

[LEAD PASTOR, LEE WIGGINS]

Let me read Matthew Chapter 20 starting in verse 17:

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 delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death 19 and deliver him over to the Gentiles 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 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 as a ransom for many."

– MATTHEW 20:17- 28 (ESV)

Let me pray.

Lord God,

I want to just stop here for a moment and give You all the glory and all of the praise because You did for us what we could not do for ourselves—You took on yourself the punishment for our sins and we corporately here today say thank You. And we say thank You for forgiving us of our sins, and we say thank You for giving us your righteousness, and we say thank You for giving us eternal life. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for the miracle of a changed heart and a changed life. And even today would You remind us of what it looks like to be great, what it looks like to be first? Help us somehow to follow You in your example when You came to serve and not to be served, and give your life as a ransom for many. We love You for that and we pray that this morning each person in this room would be moved deeply by what You did on the cross. We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.



It had been for many years for Jesus, and now with His 12 disciples by His side, a regular trip that He would take. He would leave Galilee, it was probably over a week's-long trip on foot leaving Galilee, headed south towards Jerusalem. They get to the headwaters of the Jordan River where they would cross over, head down on the east side of the Jordan. When they got down to Jericho they would cross the Jordan there. At that point they were way below sea level and they would have to climb up the mountain which was quite a steep road, paved nonetheless by the Romans, until they would arrive in Jerusalem. Jesus was traveling with His disciples. By the point that they cross over

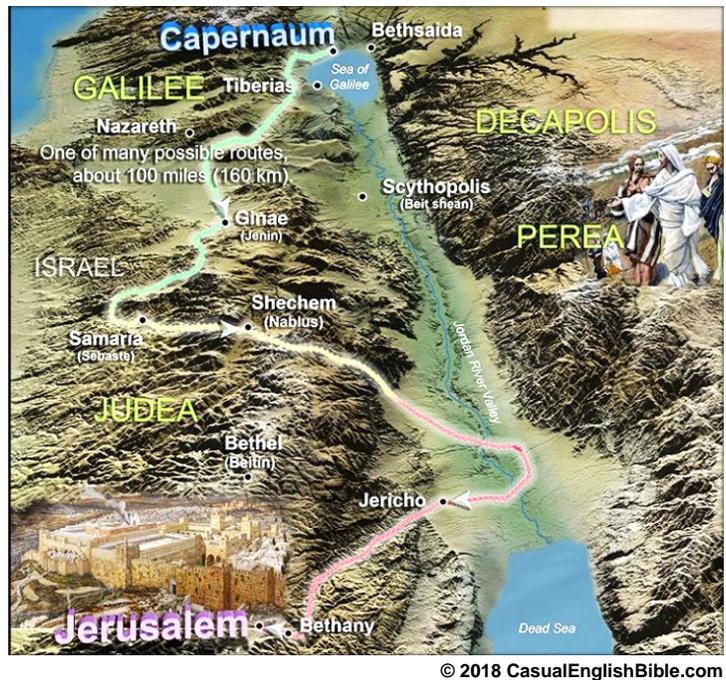
the Jordan River at Jericho and begin up that long, steep paved road towards Jerusalem, there were many, many travelers coming alongside of the road with them. Many, many of the Jewish people would have been headed into Jerusalem for the Passover, which was their custom at that time to come celebrate that; sort of like we might celebrate a holiday. When they would arrive there and remember what God had done so many years ago when the blood was upon the doorpost and the angel of death passed over, and there's this reminder of what God did and they come and they come to celebrate it.

Those feasts, those moments are important. It's like the moments that we come to in this room where we stop and we ponder what

God did for us in the past and how that impacts our present. And that was the case that day as they were traveling up that steep hill. It had to be tiring and with all the people around them all of a sudden Jesus decides to take a little detour. And they take a little side road and they go off to the side of the road and when they get off to the side on the detour the disciples are saying, "Where are we headed?" and Jesus says, "Hey, I just want to take a break right now. I want us to sit down, I want to talk to you about something. I need to explain to you what's going to happen in the next couple days."

