

How to Be A Great Christian

Read Mark 10:35-45

- Introduction
 - Great Christians
 - When you think of a great Christian
what comes to mind?
 - Maybe you think of Christians from
church history
 - who made profound impact
 - Augustine

- Martin Luther

- Many of you may be thinking of Billy
Graham

- and his grand evangelistic outreach

- Or maybe your thinking of a Christian
artist

- or musician that has really encouraged
you

- Great leaders

- In Jesus' time many Romans saw great
leaders

- Such as Julius or Augustus Caesar as
being great
- The last person they would ever think of
being great
 - and one they would never imagine
following
 - was a man crucified between two
thieves
- There are many ideas of what a great
person or what a great Christian is
 - but in today's text we will learn exactly
what greatness truly is

- Today we will learn, How To Be A Great Christian

1. Expect Hardship (v.35-40)

a. Exposition

i. Expecting prosperity

1. As Christians we are to expect

hardship. James and John however were not expecting hardship

a. Look at v.35

2. First we see James and John

3. They were part of the 12 apostles

4. However within that 12 apostles

a. there were 3 apostles who

were even closer to Jesus:

Peter, James, and John

5. So for a variety of reasons

a. perhaps included that the two

brothers were the closest to

Jesus

b. felt that they could ask Jesus for

anything

c. They wanted to use their

personal connection and

leverage that for their own
glory

6. In addition in Matthew's gospel

a. He mentions that James and
John also brought their mother

b. And in the crucifixion, John's
gospel mentions that the
mother is Jesus' mom's sister

c. So James and John in effect
brought Jesus' aunt in the
picture

d.They wanted to use their family connection to get Jesus to do something for them

e.That they knew was unreasonable

f. Unless maybe they brought in Jesus' aunt in

7.So what did they ask for?

a.They asked Jesus to receive the highest honors in heaven when everything is said and done

b.Look at v.36-37

8. Jesus asks what they want him to do for them

9. And they asked to be seated on his right and left in his glory

a. But in asking to be seated in Jesus' glory at the end of time at his left and right

i. they were in fact seeking their own glory and honor.

10. They were seeking to benefit themselves at the cost of hurting others

a. They were seeking to put themselves in a seat of honor separate from the other ten apostles

b. They wanted to exclude the ten apostles from their special seat with Jesus

11. They wanted to attain glory and honor for themselves and no one else

a. because they believed that,
that was their reward for
following Jesus

12. See many of the Jews in Jesus'
day especially Pharisees

a. expected the Messiah to defeat
all their enemies including the
Romans

b. and expected themselves to
i. dominate the world

ii. have people serve them as
they sit in positions of high
status

iii. have high honor

iv. wealth

v. and prosperity forever

13. Jesus' second coming will be
one of power and of judgement as
we see in Revelation

14. But Jesus' first coming was to
be of

a. pain

b.suffering

c. and sacrifice

15. You might wonder

16. 'well if the Jews in Jesus' day

had the Old Testament

a.and thought the Messiah would

not suffer but come only in

power and judgement

b.then does the Old Testament

even teach that Jesus would

suffer?'

b.Exposition – Isa 53:3-4

i. An unexpected lowly Messiah

1. The answer is yes, look at Isaiah

53:3-4

3 He was despised and forsaken

of men,

A man of sorrows and

acquainted with grief;

And like one from whom men

hide their face

He was despised, and we did

not esteem Him.

4 Surely our griefs He Himself

bore,

And our sorrows He carried;

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him

stricken,

Smitten of God, and afflicted.

a. Isaiah taught that the Messiah

is someone that people would

despise

i. and not esteem or honor

him

b. That he would bear grief and

sorrow

i. and that the Jews would

assume that he was cursed

by God

c. This was prophesied about the

Messiah hundreds of years

before Jesus even came

2. These were the things that James

and John were unconcerned about

3. They were so focused on the

common thought

a. of the Messiah who would bring

them victory

i. and glory and honor

ii. that they became so self-

absorbed.

