By Joe Kim

2020 New Year

**EVEN THE SON OF MAN**

Mark 10:32-45

Key verse 10:45

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Happy New Year everyone! Christmas is over in a blink of an eye and 2019 will be over in a blink of an eye, too, it seems. Are you ready for this decade to be over and start the 2020s? Time jus seems to accelerate as we get older, so use your time wisely.

So today, that’s what we want to think about before each new year. I’ll be sharing a modified version of Pastor Moses Yoon’s New Year Key Verse Message. I changed some of the examples and wording a bit to fit our ministry and personalized it a bit.

Let’s begin with a word of prayer.

In Confucianist philosophy, the goal of life is '立身揚名' (Lì-shēn yang-míng in Chinese or Iepsin Yangmyung in Korean), which means to become famous and successful. Although fame and success have different meaning for each of us, I think that our desire to be relevant and important is universal. For some of us, we see our lives as a success if we can live in comfort or luxury. For others, it’s love or power. Jesus’s disciples in this passage had the same perspective on values and Jesus also teaches the disciples on how they should live. Through this passage may God help us to learn about true greatness. May God convict us so that we may deeply accept this teaching and obey it.

Look at verse 32. *"They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him."* At this time, Jesus was on the last journey of his life. In Jerusalem, he would be crucified for the sins of the world. His heart must have been heavily burdened.

On the way, Jesus talked to the disciples for the third time about his upcoming suffering. Look at verses 33 and 34. *"‘We are going up to Jerusalem,’ he said, ‘and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.’"* Jesus had already made 2 predictions. But unlike the first and second prediction, Jesus revealed the location of his suffering in Jerusalem. Furthermore, the details of his suffering were so precise and concrete, it was as if these verses had been recorded after his crucifixion. The religious leaders would humiliate, mock, spit, and flog Jesus. They will then kill him on the cross. Yet, Jesus said that he would rise again in three days. His suffering and death would not be the end. There would be a glorious resurrection. For this reason, and ironically, his death would be a glorious death.

Why did Jesus repeatedly tell them about his crucifixion and resurrection? It’s because Jesus wanted to prepare the disciples’ hearts, so that they would be reminded and remember what Jesus had said and believe in him. It’s because Jesus wanted the gospel of his death and resurrection to be deeply planted, rooted, and convicted in their hearts.

Through hearing Jesus' words, the disciples should have had full confidence in this final victory. Yet as soon as they heard Jesus' words, they plugged their ears saying, "What did you say? I did not hear that!" Look at verse 35. "*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.'"* Whoa! Talk about being brave and being blunt about what they wanted. James and John falsely envisioned special places of honor and power, sitting next to Jesus as their political savior. Matthew's gospel tells us that they even brought their mother to Jesus for their request (Mt 20:20). In a recent assembly of North Korean leaders, Kim Jung Eun’s sister sat in the front row, close to him. People assumed that his sister’s rank went up and that she became more powerful. Like most people, as the Confucian saying (Lì-shēn yang-míng), James and John wanted to be successful and powerful in this world.

In Verse 38 *(“‘You don’t know what you are asking,’” Jesus said. ‘Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?’”)* Jesus called them out for being clueless and asked them if they could walk the way of suffering and death like him. Without hesitation, John and James said yes. They answered, *“We can.”* They must have thought the cup or the baptism meant a kind of suffering that’s required to start a new government. Maybe they thought that it’s a hardship that they can bear like with starting a new business. We can work 6am to midnight Monday through Sunday. But Jesus bore with them and humbly said, *"You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared"* (39b, 40). Jesus knew that the disciples would suffer and die. James would become the first martyr among the twelve apostles, and John would suffer in exile on the island of Patmos, outliving all the other apostles. Yet even though they would live such beautiful and sacrificial lives, the question of who would sit at Jesus' right or left was up to God the Father only.

