

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
March 18, 2018

Not To Be Served, But To Serve  
Mark 10:42-45

10:42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

10:43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

10:44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

10:45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

### **1. The Prediction of the Cross**

This year, we are following Jesus' step to the cross through reading Mark. I was taught that Jesus walked as a servant of God and requested his disciples to walk the same way through the “Lenten Meditation.” And, I newly found that Jesus taught the way of servant when he predicted his death on the cross.

In Mark, Jesus predicted his cross three times. The first one is written in Mark 8:31-9:1. His disciples confessed to him, “You are the Christ.” And Jesus also confess his plan of salvation to his disciples, saying “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.” (Mark 8:31) The word, “the Son of Man” was used for the Messiah in Daniel 7:13. Jesus revealed that he was the Messiah by the word. And at the same time, he used the word, “the

Son of Man,” in the meaning of “a human.” He revealed the mystery that the Messiah became a human for obeying and suffering according to God’s will. He left the place being equal to God and became the servant of God. He determined to go through the way of the cross. The word of prediction tells us his readiness for the cross.

Peter opposed Jesus immediately after hearing the prediction. He began to rebuke Jesus, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But Jesus said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan!” (Matthew 16:22-23) Peter thought Jesus should not suffer if he was the Messiah, but Jesus said that he had to suffer because he was the Messiah. At that time, the disciples hadn’t understood yet that Jesus was the “Suffering Servant” in Isaiah 53.

After having predicted his cross, Jesus taught the disciples to bear their own cross and follow him. To believe in Jesus means to follow him. And, to follow him means to become a servant as Jesus became the servant of God and walked in God’s way.

The second prediction is in Mark 9:30-32. Jesus said, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” (Mark 9:31) But the disciples argued saying, “Who is the greatest among us.” Such argument was far from Jesus’ teaching of the way of servant. Then Jesus taught them saying, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35) And he took a child and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” (Mark 9:37) The child was shorter than adults, but the child became tallest in Jesus’ arm while the adults were sitting on

the floor. Jesus taught his disciple that the least person was the greatest person through the object lesson. Jesus showed the way of servant in the second prediction, too.

## **2. The Third Prediction**

The third prediction is shown in Mark 10:32-34, which we read last Wednesday on March 14. Jesus and his disciples were on the way to Jerusalem where the Passover celebration was going to be held. Jesus looked toward Jerusalem and said, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.” (Mark 10:33-34) Jesus did not hide anything. He disclosed everything, including the location of Passion and how it would be carried out, and his disciples clearly listened to his words.

However, the disciples were arguing again about “who is the greatest”, because James and John asked Jesus to grant them to sit, one at his right hand and one at his left, in his glory. When the rest of disciples heard what James and John asked for, they were very angry not because of thinking of Jesus but because of young James and John ignored the elders and asked Him a favor before them. All the disciples were behaving like that.

That is why the disciples had to be educated again about the “way of servant” should be. Most of the disciples were fishermen, but they left a boat and dropped fishing net and became to engage in a missionary work with Jesus. It was a big change. Indeed, the daily life

and work had changed, but the basis of their life and the principle of their action did not change. They were living according to the principle of the world.

Jesus requests for change to the believers, but it is not a superficial change. Those who have not related to church before start to attending the worship service every week and to participating church activities. That is a big change for them, but what Jesus wants is the inner changes, not external changes. Jesus wants the believers to live a life by the principle of the Kingdom of God, but not by the worldly principles. That would certainly change person's words, attitudes and action, but the change begins with the inner aspects, such as reason, will and emotion. If it were not with the inner change, there is no meaning with the external change.

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." The believers are deemed to be a resident of the Kingdom of God, but they still live in this world. Therefore, they often judge things according to the worldly principles. They judge based on "gain and loss" instead of "good and evil" and prioritize for material benefits instead of spiritual blessings. To select for good despite of loss, to select for spiritual blessings despite of giving up material benefits, the "reason" and "will" renewed by God's grace have to work.