4. People may think that the

prosperity gospel is a modern

invention

a. but James and John believed in

the prosperity gospel of their

day!

5.They believed in ancient Israelite
prosperity gospel

ii. Modern parallel

1.This is why people like

a.Joel Osteen

b.TD Jakes

c. and Benny Hinn

i. who teach a prosperity

gospel must be avoided

ii. And this is why their false

teaching should be rejected

iii. Because they teach a pain-free

1. Me-centered

Christianity

2. When Christianity is

a. Not pain free

b. And other-centered

2. Just like the ancient Israelites today

a. many Christians today have a

false understanding of

Christianity

3.They believe Christianity is all about

‘me’

4. That Christianity is about getting

what you want

5.That if you do good works

a.and have enough faith

b.then you can live your best life

now

c. and have wealth and health

6.You go to any big bookstore

a. almost all the Christian books
are exclusively prosperity
gospel

b. because this is the common
understanding of Christianity
today

i. This teaching creates
nothing but self-centered
Christians

ii. The sun revolves around
them

iii. It's about 'me, me, me' and
what I can get

iv. A consumeristic Christianity

7. And it reproduces fake Christians

a. People who believe in such a
teaching try to evangelize

i. by presenting Christianity

as,

ii. 'if you believe in Jesus he
will cure your depression

iii. if you believe in Jesus you
will have a happy life'

*iv. It creates Christians who
only believe if they receive.*

8. This is exactly who James and John
were

a. They followed Jesus for the very
same reasons many Christians
today follow Jesus:

b. Only for the benefits

c. And what's in it for me

c. Exposition

i. So Jesus challenged them on their
attitude. Look at v.38

1. First Jesus says 'you do not know what you are asking.'

a. There is a little irony with this statement.

b. Go back before this passage and look at v.32-34 (read).

ii. As Jesus was on his final journey to Jerusalem

1. he told them that he was going to be killed

2. and three days later rise again

3. The very leader that they follow
was to suffer an excruciating and
humiliating death

4. And the very next thing they ask is,
a. 'give us the best honors, and
the best rewards'

iii. Clearly, if the leader they follow is going
to be killed

1. how much more will the followers
be treated?

2. They should be worried and
concerned about Jesus,

3. and they should even be concerned
about their own lives

iv. However, they were so blinded by their
hopes

1. and dreams of glory

2. that they completely missed the
fact

3. that following one who is going to
suffer and die

4. means that they would also have to
suffer and die

v. This is what Jesus asks them when he says,

1. 'are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?'

vi. The cup and baptism Jesus refers to

1. is the suffering and death he is about to experience

2. In the garden of Gethsemane

3. When Jesus asked the father to let the 'cup' pass from him

4. he was asking to avoid God's wrath

a. but as Jesus concluded, 'not my
will but your will be done.'

vii. So Jesus is telling James and John,

1. 'You don't get it

2. I told you earlier that I am going to
Jerusalem to die

a. and be raised on the third day

3. If you follow me you must also
suffer and die

4. Are you still willing to follow me?'

d. Exposition

i. James and John respond in v.39, 'we are able'

ii. Clearly, Jesus calls them sons of thunder for a reason

1. These were brothers who were brave and zealous

2. However, their quick and prideful answer was not met with equal response

3. as they fled and went into hiding when Jesus was crucified

iii. This is what 'me-centered' Christianity
and prosperity teaching creates

1. It creates people who are quick to
click accept the terms of agreement

a. and ignore, not fine, but big

bold print that says,

i. 'warning: you may lose your
life for following Jesus'.

2. It creates people who say they will
still follow Jesus when the trials
come

3. and when the trials do come they

leave

4. They stop coming to church or they

outright reject Jesus

iv. So how does Jesus respond?