The other disciples did not know about James and John approaching Jesus to make this request. Yet when Jesus loudly replied to them everything was revealed. What was their response? Look at verse 41. *"When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John."* All ten, not just one or two, became very upset. Why is this important? It meant that all of them had a strong desire to sit at Jesus' right and left. All of them wanted to be great. So, Jesus taught them about true greatness and the right attitude in following him in verses 42-45.

**First, those who serve others are truly great.** Look at verse 42. *"Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.’"* Jesus starts out by mentioning the oppressive misuse of human authority. The phrase “lord it over” means to act in a way where one thinks he or she is better, or more important than another. The disciples knew and understood the unfair and unjust rule of their country. They saw that their life or death depended on a ruler’s thumb. If a ruler pointed his thumb up, a prisoner was released, but if he pointed his thumb down, he was put to death. The disciples hated such power, but in their heart, they also desired to get such power and rule.

Yet what does Jesus tell them? Look at verses 43-44. *"Not so with you”* Jesus challenged the disciples to think differently. In the rest these 2 verses, Jesus says, *"Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."* A servant is one who, from a lowly position, attends on people. A slave is the possession of a master and has no freedom. A slave serves all kinds of things for the master. The word slave here does not have the negative connotation as it does in America because of our history. Of course, Jesus' disciples were not literally slaves. Yet if they lowered themselves to be like slaves and served others, they would be truly great and be regarded as being first.

At first when we hear this, we may think that in order to be acknowledged by others and eventually become great, we have to first serve others temporarily. We think that if we sacrificially serve others, as time goes by, people will eventually realize that we are humble. So, we may think, "O.K. Right now, I will serve. I will serve many people. I’ll establish a great ministry. Later, people will listen to me and respect me." Yet Jesus does not mean that! Jesus is saying that even though we are not slaves, if we humble ourselves and serve others, such a life of serving itself is true greatness! Jesus is saying that those who serve others are first in the sight of God.

Why then is such a life of serving so great? It is because to humbly serve others is the most difficult thing to do and is the most rewarding life one can live. In order to serve others, we need to grow and mature in our inner character and faith. Without such character and faith, serving like a slave is next to impossible and we will truly feel like a slave, literally. The person who is honest in his humility, meekness, patience, and love, and serves others, is truly great.

The truth that the one who serves is great can be found among us. Normally, children are not able to serve others because they are immature and self-centered. In order to serve others, we must be aware of and fight against our self-centeredness. God sees and appreciates our struggles to have a mature inner character! The disciples of Jesus did not strive to overcome themselves and grow into men who could serve others. They struggled for a worldly position. They thought that a higher position would make them great. Yet Jesus says that what makes a man great is not his position, but his character.

Pope Francis is the leader to 1.2 billion Catholics around the world. People around the world consider him to be a great man and he is well respected. He shows this by his character practically. How so? He drives a 1984 car with 185,000 miles. His car of choice that he drives around the Vatican City is a 2008 Ford Focus with cloth seats. He was given a $200,000 Lamborghini as a gift, but donated it to charity.

May God help us to deeply accept this teaching and grow into men and women who humbly serve others.

**Second, Jesus came to serve.** Look at verse 45. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Jesus is, in very essence, God the Creator. He is holy, glorious, and worthy to receive the praises, worship, and service from all angels and human beings. For Jesus to be served would be absolutely natural. Yet Jesus said that he did not come to be served but to serve. He served a paralytic who was sick with his sin. He served tax collectors who betrayed their own people for their selfish ambition. He served a man with an evil spirit in the region of the Gerasenes. Jesus bore with and served his disciples who were full of worldly and misguided dreams. He served the stubborn and unrepentant Pharisees patiently.