There is something about that family meeting, there's something about saying, *Hey, here's what's going to happen, you need to know this*. It wasn't the first time that He had told them. In fact, just in the book of Matthew alone as the story is being told He has told them three different times, this is the third time that He tells them. He says listen, we are going up today to Jerusalem, and He says as we go there – and His exact words are, **"the Son of Man will be delivered over."** The Son of Man, and the word "Son of" when you see that in Scripture, this reminder of the Son of, those words are "the essence of"—the essence of man—Jesus was fully man. What is about to be told to the disciples, He's reminding them that I am fully man, I am fully God, and what is about to happen to Me, I will take on the full brunt of what's taking place there. He says when we get there I am going to be delivered over, uh, specifically betrayed.

By the way, I'm going to list right now 10 different things that Jesus says are going to happen when they arrive there in Jerusalem. This is before, He's already mentioned it two other times to them that they record in this book.¹ He says when we get there this is going to happen, it's important. If one of these things doesn't happen, Jesus doesn't know what He's talking about. These are not things that He could control. These are not things that He could will into action or hope into action. He knows exactly what's going to happen and how it's going to happen because He is God and He has been pre-ordained. And He sits down with His guys and He says listen, I'm going to be delivered over, I'm going to be betrayed and it's going to be to the chief priests, these are the religious people,



¹ See Matthew 16:21, 17:22, and 20:17

and to the scribes, the rulers of the nation of Israel, and they will sentence Him to death. He's being very specific of what's just about ready to happen.

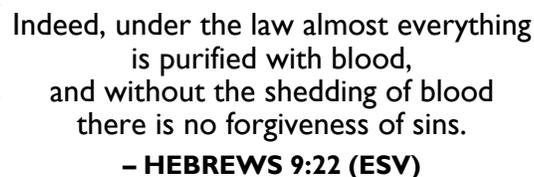
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1. **Delivered over**
 2. **To chief priests**
 3. **And scribes**
 4. **They will sentence Him to death**
 5. **Deliver to the gentiles**
 6. **Mock Him**
 7. **Scourge Him**
 8. **Crucify Him**
 9. **Raised up again**
 10. **3rd day**

As a result of being betrayed. He's going to be handed over to the religious leaders and to the leaders of Israel and they are going to say You deserve death, You're going to a cross. And then because they can't do the deed they deliver Him over to the Gentiles because Roman law would not allow this to take place. And

there they mock Him, they laugh at Him, they make fun of Him, and then they scourge Him. And the scourging process that we'll be talking about more in the weeks ahead was a horrific process. Thirty-nine lashes that the Romans had absolutely perfected. They were so good at it that they could basically with those 39 lashes remove all of the skin from a person and leave them just down to bones and their organs, it was a horrific, horrific thing. And then they would crucify Him, a punishment that was invented by and perfected by the Romans. And He says in that time He would die. And then He would be raised up again and it would happen on the third day.

His disciples are sitting there hearing all of this. I don't know about you, but when I hear all of that and I didn't go into great depth on any of those things, these guys they live in that time, they know what mocking is, they know what scourging is, they know what crucifixion is, they understand the mindset of the chief priests and scribes of the people. They understand what the deal is with the Romans, they have been living under that oppression. This should have been a huge, huge burden to each one of them. Three times Jesus says this will happen. If it doesn't happen, He's not God, He's not who He says He is. This is not just an emotional moment. This is not Jesus getting carried away. This is what is about to happen.

You would think that in that moment there would be a lot of introspection, there'd be a lot of questions about this subject. The Scriptures say the Apostle Paul says I came and what I came to preach was Jesus Christ and Him crucified.² This is the center, this is the core of Christianity—without a Savior, without a cross, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Thus, this suffering is necessary.