1. Does he say,

2. 'no, don't worry there is no

suffering or pain here

3. only health and wealth come and

join!'

v. Jesus responds,

1. 'the cup that I drink you shall drink

a. and you shall be baptized with
the baptism with which I am
baptized.'

2. Jesus is saying

a. as followers and disciples of me
b. you will also suffer and die

3. Also the rewards you are asking for

a. are for the Father to give not
me.

b. Meaning that the you won't
actually know what reward you
are getting for following me

i. until everything is over.

c. Still want to follow me? That's

verse 40

e. Application

i. Church do you still want to follow
Jesus?

ii. Do you still want to follow Jesus even if
there will be much

1. Pain

2. Suffering

3. and hardship?

iii. Do you still want to follow Jesus

1. even if you don't know exactly what
reward you will be getting in
heaven?

iv. While Christians are guaranteed and
secured salvation forever by the Holy
Spirit

1. I worry about Christians who are
only Christians

a. because they want to go to
heaven

v. There are many stories and examples of
people who have visions of hell

1. and learn about God's judgement

from the bible

2. and then claim to be Christians

3. But later on, they eventually leave

Christianity

4. Becoming a Christian merely to

escape hell

a. does not create Christians

5. They are no different than

Christians who are in it for the

health and wealth

a. because they are following

Jesus only if it benefits them.

vi. For some of you, health and wealth

1. or going to heaven isn't even the

benefit you are seeking

vii. Some of come to Christianity because

of the social and family benefits

1. It makes you feel good to be around

a kind and loving people

2. It makes you feel good to be with

your family

3. It makes you feel good to think,

that if I join Christianity,

a. 'I will get to be with my family

in heaven.'

viii. As noble as that sounds, even this is a

poor reason to follow Jesus

f. Exposition

i. Look at Matthew 10:34-37,

34 "Do not think that I came to bring

peace on the earth; I did not come to

bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I came

to set a man against his father, and a

daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. 37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

1.If you want to follow Jesus you

must love no one

2.even your own family or wife above

him

3. You must even follow Jesus

regardless if your family is in

heaven with you or not

4. Do you still want to follow Jesus?

g. Application

i. Church, follow Jesus because

1. he is the way

2. the truth

3. and the life

4. not because he gives you things

5. or because of family

ii. If you follow Jesus only because he gives you things

1. how is that any different than believing in Santa Claus

2. or the Easter Bunny?

h. If you want to be a great Christian

i. you must expect hardship rather than easiness

ii. I'm not saying that being a Christian means to suffer 24/7 either

iii. You know this

iv. We live in one of the richest areas in
the world here in Fairfax, VA

v. We are definitely not suffering 24/7

vi. we all know

1. peace

2. comfort

3. and prosperity well

vii. There is joy

1. Peace

2. and comfort in the Lord

viii. But to follow Jesus and never expect
hardship is foolish

ix. If you want to be a great Christian
expect hardship

2. Serve others not yourself (v.41-44)

a. Exposition

i. You might think,

1. 'this is just James and John

2. The rest of the apostles, they can't

all be that bad!