We serve family, children, students, friends and co-workers. Yet when we continue to serve, after a while, we become impatient, tired, or just plain burned out physically, emotionally, and mentally. Some people just know how to just take, take, and take. Can you imagine living your life to only give, give, and give and knowing that you’ll get nothing in return? Can you imagine cooking for your spouse and he or she doesn’t say thank you for 30 years straight? And yet, that was the goal of life for Jesus. It was not to become famous or successful. Jesus did not care that people recognized his service or not did not matter to him. While serving people, Jesus was full of peace because serving was the reason why he came. This is true. If the purpose of our life is to serve, we do not care about other’s recognition. We do not even need to hold on to Mark 10:45 and struggle because to serve it is already the goal of our life. If we do not have such a clear attitude, we want compensation for our services. We want to be recognized and respected. When we don’t receive the compensation, we lose peace in our hearts. Yet Jesus came to serve and only to serve!

Please look around to each other and think about how the person next to you have served over the years, sometimes even decades. It could be simple as sweeping the floors to serving coffee each week to serving students with the word of God. We all do this as Jesus has done. I want to thank everyone here today for their life of service in Jesus. It’s not an easy life, but it is the best and full life. It is the most fulfilling life and meaningful life.

Even though we are just unworthy servants because of our innate selfishness, may God help us to continue to imitate Jesus' beautiful life of serving.

**Third, Jesus gave his life.** Look at verse 45 again. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*  Notice the last part of this verse: *“to give his life.”* While Jesus served people, he served them with the spirit of giving his life. To be like Jesus, we study the Bible and pray. We invite people and serve them. Our daily or weekly routine is filled with spiritual or religious activities. So, the misunderstanding we easily come to have is: “Since I am engaged in spiritual works, I must be a good follower of Jesus." Even though we humble ourselves to serve others, and struggle hard for the work of God, many times we do these activities out of obligation or for our own glory and reputation. Rather than desiring to give our lives, we find that we still work hard to save ourselves. We struggle not to lose, but to keep, sustain, and glorify our own lives. Even in Jesus, we live worldly lives. We get upset when our opinion is not heard, when our pride is hurt, when we don’t get that promotion, or when we don’t get the number of likes that we want on Instagram. But Jesus served not to save his life. He came to give his life! And he gave his life for us. I repeat, Jesus gave his life of us! Such is the amazing gift of grace that we do not deserve. As those who received his grace, may we live lives that glorify God, and give our lives as Jesus did.

How then, can we live such lives? How can we curb our pride? How can we give up our selfish ambition and live as slaves of all? It seems impossible, but anything is possible with Jesus.

**First, we must remember the grace we received from Jesus our Lord.** Not only should we remember his grace but also renew it every day. Through Jesus' serving, we have received the best gift in the whole world! When we remember the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life we received through Jesus, it is odd to desire anything else in this world. If we do so, are we not ignorant of what kind of grace we have already received? When we remember and renew the grace of Jesus, we can live to serve and to give our lives.

**Second, we must pray so that we can follow Jesus' footsteps in giving.** Prayer is the channel through which we receive God's grace. When we pray, God provides us with all the necessary grace that enables us to live such lives. When we pray, God gives the heart's desire to serve and to give our lives for others. He molds our inner characters to be humble, sacrificial, and beautiful like that of Jesus. When we pray, our hearts can be filled with thanksgiving, joy, and praises. We must pray that our hearts may be filled with the desire to know him and to be found in him. May God grant us a desire to imitate Jesus' life to serve and give our lives for others.

**Lastly, what then does it mean practically to serve others?** Whom should we serve? In short, we should serve anyone who needs our help. Our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, husbands and wives, parents and children, teenagers and college students whom we pray for. We should serve each of them, one by one, as we serve Jesus.

Many years ago, I studied with a college student for several years. In one of our last bible studies, he said to me that there is not a single person in the world that is not self-serving. He firmly and adamantly believed that every person only cared about himself or herself and that no one gives without expecting something in return. My heart was broken and I was sad. But at the same time, I realized that he is the exact person that we must serve with our hearts and pray for.

Jesus came to serve like a slave and to give his life. Because of Jesus' serving, we received forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We do not need anything more. May we give thanks to Jesus and live to serve others with all our hearts. May we give our lives as Jesus did. May God bless us, by humbly serving each other, to grow into a loving spiritual community!