is, "How?" How do we live a life that matters?

Well, if you have your Bibles, I invite you to turn with me to Mark 10, where two of Jesus' disciples come seeking places of honor and Jesus again teaches them all what it looks like to live a life of greatness, a life that matters.

Read Mark 10:35-45:

- 35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."**
- 36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"**
- 37 They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."**
- 38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"**
- 39 They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized;**
- 40 but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."**
- 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.**
- 42 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.**
- 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.**
- 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall 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 a ransom for many."**

Remember last time we saw that Jesus was leading His men up to Jerusalem. As they followed Jesus, they were amazed and afraid. Jesus seemed to be walking right into the hands of His enemies, into a city where the authorities hated Him and wanted Him dead.

Jesus again took the twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to Him when they got to Jerusalem. In verse 33 He said,

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

Jesus knew about the pain and the suffering that awaited him in Jerusalem, but He did not shrink back in fear. On the contrary, he led the way through the pain into victory. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to sacrifice Himself for us, and He invites his fearful followers to come along.

Jesus is leading the way! He was going to make the ultimate sacrifice. And He invites us to go with Him. So we have our first lesson for a life that matters. If we want to live a life that matters, then like Jesus we must be willing to sacrifice.

A life that matters is a life of:

I. SACRIFICE

Jesus is going to the cross. He will suffer and die. And He has called His followers to the same. Back in chapter 8 when Jesus first told them about His suffering, death and resurrection Jesus then said to them, **"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."** (Mark 8:34-35).

That's what Jesus invites us to do if we want to live a life that matters. Jesus invites us deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him to death.

To be great in the Kingdom, to live a life that really matters, there will be some sacrifices. We may have to give up our own comforts and agendas. Some of us may even have to give up our lives, but that's the only way to live a life that makes any real difference. If we want to live a life that matters, 1st we must live a life of sacrifice. Then 2nd, we must...

To live a life that matters we must live a life of

II. SUFFERING

We must drink His cup of suffering. We be immersed in that rejection and pain. At least, that's what Jesus told James and John. These two wanted the top two spots in Jesus' Kingdom – positions of real influence and power. In other words, they wanted their lives to matter. So Jesus tells them how. Notice, He doesn't reprimand them for their ambition. He just asks them to consider the cost.

Mark 10:38 **"You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"**

Now, in the Old Testament, **"the cup"** was a common metaphor for divine judgment and suffering (Psalm 75:7-8; Isaiah 51:17-23; Jeremiah 25:15-28; 49:12; 51:7; Ezekiel 23:31-34; Habakkuk 2:16; Zechariah 12:2). You see, Jesus

is about to bear the wrath of God's judgment for my sin and yours on the cross. That's why He uses this metaphor.

But He also talks about being under water, about being "baptized" or more literally being immersed. That too was an Old Testament picture of overwhelming calamity and suffering. The psalmist and other Old Testament writers often described their sufferings as coming "into deep waters" and having "a flood overwhelm" them (Psalm 69:2,15; Job 22:11; Isaiah 43:21).

Jesus is telling James and John, "I'm about to go through a time of extreme suffering and pain. Are you able to suffer too?"

Mark 10:39 "**We are able**," they answered. Jesus tells them, "You will indeed suffer, because that's the price of greatness. That's the cost of living a life that matters. That's the only way to have power and influence in My Kingdom."

And Jesus would say the same thing to us. If we want to live a life that really matters, then there is a cost. We too must suffer as He asked His original disciples to.

Adoniram Judson, who was one of the first Baptist missionaries, went to Burma in 1812 with his new bride. A baby was born to them there, but died 8 months later in a cholera epidemic that ravaged the country. It was seven hard years before they baptized their first convert, but soon after that, Judson was imprisoned as a British spy and subjected to incredible mistreatment for 21 months at the prison in Ava, the capitol city. He bore the scars of that mistreatment for the rest of his life.

Even so, upon his release, he did not return home, but asked for permission to go into another province of Burma in order to keep on preaching the Gospel. A godless magistrate angrily denied his request with these words: "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might SAY, but I fear they might be impressed by your SCARS and turn to your religion!"

Indeed, that's exactly what happened. Judson found a way to continue preaching the Gospel in Burma and soon after his death on April 12, 1850, a government survey recorded 210,000 Christians, one out of every 58 Burmese! (Bible Illustrator #3474-3475)

His scars spoke louder than his sermons, lending credibility to his message. That's the way it is with suffering. When we speak out of the pain of our own experiences, people tend to listen.

So if we want to live a life that matters, 1st we must live a life of sacrifice; 2nd we must live a life of suffering; and 3rd

To live a life that matters we must live a life of

III. SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL.

We must be faithful to carry out God's assignment for us whether it's great or small. That's what Jesus says in vs.40

Mark 10:40, "**but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.**"

God has prepared a place for each and every one of us believers – not only a place of honor, but also a place of service in His Kingdom. And God chooses that place, not us.