ii. Unfortunately this isn't the case look at

v.41

1. We see here that the other ten
apostles were upset with James and
John

a. because they also wanted the
same honor and glory

b. and also because James and
John were asking the rest to be
excluded

i. from their special
fellowship and honor with
Jesus

iii. Read v.42

1. So Jesus calls all twelve to correct them

a. and tells them how pagan

leaders abuse their power

b. and authority to dominate

others

c. and to gratify themselves

2. This is exactly with the 12 are doing

a. They are arguing who is to be

the greatest

b. They are concerned with who

gets to lead who

- i. and they are concerned
with protecting their own
honor and glory

3. It's almost as if Jesus is comparing
them to pagan kings

iv. Read v.33-34

1. Jesus teaches them that this type of
self-serving attitude is not to be the
attitude they are to have

a. Instead Jesus completely flips
the idea of rulership

- i. greatness

ii. and supreme influence on
its head

2. Instead of enjoying and harnessing
the power and authority you have

a. Jesus teaches us to instead be a
servant

b. He also says that we are to be
slaves of all

c. That's right Jesus' idea of
greatness is to be a servant and
a slave

b. Application

i. If you want to be a great Christian

1. Serve others not yourself

ii. Use your power and authority not for
yourself

1. but for others

2. use it to serve others

iii. This is for all Christians but it starts with
the leadership

1. Its not a surprise that this

conversation was held with the 12

apostles

iv. If you are a leader within this church

1. you must use the gifts and unique

talent God gave you

a. not to be garner more attention

for yourself

b. or more praise for yourself

c. or more glory for yourself

d. You must instead use it to serve

others

v. Instead of seeking the spotlight

1. seek to move the spotlight on to

others

a. by using your unique gifts to
build others up and serve them

vi. And if you are not a Christian leader

1. but you are a father or husband

2. you must immediately apply this in
your marriage

3. You already know this especially
fathers and husbands here who
have been married for decades

4. that your role as a husband

5. your role as the leader of your
marriage

6. your physical and emotional
strength

7. is to be used not for you to be
served

a. and be comfy on the couch to
watch football or basketball

8. but to be used to serve your wife
and honor God

vii. In fact, this is what we have been
learning in our men's group

1. so I encourage every man to come

2. and I encourage every wife to
encourage your husband to come
3. if he is not coming already
4. to come and learn how to serve his
wife

viii. When the leaders in the church

1. And the leaders in the home
become servant leaders
2. then the whole church becomes an
other-centered church
3. A church focused on serving and
loving one another

4. rather than a vain and prideful

church

5. is a place to be

6. where people grow in the Lord a

a. and other people want to join

ix. The best way for us to specifically apply

this is to come to church in person

c. Exposition

i. Hebrews 10:23-25 says,

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our

hope without wavering, for He who

promised is faithful; 24 and let us

consider how to stimulate one another
to love and good deeds, 25 not
forsaking our own assembling together,
as is the habit of some, but encouraging
one another; and all the more as you
see the day drawing near

1. The author of Hebrews is teaching

here

a. that we are to hold fast to our

faith in Christ

b. without worrying

c. because Jesus is faithful.

2. And because Jesus is faithful to help

us

a. we are to help others first

b. by intentionally thinking of how

we can inspire each other

c. to love one another and good

deeds

d. to serve one another

e. and to not forsake our own

assembling together.

d. Application

- i. The author of Hebrews is making a command that we are not to skip church
- ii. Church is not optional it is mandated by scripture
- iii. Why did the author make this a command?
 - 1. Because unfortunately it was becoming the habit of some to skip church
 - 2. The Hebrew Christians to whom this letter was written to

a. were dealing with persecution

b. and some medicated it by

compromising on their faith

c. and that compromising made

them lazy and dull to go to

church

iv. Instead of doing that

1. the author of Hebrews says we are

to be encouraging one another

2. The purpose of church

a. is not only to be fed by the

word of God

b.but to serve one another

i. and encourage one another

3.You cannot serve me through a
screen

a.nor can you encourage me
through a screen

b.The bible says that are not to
forsake the assembling

c. meaning a physical assembling
together

d. because we are needed to
serve and encourage one
another

v. Every Christian has a unique spiritual
gift

1. that the Holy Spirit gives them
immediately when they are saved
a. in order to serve one another.

