

Mark 10:35-45

## Preaching Supports

### Focus Statement

The gospel comes as a total surprise, challenging our sense of rights, privileges, and order: the first will be last; greatness comes through service; life comes through death.

### Key Verse

"The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized." Mark 10:39

### Tip

Many of the creative worship suggestions in these preaching and liturgy supports require some preparation, so please look through them well in advance.

# What Does It Cost to Be Your Follower?

Year B—Lectionary 29 / 20 Pentecost

## Theme Statement

*An overarching glimpse of the entire worship series.*

We live daily under the microscope of performance. The child knows she must eat her broccoli before getting dessert. The student knows he must study hard to get good grades. The employee knows she must do well to get a raise. We live in a performance-based world where laws, rules, and expectations govern most of our actions.

This performance-based living flows naturally into our Christian living. You shall not steal. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Paul said that the law is good. The law reveals our sin and our deep need for mercy.

1. What Do You Think about Marriage and Divorce?  
Mark 10:2-16 (Year B—Lectionary 27 / 18 Pentecost)
2. What Must I Do to Be Saved?  
Mark 10:17-31 (Year B—Lectionary 28 / 19 Pentecost)
3. What Does It Cost to Be Your Follower?  
Mark 10:35-45 (Year B—Lectionary 29 / 20 Pentecost)
4. How Boldly Can I Pray?  
Mark 10:46-52 (Year B—Lectionary 30 / 21 Pentecost)
5. What Comes First in My Life?  
Mark 12:28-34 (Year B—Lectionary 31 / 22 Pentecost)
6. How Much Should I Give?  
Mark 12:38-44 (Year B—Lectionary 32 / 23 Pentecost)

## Text Study

*An expository summary of the reading related to the Together in Faith Adult Bible Study.*

James and John obviously thought the same way that most first century Jews thought about the Messiah.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious. On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise a signal for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:10-12)

This militaristic messiah would raise an army, overthrow the Roman government, reconvene the scattered tribes and reestablish the dominance and glory of former Israel.

Jesus challenges this messianic nationalism by turning their understanding of power and greatness upside down. The cup is not a golden goblet to toast their victory but a cup of sorrows. “Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it” (Jeremiah 25:15). The baptism of which he speaks is not to anoint them to a higher political calling but one unto death. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3).

Ironically, Jesus asked them if they were able to drink from his cup and be baptized with his baptism. Immediately, they say, “Yes, we are able!” At this point, you can almost hear the sadness in Jesus’ voice as he cryptically says, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized” (Mark 10:39). In other words, Jesus tells them (though they do not yet understand) that they will indeed suffer for his sake.



## Sermon Outline

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

*The baptism that Jesus refers to is a baptism unto death. Paul used that same imagery of death within the act of baptism in Romans 6:3-5. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Paul, and later on Luther, both describe baptism as a dying of the old self within the waters of the font. Symbolically, that death occurs daily through repentance and living anew in the promises spoken at baptism.*

*The associated readings from Isaiah 53 and Hebrews 5 both speak to the qualities of godly service and the suffering it often entails. While the former has famously been connected to the passion of the Christ, the idea in Hebrews 5:3-4 that “one does not presume” the “honor” of offering a sacrifice for sins is also in line with the Mark 10:35-45. In the upside down world of the gospel, the greatness of service and the glory of sacrifice is a matter of calling, not merely circumstance or presumption.*

### TITLE: “WHICH ARE YOU?”

#### I. Introduction

- A. Years ago there was a movie out called, *City of Joy*. It is a true story about a young American doctor who could not deal with the pressures of medicine, the high expectations of people, and the limits he discovered in himself to save people. With all his years of education and a pharmacy at his disposal, he still could not win the battle against death. So he ran away as far as he possibly could until he ended up in Calcutta, India. There he meets a gusty, British woman who runs a medical mission and he eventually gets involved in their struggle for life. Soon, she sees right through this doctor’s macho-façade and sees his fears and understands his limits. But she needs a doctor to help her with the people. And he’s running, resisting, refusing until she finally corners him with a challenge, “There are three kinds of people in the world: those who run from life, those who are spectators of life and those who commit to life. Which are you?”
- B. Runners, spectators, committers. Which one are you? Runners would just as soon avoid the pain and dirt and mess of this world because it hurts, because it’s tough, because it’s overwhelming. Spectators may talk a good line, enjoy a good scene, egg on a good fight, but always from a safe distance. But committers get involved with life, including its pain and joys, blood and sweat, dirt and impurities.
- C. Which are you, honestly?

## II. Text: Mark 10:35-45

### A. Just before this text, Jesus reveals who he is—a committer.

1. *“See, we are going to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again”*
2. Clear and concise.
3. Jesus is a committer . . . to them and to us.

