

骄傲的野心——马可福音 10:35-42

Prideful Ambition—Mark 10:35-42

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 10:35-42; Philippians 2:5-11.
Mark 10:35-42 (NASB 1995)
35 James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” 36 And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” 37 They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory.” 38 But 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?” 39 They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. 40 But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” 41 Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. 42 Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.
- Pride is the root of all sins. All sins can be traced back to some kind of pride. Pride is the root cause of the original fall of both Satan and Adam/Eve. The first act of sin in both angelic and human worlds is due to pride that wants to exalt oneself. It is pride that plunged the whole university into curse.
- The Christian life is one that continually fights against pride by the Holy Spirit. Even the most spiritually mature Christians still have deep hidden pride that needs to be dug out and killed by the Holy Spirit.
- For example, Job. A man who was “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.” (Job 1:1) Even Job, when attacked by Satan, had his hidden pride exposed. God challenged him with a whole slew of rhetorical questions, which finally humbled him to confess the following words, “I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth.” (Jobs 38-42)
- Pride can be manifested in many ways, one of which is **ambition**. That is, a strong desire for honor, glory, and prominent positions. This passage sees the disciples in such prideful ambition, which, by stark contrast, follows right after Jesus’ greatest example of self-sacrificial humility (vv. 32-34)! Jesus had just said he’d humble himself to the lowest for them, and the disciples responded by demanding Jesus to elevate them to the highest. They completely missed Jesus’ point!
- Outline:
Title: Prideful Ambition
 1. A Lust for Prominent Position (vv. 35-37)
 2. An Overconfidence in Oneself (vv. 38-40)
 3. An Inclination for Jealous Competition (vv. 41-42)

A Lust for Prominent Position (vv. 35-37)

- “We want you to do for us whatever we ask of You”: How immature is that! Only a four year old would ask that. Perhaps this kind of blank check is what secular leaders use to gain favor

with people (*cf.* 6:22-23 King Herod). Perhaps James and John thought Jesus too was this kind of leader who would use blank checks to show off and gain popularity. It's all political games, very despicable. These two want to manipulate Jesus with a psychology game to achieve their political end. And, in order to achieve it, they'd even go so far as to use their mother (Matthew 20:20)!

Does this give you some fresh new insight into these disciples? Well, James says God's word is like a mirror (James 1:23). Perhaps the disciples here are to help us know more about ourselves.

- “What do you want Me to do for you?”: Jesus does not show any anger but gently asks them to make their request. Remember, the best way to correct a prideful person is to live a humble life yourself. The prideful person cannot see his problem. The more you try to point it out, the more he'll think that you have a problem.
- “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory.” Give us the best seats in the kingdom! What a brazen-faced request! This is prideful ambition on full display. People normally wouldn't say it out loud, though they'd have similar desires inside. A prideful person always wants to elevate himself to some eminent position.
- Part of the reason they were obsessed with the seat is that Jesus just promised 12 seats for them (Matthew 19:28). To some extent, their request is out of their faith that Jesus is the Messiah and that he will indeed establish the glorious kingdom. They believe the seats Jesus promised are real seats! But even the best truths could be abused by wrong attitudes. That's how they abused Jesus' promise here - they just want the best seats!

An Overconfidence in Oneself (vv. 38-40)

- “You do not know what you are asking”: Asking for a better seat in God's kingdom is equal to asking for more suffering in this world. The best seat is reserved for the one who suffered the most in this world for the Lord. That's why Jesus asked the following questions.
- “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”: Cup is a common metaphor in the bible. The image is to drink it all without leaving a drop behind. It's used to describe a full experience of something. There's the cup of blessing and of salvation (Psalm 23:5, 116:13), but mostly commonly, there's the cup of suffering. Suffering is due to God's anger against sin, so it is often called the cup of God's wrath (Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15; Ezekiel 23:33; Habakkuk 2:16). For baptism, its original meaning is to submerge. Here it is not talking about the Christian baptism, but total submersion in suffering. Both are metaphors for suffering in the service of God. Extreme sufferings. Jesus says that's what you're asking for. Are you able to endure it?
- “We are able”: What an overestimation! Where were they when Jesus was suffering on the cross? They all fled! They haven't suffered a single drop of blood yet, and they all fled! But

here they are so confident - “we are able!” So here we see another characteristic of pride - overconfidence.