2. There are gifts that people in this
church have that I don't have
a. and there are people in this
church

b.who have the ability to
encourage people in ways I
never can

3.That's why we need every single
member of this church to be here in
person for one another

a.and to serve one another

4.People think that the preacher or
pastor is good and doesn't need
help

a.But that's far from the truth

b.I need to be encouraged by the
church as well as you do

5.If you are sick then stay home

a.but if not

b.there is almost no reason to not
obey the word of God's
command to come to church

vi. Because if we want to be great

Christians

1.we must be here in person to serve
one another

2. We must serve one another and not ourselves

3. Follow Jesus' example on the cross

a. We have all heard the saying,

b. 'do as I say but not as I do.'

c. I don't know anyone who actually follows or respects someone who says that

d. Leaders who don't walk the message they preach

i. are leaders who will never be followed

ii. Thankfully Jesus was not one of those leaders

e. Exposition -v.45

i. 'Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve'

1. When Jesus came he never once used his own power and authority

a. to receive more status and honor

b. which he deserved

2. Imagine God himself coming down to be with us

a. and doesn't expect the fanciest palaces to live in

b. or any other luxuries you can

imagine

ii. Instead he came and lived just like any

average person and served others

1. The level of humility and

servanthood that Jesus displayed

a. is truly unmatched by any king

who ever existed

2. If there was anyone who ever

deserved every single

a. Honor

b. Glory

c. and luxury

d. it was Jesus

e. God in the flesh

f. and yet he did not use his

power and authority

i. to seek these things

ii. but rather he used his

power and authority to

serve others

f. Application

i. If we want to be great Christians

1. we must follow Jesus

2. and we must follow his example

ii. Of all the points today this may be
easiest

1. We follow a leader who is not a
hypocrite

2. who did not merely talk but walked
the talk

3. Be thankful that Jesus gave us a
supreme example

4. of how we are to use our power
and gifts

5. for the good of others

g. Exposition

i. Philippians 2:3-7 says,

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty

conceit, but with humility of mind

regard one another as more important

than yourselves; 4 do not merely look

out for your own personal interests, but

also for the interests of others. 5 Have

this attitude in yourselves which was

also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He

existed in the form of God, did not

regard equality with God a thing to be

grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

h.Application

i. As Christians

1. we need to have a heart free of selfishness

2. and instead a heart and mind to view others

3. as more important than ourselves

ii. To not merely look out for own interests

1. but for the interests of others

2. Instead of asking what benefits me

here

3. ask, what benefits Merbin or John

iii. We have the example of Jesus who

although is God

1. did not let his view of being God

make him proud or arrogant

2. but instead became a human slave

for us

iv. Because if want to be a great Christian,

we must follow Jesus' example.

v. So those are three things we must do if

we want to be great Christians

1. Expect hardship

2. Serve others not yourself

3. Follow Jesus' example on the cross

i. Transition to gospel

i. But you may be asking 'why die he have
to die for us?'

1. Because we deserve judgement

2. We deserve hell for our sins

3. And so Jesus decided to become
the substitute

a.the ransom to God. Jesus paid

the ransom to God

b.because God's holiness and

justice required judgement

c. and so Jesus took on our sins

d.and sacrificed his life to give us

eternal life

e.to those who believe

ii. Isa 53:5-6 says,

5 But He was pierced through for our

transgressions,

He was crushed for our iniquities;

The chastening for our well-being fell
upon Him,

And by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,

Each of us has turned to his own way;

But the Lord has caused the iniquity of
us all

To fall on Him.

1. The Messiah was long ago

prophesied to come

a. and be pierced for our

transgressions, our sins

b.To heal us

i. not primarily physically as
many prosperity teachers
and faith healer teach

ii. But to heal us spiritually

iii. Heal us from spiritual
blindness

1.and the spiritual cancer
of sin

2.so that we would turn
to him and be saved

2.Gospel

a. And that is what God is offering
to you today.

b. That if you realize that you
deserve judgement for your
sins

c. And that your works are
nothing but worthless rags
before God

d. And that you accept Jesus as
your substitute

i. To take your sins on the
cross

ii. And give you his eternal life

iii. If you believe in these

things by faith alone

iv. You will be saved

v. And if you believe today

vi. Today you will be saved

e. And so I urge you to come and

have your spiritual infirmities

healed by his stripes

f. So that you will not die of the

spiritual cancer of sin