### B. Are the disciples runners, spectators, or committers?

1. *“Teacher, we want you to do us whatever we ask of you . . . Grant us to sit, one at your right and one at your left, in your glory.”*
  - a. This is a bold move from two brothers known as the “Sons of Thunder.”
  - b. They expected and deserved these important roles in Jesus’ new administration.
2. *“You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”*
3. They reply that they are able.

### C. The life of discipleship isn’t what they expected. Sometimes we can be caught off guard when we really should have known better.

1. In California there is a lawsuit against the maker of Oreo Cookies because some sharp lawyer discovered that eating too many of these cookies makes you fat. Can you imagine the shock of all those people who sit down with an entire sleeve of Double Stuf Oreos, thinking they are only satisfying their taste buds and enjoying the extra goo, only to find out that they have gained weight? Is there no justice anymore?
2. What did these two brothers think they were signing up for when they left the boats with their dad and followed this preacher? Comfort? Honor? Prestige? A place in his presidential cabinet?

### D. Unfortunately, they do drink from Jesus’ cup and are baptized with Jesus baptism.

1. The death of James in Acts 12:2
2. The long suffering and exile of John

## III. A Committer: In that movie, *The City of Joy*, the young doctor finally becomes a committer when he realizes that it is no longer about him. His petty whining about his limitations or the fact that he feels overwhelmed or complaint about how hard his life is was a joke. We complain too often about our spilt champagne. He became a committer when he recognized the need out there and not the need in here. He became a committer when he saw another human, not as a stepping stone toward his goals or a score pad checking his progress, but as another child of God with immeasurable worth in need of his gifts. It began with a humble heart.

## IV. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

### A. Two possible endings

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer: German pastor and resistance fighter during World War II, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, died in the Nazi concentration camp. From his time in prison, he wrote several books. One of his more famous books is entitled, *The Cost of Discipleship*. In this book he writes against what he calls “cheap grace,” a particular style of preaching that demands nothing of the individual. The gospel, Bonhoeffer asserts, is a radical life change that calls people to deny themselves, pick up their cross and follow Jesus. Bonhoeffer’s famous words in this book say that when Christ calls a person to follow him, it is an invitation to come and die.
2. Bishop Herbert Chilstrom: About a dozen years ago, there was a parade in the small town of Litchfield, MN where two brothers rode side by side in a convertible. One of them was Dave Chilstrom, a janitor at the local nursing home. The other one was Herbert, then presiding bishop of the new ELCA, overseeing 5.2 million Lutherans. Jim Klobuchar, a columnist for the Minneapolis Star Tribune, tells their story as follows:

*Because of a birth defect, David never advanced in school. He doesn't fly around the world, meeting heads of state and popes and other bishops to speak on political, social and theological issues. Dave never left Litchfield and worked the same job for decades. And so, when these two brothers rode side by side, more than one Litchfielder was noted to have said, "Say, who is that tall white-haired guy sitting next to Dave, the janitor?"*

*Bishop Chilstrom told pastors that before churchy people can pretend to be proclaimers of hope and judgment, they must first walk with the people of their church by sharing their stories, pain, and sorrow.*

*"When I get too large for my hat," the bishop said, "it's time to go back to Litchfield where they still call me Herbie. And when I go back, I walk with my brother, Dave, down the nursing home halls and greet the people. The fact that I'm the spiritual leader of the Lutheran Church and about half the residents is of no interest to these good folks. They are too busy telling me about my brother, Dave, and the sun that he brings into their sometimes gloomy, monotonous lives because he knows them by name, he knows their stories, he laughs with them, cries with them, lives with them. He makes these wheelchair-bound nursing home prisoners feel like the most important person in the world. And that's what counts.*

*"And they sometimes ask, 'Dave, who's this friend you've brought today?' And he punches me in the shoulder and says, 'It's my brother.'"*

*The message, whether delivered in some flowing, ecclesiastical robe and ornate chasuble or from a broom and dustpan, is the same: "Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant." Adapted from "Bishop proudly bows to the fame of his brother, the janitor" by Jim Klobuchar, Minneapolis Star Tribune, July 12, 1992.*

## V. Conclusion

- A. There are three kinds of people in this world. Runners who flee from what is difficult. Spectators who are content to watch when it gets too dangerous. And there are committers who do not hide behind titles, positions, money or strength but who take up their cross and follow the One who holds not a scepter or a club in his hands but just two nail holes to put to rest any doubt as to which of these three he might be.
- B. The irony, of course, is that James and John eventually do get exactly what they ask for—a place next to Jesus when he comes into his kingdom, a place at that heavenly banquet, a place with all the saints who from their labors rest. It is a place of honor. Make no doubt about that. It is a place of eternal honor. It is a place where the words of Jesus ring true. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." (Matthew 5:10, 11)

## Children's Lesson

*The first option is designed for use if the scheduling of this series corresponds with the church year calendar. The second option is provided for general use at any time of the year.*

### Option #1 (Lectionary-based Lesson):

Read the story *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister (North-South/Night Sky Books, 1996), and talk to the students about the story and connect it with today's lesson.