Matthew 26:35 “Peter said ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You’”...

【Illustration】 Surely you know someone like that, always boasting, always feeling they are a wasted talent a hidden gem. They have such great potentials but never get to fully achieve them. They don’t understand why others just couldn’t appreciate and support them. As soon as they get enough support, they’d surely change this world into a better place. By their superficial understanding of things, they make big judgements on things that are way beyond their knowledge, experience, ability, and authority. They want to rule the world!

Psalm 131:1 “O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; Nor do I involve myself in great matters, Or in things too difficult for me.”

- “the cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized”: Only Jesus’ suffering can atone for others’ sins, so the point here has nothing to do with atonement for sin. The point is the suffering itself. You will endure suffering as you serve God.

【Fulfillment】 James is the first disciple that suffered for Christ, and John is the last. James was beheaded early on in Acts (Acts 12:2), while John survived waves of persecution and was finally cast out to Patmos where he wrote Revelation. Although John didn’t die a martyr’s death, he suffered the longest for the Lord.

- “But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared”: Maybe Jesus in His omniscience already knew who would have the best seat, or maybe He chose not to know this information, just like he did not know when he would return. In any case, Jesus did not tell them who would sit on his left and right side. This is not something the disciples could know. The seats are prepared by God for those who suffered the most for the Lord.

【Principle】 Asking for a better seat is to ask for the cup of suffering; but the degree to which we suffer is not something we could pursue by our own will, but it is determined by the sovereign will of God. We cannot inflict suffering on ourselves and call it suffering for the Lord. If a better seat could be earned by self-inflicted suffering, then the church would be filled with people with broken legs and arms. The human bombs in extreme Islam do what they do because they thought they could earn the best seats in heaven by such a heroic act. Suffering for the Lord is not a self-infliction but a grace from God. Whoever God decides to give the best seats to will also be given the grace of greatest suffering, as well as the spiritual strength to endure it without compromise, but in full submission to the will of God with a joyful heart.

For the disciples, all they want at this point is the glory seats in the kingdom. Little did they know that the way to the glory seats must be painted red with their own blood!

An Inclination for Jealous Competition (vv. 41-42)

- “Hearing *this*, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John”: This is not righteous anger, not because they saw how prideful these two are and so became angry for God’s glory. They were angry because these two got ahead of them! They were all thinking about the best seat; the ten just didn’t say it out loud. They were angry because the two had the courage to say what they dared not to say. Here’s the third characteristic of pride, jealous competition. Cannot stand others being exalted above oneself.
- 【Caution】 Prideful people give the impression that they’re **always competing with others**, always wanting their own small group to be more successful than others. They always **compare their own stuff with others, thinking their own little ministry is far more important than others’ ministries.**
- “Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them“: This is not just an isolated problem with James and John. Every disciple must learn this lesson.
- “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them...“: Manipulation, authoritarianism, despotic rule, these are how leadership works in the world. Jesus knows exactly

【Principle】 Lust for prominent positions, overconfidence in oneself, and jealous competition, all these signs of pride are the ways people gain power and prestige in this world. The way of the world is to use all means to elevate oneself and to push others down. This is the exact opposite of the way it works in God’s kingdom! (vv. 43-45, next sermon).

1 peter 5:2-3 ‘shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; **nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge**, but proving to be examples to the flock.’

Summary

Two cities have been formed by two loves: **the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.** The former, in a word, glories in itself; the latter in the Lord. — *The City of God by Augustine*