"This world" can be seen, but the "God's Kingdom" can not necessarily be seen, and even believers act according to the worldly principle. Then, even if they are saved from "this world", they are

“conformed” to “this world”. The word “conform” used in Romans 12:2 also has a meaning of “assimilate” and refers to a situation where a person is 100% “conformed to this world” even if they become “children of light”. This is worse than being in the “Kingdom of God” half of the time and in “this world” the rest of the time. The believers have to be “transformed” like Jesus, not “conformed” to this world. That is what Roman 12:2 teaches us.

Anyone can tell that greedy and fornication are worldly things but “to stand above others” is considered to be admirable and favorable. Indeed, those who get promoted at work have ability as well as they make efforts, so they deserve to be placed at a higher position. However, if the social status, honor and power themselves become the purpose, and such a thing as stepping onto others is allowed to get a higher status or killing others is allowed to keep one’s power, is the principle of “this world,” but not of the “Kingdom of God” where believers live.

This is what I actually experienced in the past: there was “a congratulatory address” to a pastor who was transferred from the church in a country side of Japan to Tokyo. I felt something strange there. Even in the church, they are making a decision and action based on the worldly principle. Since churches are supposed to show the “Kingdom of God,” we want to live in the “Kingdom of God” as a missionary for the Kingdom of God, not being “conformed to this world” or “assimilated to this world.” Church should work according to completely different principle from the principle of “the world.” Church should stand differently from the worldly things.

### **3. The Way of Servant**

Let's think about the principal of church. Jesus said, "But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all." Jesus taught us to become "servants", not "masters," and taught "to serve", not "to dominate."

Of course, this does not mean that churches shall not have any kind of leaders. In the early churches, the twelve apostles were great authorities, which was teaching and leading the whole church. People who were called "Overseers" taught and led the regional churches. "Elders" governed their churches. In, 1 Timothy chapter 5 and 1 Peter chapter 5, they mentioned about the "Elders", "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17) "Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses." (1 Timothy 5:19) "Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another," (1 Peter 5:5). The elders who can teach the word of God were called "Pastor-Teacher", and for this duty, Galatians 6:6 said, "One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches."

However, the leadership does not dominate the people by prioritizing the leader's humanly thoughts. The leadership is used to fulfill Jesus' will, and the churches shall become the "Outpost" of God's Kingdom. This kind of leadership is called "Servant Leadership" and this is what we should seek for. I said "we," this "we" indicates the leaders and the people who work with the leaders. The leadership needs the "servant-ship" because the leaders can

nothing, and the leadership does not grow. I became a pastor when I was young; however, the elder people were very humble and supported me and followed me. I had grown up by those people and I really appreciate it.

Jesus taught his disciples about the way of “servant”. He said, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” I believe that this is the most important verse in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus should be served by people. We shall offer our life, love him, and follow him. However, Jesus served the people who had not served or loved Jesus, and he sacrificed himself on the cross. Jesus did not only teach us the way of “servant” but also show us the way of “servant” through his life and death. Jesus was the Son of God but became the “Servant of God,” He became the “Suffering Servant,” and died to save us from our sins. Jesus even became the “Servant of sinners.” The believers of this Jesus receive the mind of “Servant” and be able to walk on the way of “Servant.”

Jesus predicted his disciples about his cross three times because he wanted to teach them the happening of cross was not an accident but it was the will of God to save people from sins. And Jesus also want to teach the disciples to walk in the way of “servant” as Jesus walked in the way of God’s will as a “Servant of God.” We believe in Jesus who became the “servant.” We shall walk the way of “servant” as the way of our life and the principle of our life.

### **(Prayer)**

Dear Father, we have seen Jesus who walked on the way of “servant” today. Please give the mind of “servant” us who believe in Jesus.

Teach us how to serve Jesus as his servants. We can learn it and get the power to walk in the way through the cross. Help us understand the meaning of the cross, love it, and proclaim it. In Jesus' name. Amen.