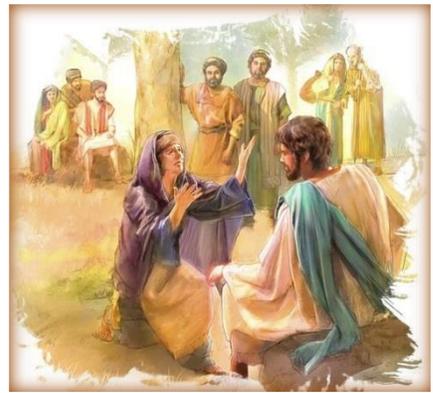


Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.
– HEBREWS 9:22 (ESV)

It's a really odd thing that happens in this story as we're sitting there alongside of the road, and as it were maybe a rest stop overlooking the valley down below, all of a sudden what happens next is not what we would necessarily expect having just heard these ten things. The mother of two of the guys comes to Jesus and has a request; mom wants something done on behalf of these boys. You gotta understand who the guys are, they're two of His disciples, this is James and John. When Jesus picked them back in Mark Chapter 3 He gave them a nickname and their nickname was "Sons of

² See 1 Corinthians Chapter 2

Thunder." In the Greek it's the word Boanérge³. Remember I said *sons of* – the best way to understand that, that just two words is to think of "the essence of." So when you think of these Boanérge³, these Sons of Thunder, you're thinking about two guys that when Jesus nicknames them He knows these are bold, loud, booming, bombastic, solid guys that know what they want and when they know what they want they go get it. But in this moment mom has to show up on behalf of the Sons of Thunder and she has a request, and it becomes clear momentarily that they put her up to this because they're standing there listening and they actually get involved in the conversation that Jesus and the mother have.



Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.

– Matthew 20:20

By the way, the mother's name is Salome, her husband was Zebedee, and Salome was also seen shortly hereafter at the foot of the cross. She will be seen on Easter morning at the site of the tomb, of the empty tomb, so this is not someone that is to be passed off as unimportant in this story. This woman has a lot of faith, she believes, but for some reason at this moment she can't even begin to think about suffering and death, and for that matter even resurrection, because all she can think about is the thing that they were all thinking about and that was Kingdom because they knew that Messiah was coming to make everything right. Because we look in this dark world and we say to ourselves, *This is messed up, we want God, we want Messiah to come and heal things and make things right again.*

And so she looks at Jesus knowing—talk about faith, even though this is a crazy moment to come in this way and have this kind of request to a point that we would say, "Salome, you probably shouldn't have done this." But she has faith because she knows, regardless whatever that was that Jesus said, that we are coming into a moment where He's going to come and He's going to reign and rule and He's going to put Rome down once and for all and so her big request is, "Hey, Jesus, can my boys James and John sit on your right and on your left in the Kingdom?" Seems like a crazy request at the time but it's from a woman saying no, I know the Kingdom's coming regardless of whatever it was that You just said. And Jesus says, "You don't know what you're asking." And then He says, this, "Can your boys drink of the cup that is about to come?" Can your boys experience the suffering that they're going to have to go through in their life? He says are you ready to drink the cup?

Maybe we'd stop and pause in this room and say: *Are you willing?* I want Kingdom. I want honor. I want position. *Are you willing?* *Are you willing to drink the cup?* This is why I know the boys put her up to it because they boom in right now and the Boanérge³ respond with boldness because they get stuff done and they go absolutely. And Jesus says well, that's fine, you will suffer. In fact, we know from Acts⁴ that James is the very first disciple to die at the hands of Herod; John the very last one to die, exiled on the island of Patmos. And then Jesus says, and by the way, you asked the question can they sit on my left and my right, He says listen, I'm not going to make that decision, that's for God to decide. Leading us to believe that evidently there is some sort of position in Heaven. There is stuff going on there that something that is happening that God has decided based on allows a person to find themselves in a place of position.

³ Boanérge³ – see Strong's Concordance at <https://biblehub.com/greek/993.htm>

⁴ See Acts 12:1-5

Oh, the amount of stuff at this point that has to be spinning through their minds. They don't know what's going on. They can't process it all. They can't put it into neat little containers understanding what's going on. They should have been able to here, Jesus has told them over and over and over again, and yet here they are; these guys, at least they are at a place where they have the faith to say "Jesus, I believe You." The Bible will tell us over and over that's where we've got to start, coming to the place where we go, "I believe that He is, that He is God." And that's the only thing they have at that moment now sitting there.