Say: "What was special about the rainbow fish? Did the other fish like him at first? What did the rainbow fish learn he had to do if he wanted to get along with the other fish? This is what really made him the greatest fish, not that he was beautiful but that he looked out for others and put others before himself. That is what Jesus is talking about in today's lesson. He tells us that to be really great, we must put others before ourselves. Let's have a prayer. Everyone fold your hands, close your eyes, and bow your heads."

*Prayer: Dear God, help us to see the needs of other people and help us to put their needs before our own. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.*

**Option #2 (Thematic Lesson):**

Play a game with the children, such as musical chairs. However, when you are done reward the student who was out first instead of the student who won the game.

Say: “Who won the game? Who was out first? Well since \_\_\_\_\_ was out first, I’m going to give you a piece of candy.”

Don’t give it to the child yet but hold it in your hand. If you give it too early, the child will eat it and whoever won may begin to cry.

Say: “Do you think that would be fair? Do you think that I should give the prize to the person who was out first? Who usually gets the prize? That’s right, the person who won the game. But God doesn’t work in the way that the world tells us. You know what God does? He turns everything around. He tells us that instead of thinking about ourselves and putting ourselves first, we are supposed to look out for each other instead. We are supposed to help each other. We are supposed to share with each other. This is what really makes us great in the eyes of God. So this is what we are going to do. I have here a whole bowl full of candy. But you can’t take a piece for yourself. I am going to give the first piece of candy to \_\_\_\_\_ who was out first. But \_\_\_\_\_ is going to give that piece to someone else. Whoever \_\_\_\_\_ gives that piece to; I will give to that person a second piece of candy. That person will share the second piece of candy with someone else in our group until *everyone* has a piece of candy.”

Watch the children so that they don’t open their candy until everyone has a piece of candy. Then close in prayer. Say, “Now does everyone have one piece of candy? Okay, let’s thank God for what he’s given to us and for helping us to put other people before ourselves. Everyone fold your hands, close your eyes, and bow your heads.”

*Prayer: Dear God, help us to see the needs of other people and help us to put their needs before our own. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.*



## **Ideas and Images for Preaching**

*What follows are a variety of creative ways to enhance the communication of the message. While some links to ideas and images are provided, permission may be required for congregational use.*

### **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**

*Ways to create an active learning environment.*

Option #1: On their way into church, hand everyone an empty individual communion cup (perhaps cleaned and reused from the week before). After the sermon, have everyone hold their cups in the air and repeat the words:

Take this cup, Lord, it is my life.  
Fill it up, Lord, through joy and strife.  
Pour me out Lord, with grace to share.  
Pour me out, Lord, to love and care.  
Your greatness in service, your glory in death,  
We raise our cups, your praise our breath.

Invite worshipers to take the cups with them and to “fill them up” during the week with intentional acts of service and sacrifice in the name of Jesus. Encourage them to write a short account of these acts and to press the paper into the cups for future collection and recollection.



Option #2: Have the baptismal fount filled with water and placed so that worshipers can file by it and refresh the sign of the cross upon their foreheads, both in remembrance of baptism and as a sign of their willingness to be of Christ-like service in this world.

## CLIPS

*TV, movies, and miscellaneous video.*

Option #1: *Armageddon* (Touchstone, 1998 [In at 00:32:15—out at 00:33:30])

In this movie an asteroid that will destroy the earth is headed our way, and the only persons who can save us are the members of a ragtag drilling crew from an oil rig. In this scene, Stamper, the leader of the crew, asks his team if they will join him in saving the world. All agree to risk their lives and join him. Jesus' call to join him is one that should not be taken lightly. He demands a lot of those who will be disciples and we should all understand what we are called to do.

Option #2: *Holes* (Disney, 2003 [In at 00:54:45—out at 00:56:45])

In this scene, Magnet steals Mr. Sir's bag of sunflower seeds. The stolen seeds get thrown in Stanley's hole when Mr. Sir returns. Stanley takes the rap for the theft, claiming he stole them. Stanley shows his character when he substitutes himself for the true criminals, which mirrors what Christ did for each of us on the cross. His amazing sacrifice is a true example of what it means for us to sacrifice ourselves for others.

