

“Lord, Please Open Our Eyes!”

Thomas Robinson, *Wide-Eyed—Listening to Jesus 5*, February 8, 2015

Matthew 20:17-34 (ESV Adapted; Cf. Mark 10:32-53)

¹⁷ And as **Jesus was going up to Jerusalem**, he took **the twelve** disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, ¹⁸ “See, **we are going up to Jerusalem**. And **the Son of Man** will be **handed over** to the chief priests and scribes, and they will **condemn him to death** ¹⁹ and **hand him over** to the Gentiles (nations) to be **mocked** and **flogged** and **crucified**, and he will be **raised** on the third day.”

²⁰ Then the **mother** of the **sons of Zebedee** came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹ And he said to her, “**What do you want?**”

She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at **your right hand** and one at **your left**, in **your kingdom**.”

²² Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to **drink the cup that I am to drink?**”

They said to him, “We are able.”

²³ He said to them, “**You will drink my cup**, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”

²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were **indignant** at the two brothers.

²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the **rulers of the Gentiles (nations) lord it over them**, and their **great ones exercise authority** over them. ²⁶ **It shall not be so among you!** But whoever would be **great** among you must be **your servant**, ²⁷ and whoever would be **first** among you must be **your slave**, ²⁸ **even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life (psyche) as a ransom for many.**”

²⁹ And as they went out of **Jericho**, a great crowd followed him. ³⁰ And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, “**Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!**”

³¹ The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, “**Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!**”

³² And stopping, Jesus called them and said, “**What do you want me to do for you?**”

³³ They said to him, “**Lord, that our eyes may be open.**”

³⁴ And Jesus in compassion touched their eyes, and immediately they **recovered their sight** and **followed him**.

Matthew 19:28

²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Matthew 27:55-56

⁵⁵ There were also many women (at Jesus’ crucifixion), who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, ⁵⁶ among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Isaiah 51:22-23

²² Thus says your Lord, the LORD, your God who pleads the cause of his people: “Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more; ²³ and I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you, ‘Bow down, that we may pass over’; and you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to pass over.”

What Do You Want Me to Do for You?

Jesus nears Jerusalem and the final confrontation. In Mt, this is last teaching before he arrives.

Mt tries to help us to see Jesus in his depth and reality, no simplistic cliché, and through Jesus to see the real world of God, his grace, challenge, radical difference from our ways of thinking, seeing. The last two episodes Mt tells are requests to Jesus. One from a mother for her sons about Jesus' kingdom. The other from blind beggars at Jericho. Jesus focuses on "What do you want?" Mt wants us to think about them and Jesus' responses.

Jesus has been talking about first becoming last and last, first. The rich, young man, so promising, but.... What about disciples who left all? The strange employer who makes first and last equal. Then that awful, awkward moment when he took the twelve aside. They were headed to Jerusalem with dreams of a renewed world. What could Jesus mean? He had just spoken of the Son of Man on a glorious throne. Was he using crazy symbols?

A Mother and Sons

A disciple named Salome (Mk 15:40) came to Jesus with her two sons, James and John, two of Jesus' closest followers. They'd been with Jesus since the earliest days when Jesus found the two sons fishing with their father Zebedee. He called them as disciples; they left their father still fishing. But their mother went with them, also following Jesus. They've seen all and are wholly committed to the Kingdom that Jesus proclaims. Jesus asks, "*What do you want?*"

We know where this is going. We wince in embarrassment for them. Didn't you hear Jesus? Jesus doesn't wince. These are great people, but it's really hard to think in a new way, to see with new eyes, to "*know what you're asking.*" Salome, James, and John are just like the rest of the disciples (now angry), trying to grasp the mystery and challenge of Jesus.

Jesus says, you well know how power works. "*It shall not be so among you!*" Start from that. Look at the way power works in the world. Do something different. I'll show you the way.

Son of Man – King, Cup, Ransom

It's no wonder they were confused, like I'd be trying to drive in England. Jesus asks, "*Can you drink my cup?*" You mean like the king's cupbearer? Yes! Jesus knows that they cannot understand yet, but Mt wants us to see the connections. The "cup" is the prophetic "cup of wrath" (Isa 51:17,22) on oppressors and destroyers. It's Jesus' suffering and death.

But that doesn't mean he is not Son of Man, Lord, Son of David, Messiah, King. Greatness is still great, first is still first. But Jesus knows "great" and "first" as seen through God's reality of self-giving love in the suffering servant of Isa 53. In reality, "great" means "servant." The Son of Man on the Glorious throne is the one going to Jerusalem to drink the cup, the one not being served but serving, giving his life/soul for these broken creatures he loves.

It was only days from that moment till Salome was standing on Golgotha watching Jesus crucified between those on his right and left. Till she and James and John experienced Jesus' resurrection, a new reality no one had ever known. Now they could begin to understand. The world truly was bigger, different, astonishing. James and John drank the cup in different ways: James was beheaded. John traditionally lived a long ministry.

Eyes Open to Follow

Two blind beggars cry for Jesus as Lord, Son of David – Messiah, King. Everyone knows what they want: a beggar wants money – a lot from a king. But Jesus asks, "*What do you want me to do for you?*" Only one thing: "*That our eyes be open.*" Touch, healing. They follow! What do you want Jesus to do for you? Am I ready to have my eyes open? Ready to live?