After this mother Salome comes up and says what she says the word gets out, I don't know if they were listening on or if they were just coming back from restroom break or what took place, but evidently the other ten hear about it. They hear about what she just asked on behalf of her two boys and the Scriptures tell us that these ten guys they go all human on us. They freak out and they become indignant. Are you kidding me? You two, what about us? Do you not know what *we've* done. Do you not know where *we've* been? Do you not know what *we've* said about Jesus? Hey, we've been here all along, too. How is this going on? And Jesus says stop! Stop it, children. Just not on my watch.

The way you're behaving, He says, it's like the Gentiles behave. The way you're behaving is like those who do not believe in Me. This isn't how those of you who are followers of Me behave; not with Me, not here, not now. This is not how *we* are going to respond to each other, and not how we're going to behave. Even though albeit it is just our natural response to go, "Are you kidding me? What those two—and they're not talking about the two of us. And Jesus looks at them and says listen, you want to be great, you want to be great you'll be a servant. He says if you want to be first, you're going to be a slave.



Hear this: If you want to be first, you're going to have to be a servant. And then Jesus says the way you're going to understand this is by following my example. He says the Son of Man—fully God, fully man—the One who could have demanded anything, He says the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus didn't come saying, "Here I am, I'm God, wait on Me, respond to Me." But instead to sinful humanity who would wrongfully turn on Him, He says I've come to serve them, and I've come to give my life as a ransom for them.

When we listen to that story I want that story to sink in and I want us to really bring it home personally today. So I've been praying this week as to what are a number of things that I would like to share to bring this home personally, and here's what I'm reminded—that our personal bias, I'm pointing at me [POINTS AT HIMSELF], I could easily be saying *our*—our personal bias is comfort and control. In fact, this year, this last year, we have felt less comfortable and less in control, more out of control than we've ever felt in our lives before. We want comfort. We want control. But it's not there. We want the Kingdom now. And Jesus says no, that's not what I'm teaching, and that went right over their head when Salome just shows up and says hey, put my boys at both sides first because I want Kingdom now. You're here now, Jesus, we still believe in You. I hear what You're saying about a cross and all of that, but we want that now. And Jesus says, no, you want comfort and control and that's not how it is here on this earth. Don't expect that.

And that's why we're being led astray by false doctrine when we're being told hey listen, command those diseases to go away and they have to go away and God has to get rid of them on your behalf; claim your desired results before God and He'll just give that to you. I want my kingdom now. I don't want a cross. I don't want suffering. Jesus says if you want to come after Me—we talked

about this a couple weeks—if you want to come to my cross, if you want to receive the righteousness I give there, you're going to have to get under your cross and you're going to have to carry that cross. You're going to have to die to yourself. There's this thought process that Jesus dies, He takes all of the suffering, He takes all of the burden, and He does, but there's this thought that then that means that all of a sudden the rest of us are healed and everything's all okay and we should live a happy life thereafter, there might be a few little bumps in the road. And Jesus says even to these two are you willing to drink the cup? You want to follow Me there is going to be suffering in this moment.

Here's the deal, He says you're going to be like your Master—you may be maligned, you may be spoken poorly of, you may be treated horribly, you may be bad-mouthed, you may be removed from your position. Hey, in today's language we may be "canceled"; we may suffer for what we are speaking. For the most part we have yet to suffer for us calling out the Name of Jesus. We have yet to suffer for saying that Jesus is the only way to the cross, but it is only a moment from now that that will be the case. And all of a sudden we'll be in a spot where comfort and control will not rule the day and I believe that that day is getting closer. And that day is the day that's going to separate those of us who truly believe in Jesus.

Jesus says to His disciples are you willing to drink that cup? [SHOOTS HIS HAND UP] Oh, yeah! And they head into a very difficult life, but it was worth it. James and John said yes. Jesus says are you willing to join Me in this? When He speaks to them about that, you know, right after getting done saying are you willing to join Me in this, and they, Boanérghes, Sons of Thunder, absolutely, we've got this, we understand. Man, we're ready for the mission, we've got it. What we see next is that angry little back and forth between the other ten disciples and frustrated with the other two for what they had said. Normal behavior among people, unfortunately, even normal in the church because there is a constant jockeying for position.