Pastor Stephen Cole in Leadership journal writes about jogging in the forest near his house when a question popped into his mind: What about John Spurgeon?

He had been reading the autobiography of the famous 19th Century, British preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and was asking the Lord to bless his ministry like Charles Spurgeon's. Then that question hit him, and he began thinking about John Spurgeon.

Ever hear of him? He was the father of Charles. He was himself a pastor and the son of a pastor. Yet if his son had not achieved such fame as a preacher, John Spurgeon would have served the Lord faithfully, gone to his grave, and we never would have heard of him.

Hundreds of pastors like him have walked with God, shepherded his flock for a lifetime, and gone to their reward without any notice in the sight of the world. "As I jogged," Cole writes, "I thought, 'Would I be willing to serve God faithfully and raise up my children to serve him, even if I never achieved any recognition? Even if no one but my own small congregation knew my name?'"

The more Pastor Cole thought about it, the more he realized, "Yes! That's really what I want: to be faithful to the Lord in my personal walk, in my family, and in my shepherding of God's flock."

The Lord never says, "Well done, good and *famous* servant", but he does say, "Well done, good and *faithful* servant."

If God makes me as famous as Charles Spurgeon, that's His business. My business is to be as faithful as John Spurgeon. (Steven J. Cole in Leadership, Vol. 7, no. 3; www.Preaching Today.com)

It's the only way to live a life that matters. Don't strive to be famous; strive to be faithful as a husband, as a father, as a wife, as a mother, as a grandparent, as a student, as a carpenter, as a teacher, as a businessman, or even as a preacher.

Whatever role God has assigned to you, in His strength, carry out that role to the best of your ability. For if we want to live a life that matters, 1st we must live a life of sacrifice; 2nd we must live a life of suffering; 3rd we must live a life of submission; and finally, we must...

Live a life of:

IV. SERVICE

We must wait on each other and put each other's needs and interests above our own. That's what Jesus said to the rest of His 12 disciples, who felt left out after James and John claimed the top two spots in His Kingdom.

Mark 10:42, **"But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.'"**

That's the way the world operates. It's leaders dominate and control. They demand respect and trample over people to get ahead.

Nowhere is this more evident than on Donald Trump's reality TV show, called The Apprentice. Bradford Cohen, a contestant on the show several years ago, turned down his exemption from getting dismissed at the end of the show that day. He did this as a gesture of support for his team leader, assuming his performance would protect him from hearing the dreaded words, "You're fired."

He was mistaken. Accused by Trump of making a stupid mistake in turning down the exemption, he sent Bradford packing.

At the time, Dr. Stacy Blake-Beard, of the Simmons School of Management, said the episode accurately reflected the highly competitive nature of the business world. *"The message of The Apprentice is that to the extent that you look out for yourself above all else, you will be rewarded. In that sense, the show is a microcosm of the real world. Organizations talk about teamwork, but few of them promote it. They promote the star."* (Aiane Lewis, "The Sting of 'You're fired!' Management Specialists Decry Trump's Ways," Boston Globe, (10-3-04); www.Preaching Today.com)

It's the way the secular world operates, but Jesus says...

Mark 10:43-44, **"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all."** (NIV)

Jesus Himself showed us what true greatness is all about. It's not about people waiting on me. It's about me waiting on people. In verse 45 He says, **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

To His ambitious disciples, Jesus made it very clear: The way up is down. They way to lead is to serve. He didn't squelch their ambition for greatness. He just showed them how best to realize it. And He would say the same thing to us, His disciples, today. If we want to live a life that matters, then we too must serve.

Do you want to live a life without regrets? Do you want to live a life that makes a positive difference in other people's lives? Then with God's help strive to be a servant and not a celebrity.

If we want to live a life that matters, then we must sacrifice; we must suffer; we must submit; and we must serve. Sacrifice, suffer, submit and serve: Those are four words we don't like very much, because they seem like steps down to obscurity, but in God's Kingdom they are steps up to true greatness.

It is a paradox, but it is true nonetheless, for the Christian the way up is always down. Is that the path you are walking? Are you actively seeking ways to serve others? We have places of ministry in this church where you can serve, are you serving in them? There are people all around us who need to know about Jesus, are you telling them? There are needs on every hand, are you seeking to meet them? Are you being a servant of God by selflessly serving others? If the Lord has touched your heart about your service, today would be a good day to enlist.

If you are like the ten and you have hard feelings at other for what they have said or done, today would be a great day to make that right. I would make it right with them and then come make it right with God.

If you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior, today would be a good day to bow before Him and receive Him as your Lord. He will receive you, change you and use you for His glory.

Let's pray...