Option #3: *Ice Age* (Blue Sky Studios, 2003 [In at 00:53:13—out at 00:55:55])

With an ice age approaching, three completely different animals come together to set out for safety; a mammoth named Manfred, a sloth named Sid, and a saber tooth tiger named Diego. In this scene, the three find themselves in the middle of a lava flow. While getting to safety, Manfred rescues Diego and almost gets himself killed. Once they find safety, Diego asks Manfred why he risked his life to save him and Manfred's answer was "that is what you do in a herd, you look after one another". Diego, who had planned on killing Manfred, is amazed at the sacrifice this mammoth was willing to make. Jesus calls us to look after one another in this world.

## HUMOR

*Jokes, cartoons, and miscellaneous funny stuff.*

Option #1: Two women were having a nice lunch together. One was obviously dominating the conversation. She then paused for a moment and said, "But enough of me talking about me. You talk about me." We do love to hear ourselves (and others) talk about us, don't we?

Option #2: At the airport, an executive of the airline was trying to catch a flight for an important meeting. He tried to cut in front of the line but the lady at the counter said, "Back of the line, please." He insisted that he had a very important meeting. "Back of the line, please." He became more impatient with her, "Back of the line, please." And then he pulled rank.

"Do you know who I am?"

She then turned on the microphone and said, "Ladies and gentlemen. We have a man here who doesn't know who he is. Will someone please claim him and escort him to the back of the line?"

## ILLUSTRATIONS

*Stories and anecdotes that enhance understanding.*

Option #1: So, whatever happened to James and John? There is much debate about John. There is the author of the Gospel of John, John who wrote Revelation on the Island of Patmos, and John the author of the Epistles. Scholars argue about whether they are all one and the same person. What we do know is that John is the only disciple who did not die a martyr's death. He had a job to do for Jesus. Do you remember what that was (see John 19:25-27)? Our best evidence suggests that after caring for Mary, John suffered a lifetime of persecution for his faith until he was eventually exiled, sent out in isolation, as an old man

on the Island of Patmos. He may not have died for his faith but make no mistake, he drank deeply from that cup. His life was a far cry from being secretary of state in Jesus' new government, but it was a life of service, commitment, and obedience to the one he called Lord. And James? Appropriately so, a dozen years later, James was the first disciple to be killed for his faith. Acts 12:2 simply says that Herod had him killed with the sword. That is all that is written. It's not much. Ironically, James got what he asked for—a humble ending. He was the first of all the disciples to drink the cup Jesus drank.

## PROJECTION

*Note: The PowerPoint presentation provided for use in the Together in Faith Adult Bible Studies can be easily adapted for worship settings.*

## PROPS AND OBJECTS

*Ideas for designing a more multi-sensory sermon.*

Option #1: A display of various cups and chalices.

Option #2: An enlarged version of the optical illusion found in the guides for session three.

## QUOTES

*Theme-supporting, thought-provoking words from notable sources.*

Option #1: Bishop Chilstrom shared more about his relationship with his brother David in an email with the author, Scott Suskovic, dated June 4, 2009: "Dave now lives in the same senior residence where he worked for years as a custodian. He still brings cheer and a word of encouragement to the residents. Because of a decline in his health he now gets around with a walker. Not long ago he had surgery for prostate cancer. Fortunately, his cancer was caught early and he has had complete recovery. Just before the procedure Dave and I went out to the county church cemetery where our grandparents, many relatives, and friends are buried. As we walked around he turned to me and said, 'It's goin' to be a big gathering, ain't it?' How can I help but give thanks for one who may be developmentally disabled, but whose faith outshines my own by far?"

Option #2: Rick Warren's Book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, begins with a sentence that frames this entire subject of discipleship, "It's not about you" (Zondervan, 2002, p. 17).

## IMAGES

*Links to photos or art that enhance multimedia presentations.*

Option #1: Picture of James and John (<http://www.comeandseeicons.com/groups/ntp02.gif>).

Option #2: Picture of Dietrich Bonhoeffer ([http://drjamesgalyon.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/dietrich\\_bonhoeffer.jpg](http://drjamesgalyon.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/dietrich_bonhoeffer.jpg)).

Option #3: Picture of Herbert Chilstrom ([http://www.elca.org/~media/Images/Who%20We%20Are/History/Lutheran%20Roots%20in%20America/www\\_history\\_lbishop.ashx](http://www.elca.org/~media/Images/Who%20We%20Are/History/Lutheran%20Roots%20in%20America/www_history_lbishop.ashx)).

## LINKS

*Are you a helpful link? Consider making your congregation's creative worship ideas available for others to use via the social networking features of [www.bookoffaith.org](http://www.bookoffaith.org).*

Search on the "persecution of Christians," to see how Christians around the world continue to suffer for their faith. Let these stories serve to put our own difficulties with our faith into perspective. One such Web site is <http://www.persecution.com/>.