The second thing I want us to take home today is our pride is the greatest block for unity that exists out there. We love hearing the thought of unity. There's something about linking arms together, there's something about rocking back and forth together and just being all focused in on Jesus, and that's where we want to be as a church. Jesus in His high priestly prayer in John 17,⁵ He's praying out to God and His words are I pray that they may be one as we are one. That was Jesus' prayer for us. And I believe that's why when He sees these guys in a flash, in a moment, He's talking about the cross, He's talking about the centerpiece of all of history that is about to occur, that has to happen for mankind to be saved from their sin, and there is this flash point of back and forth with each other, which is exactly how the enemy works. There is always this moment where the enemy tries to get us against each other, and I think that even human nature it's just why and Jesus speaks to it because I want my rights, I want my privileges, I want to be first.



So a couple words to think about. First of all, we must get rid of our entitlement. Our entitlement is our biggest obstruction to growth and discipleship. Okay, these guys are disciples. If we want to be a disciple of Jesus, a follower of Jesus, an obedient follower of Jesus—words that fit into this definition of discipleship—if we want to be a disciple and we want to follow Jesus, we must get rid of our entitlement. This idea that everyone owes me, this constant struggle for who's the greatest,

⁵ Transcriber edit: John 21 cited in video, the correct reference is John Chapter 17, verses 11 and 20-22.

who gets there first, who gets the best seat. If you and I are all about our rights and what we deserve and the place that we should find ourselves seated, we will be the most unhappy people on the face of the earth. There is no place for entitlement in Christ's Kingdom. And that's why Jesus jumps back at them when He sees their thing all about who sits where, He says stop. You aren't owed this. Understand you deserve death. You deserve eternal separation from God. You deserve Hell. If it weren't for Jesus hanging on that cross we would be eternally separated by God from God in eternal destruction. That's all I deserved and what I get is the righteousness of God because of Jesus. And I step back and I need to want that for you and stop thinking about what I want for me and realizing what I deserved I didn't get, and I don't want you to get what you deserve. And together we're going to serve together.

That's why we talk about servant leadership so much around here because when you get into a place of leadership the easiest thing to do is get entitled. Entitled people are not Christ followers. Those of us who choose to give our life like Jesus did—that's why He's going to end up going hey, look at my example—those of us who choose to give up our life, who choose to give up our rights, we are Christ followers. And that's why Jesus says stop, guys, not on my watch, not in this place.

Another item we as a church need to refuse to take offense. Byword of our time is offense, everyone's offended by everyone and everything constantly to a point that we can't keep up with it. We have to come to a place where we refuse to allow the hurts of our past to dictate how we respond to another. All of us come into this room today, all of us come into life, all of us will come into our home this afternoon, all of us step into our arena with a whole lifetime of stuff and that stuff flares up. And when someone acts and behaves in a way, they've got that smug look on their face or just the way they stand or just that aura that they bring across, maybe the way they say something, maybe the organizations they're part of, we immediately start throwing up the stop sign to them and taking offense. If we want to be a church united following Jesus Christ, proclaiming the greatest news of all time—which is what we're going to do over the next two weeks—we cannot be a place that gives into the world's mindset of taking offense.

And so to do so here's what we do, we say I'm going to give up my rights and I'm going to lift up others. I'm going to honor others. I'm going to consider others as more important than myself. And I'm saying yeah, I wish they'd said that differently. I wish they would have behaved differently. I wish they stood differently. I wish they talked differently. I just – it always sparks something in me. I refuse to take offense with my brothers and sisters.

One more item along these lines, honor those who are in authority over you and honor those who are under your authority. We live in a time where there is no honor in either direction, and there is a constant churning, there is a constant pressure that is taking place and it is constantly blowing up relationships, destroying families, destroying mother and father relationship, child and parent relationship, worker and employee relationship, um, employer/employee relationship because we have bought into this thing that I don't have to honor anyone. Jesus says here's what it's going to look like, we're going to have to actively serve others and we're going to have to consider how to make others more important than ourselves.

You see, when Jesus says these words here, He says if you want to be the greatest you must be a servant, if you want to be first you must be a slave. Here's what I would think that needs to happen

is we need to start out-servanting each other and we need to start out-slaving each other. There ought to be this mentality in our lives where it's like, okay, how can I beat the other person to the lowest job available. All right. I mean, I don't know why this is but I walk with people that are just I don't know, awesome, and I'll be walking around this building and there's a piece of trash on the floor and I see them reach down and pick it up and walk over to the trash can and throw it away. And it's a dumb little illustration. I don't know why for me, I don't know, I just have a tendency to just walk right by that and every time that happens I am convicted. You see, that person just went to first. And the person that says hey listen, I'm going to do the lowest job, I'm going to disadvantage myself for others, and that is the mindset.

You see, if we want to be first, I mean, there's all sorts of videos on YouTube, there's all sorts of discussions on how to be the greatest and how to get to the top and how to skyrocket there. And there is this constant, um, as Pastor Rob said a few weeks ago, or no, it was Dani that said it a few weeks ago, this desire to platform ourselves. If we want to be first if, we want to be the greatest, then what it's going to look like is being the servant and to be the slave. And so when people treat us like a slave, when people treat us like a servant, when someone treats us like the lowest of the low, we should be going "Thank you, Jesus. I am more like You today." And that is the thing that will rocket us to the place of first position. Not mom coming and saying, "Jesus, will You put them at the right or the left?"



We are so convinced that serving is so absolutely imperative that one of the things we want this place to be is a place where we practice that. That when we walk into this building we are thinking about how to serve each other. Oftentimes when we walk into a church our thought process is like, *Did I get greeted well? Did they handle me right? Did they say the right things? Did they have the right signs? Was I able to see my way around? Was I able to get in? Was the coffee in the right place? Was it the right temperature? Was it the right quality? Was the creamer the right creamer, the type I like? Was it served appropriately? Was it "safe"?* – our big byword of today, and all this kind of stuff as opposed to saying, *Wait a minute, I'm gonna step into this place and I'm gonna serve.*

How were my kids treated and how were they taught? Were they given the right paper? Should they have been given a paper? and all of these kinds of things. Should it have been animal crackers or gummy worms? I don't want sugar with my kid – as opposed to saying, *No, I'm going to be that person, I'm going to step in and I'm going to step to a place of service.* Now here's what we believe. We believe that this is a place where we can practice serving among each other. It should be the easiest among Christ followers because all of us should be on a race to the bottom disadvantaging ourselves for each other. And when that becomes modeled here, it becomes a powerful thing.

And that's why Pastors Rob and John shared last week about the Cares Message Board. You can go on to our groups on our website, on our app, and sign up for the group called Cares and there you can see what the needs are in our community, in our church, and when you see a need that you want to meet you can jump on and meet it. Or you can go there and post a need and let someone else disadvantage themselves to take care of your need. But that's just the beginning. We as a church want to get beyond just the needs of what we know of internally and we want to begin looking outside to our community and around. So we've come a long way but we have so much further to go because disadvantaging ourselves is one of the hardest things in the world to do.

Let's take it to a higher level. If we're going to do this very thing, here's what we need to know. To disadvantage ourselves that's going to be even harder when we get home and it's our spouse or our brother or sister or our kids. It's going to be harder at work tomorrow because that's not how most people travel to the top at work, not at the seminars they don't tell you that. The greatest is going to be the servant. If you're going to be first, you're going to be the slave.

And I believe our metric needs to be how many people am I serving? That's the thing that we ought to just step back and say, *What else can I give? Who else can I serve?* Because here's what we know. Jesus came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many and He is our example. After all He did on this earth, all He did for humanity, that mankind would nail Him to a tree and yet the book of Philippians⁶ says it was a joy for Him to go to the cross and bear the shame. And that's why in this room we look at Him and we put all of our attention on Him, why we make Him first in this place and in this room. He is first.

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KEYWORDS: servant, first, suffer, cross

⁶ See Philippians 2:1-11. "Joy" context is found in Hebrews 12:2: *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*