

Sermon Series: “10 Words from Jesus on Sharing the Faith”

“Ransom: Why Did Jesus Come?”

Pastor Norwood N. “Woody” Hingle III, Ph.D.

Sunday, August 15, 2021

Have you ever been ransomed? According to my *American Heritage* dictionary, a ransom is, “The release of a captive in return for payment of a demanded price”. E.g., I recall when I was about 12 years old I was riding my friend’s bike around Paris Ave. and Mirabeau Ave. when I decided to stop and check something on the bike. Before I knew it I was surrounded by about four or five boys about my age on bikes and one of them told me to get off the bike. Knowing they wanted to take it from me, I said no. We went back and forth on this, and I did not know how this was going to end up— I was determined not to get off the bike, yet they clearly outnumbered me. All of a sudden, out of the blue, and young man whom I barely knew from my neighborhood was driving by and saw my predicament, and pulled his car over, got out, and told the boys to leave me alone. Immediately, my problem was solved! The boys took off in fright and I was free to ride my bike home without worrying about the bike being stolen! I had been ransomed! I was a captive of some young boys about my age, and I was released through the necessary effort— an adult male coming into the picture. Perhaps you too can think of a time when you were ransomed. It might not have been dramatic, but it was meaningful for you. We see there are two aspects involved with a ransom: someone in a problem or predicament, and a price for the release from that problem or predicament. As we will see in today’s passage, that well explains the natural state of everyone on the planet.

READ Mark 10:41-46 (p. 47)

CONTEXT: James and John have just asked Jesus for a special place when Jesus comes in His Kingdom. They want seats of power, positions of authority, seated on Jesus' right and left hand. Jesus asks whether they are willing to drink the cup He is to drink and to be baptized with His baptism— both references to His suffering. They say they are willing, and Jesus tells them essentially that such positions are not for Him to grant but for those for whom it has been prepared— a passive reference to God the Father.

READ v 41. “The disciples were, like the Three Stooges, comically and yet tragically, marching in lock-step with the world's values. Cf. Luke 22:24-27.” E.g., the Three Stooges, with Mo, Larry, and Curly, always seemed to be in some kind of trouble as they often challenged one another over who was in charge. Mo would assert himself as the leader and the smart one, punch Curly when he was out of line, and Curly would say to him, “Oh, a wise guy!” I recall once Mo, Larry, and Curly were talking to three attractive women, and Curly tries to impress them and says, “We're not ordinary people— we're morons!” This is kind of how the disciples are. Here Jesus is beginning a ministry of living for God and serving others, and James and John are interested in who's going to get the special places of honor. In fact, in Matthew 20, the other place in the Bible this story is told, we find out James and John actually got their Mom to speak to Jesus and ask Him this question! And the other disciples are furious about their going behind their backs to make such an arrangement! It is interesting that in Luke 22:24-27 the disciples again break out into an argument as to which one of them is the greatest— during the Lord's Supper! And Jesus has to remind them of the same words we find later in this passage.

READ vv 42-44. “Jesus did not tweak the world’s standards of greatness, He destroyed them! For God looks not on a person’s power and status, but on the humble heart. Cf. Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:11-12.” Sometimes people have the wrong notion about something and need to be “cured” of such wrong notions. E.g., I recall reading in David Maraniss’ book *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi*, during Vince Lombardi’s first year at the Green Bay Packers and the players were just starting to meet him and get to know him, word around the team was that Lombardi was quite different from the previous coach, who had been known as an easy going player’s pal, a player’s coach. One guy was coming to meet Lombardi for the first time and he as talking to a teammate about what “Vince” was like, and the player said in effect, “I don’t think you should call him ‘Vince’, but ‘Coach’.” The player disagreed, and wanted to call him Vince. So he goes to meet Coach Lombardi, and he comes back to the teammate in a sour state— he was off the team! Lombardi destroyed the notion that he was to be treated with disrespect as the coach! Jesus here destroys another notion-- that following Him will mean that they will be kings and lord it over people, like the Gentiles did! Instead, they were to be servants— even the word for slave is used here— δοῦλος, as in “whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all” (πάντων δοῦλος). Jesus showed that by touching a leper before He healed him (Mark 1:41) and washed the disciples feet (John 13). Have you ever seen someone in the Body of Christ doing the servant tasks, such as the dirtiest, least wanted task? E.g., I have seen many of you doing such things— cleaning dishes after a church meal, cleaning bathrooms, driving people to church or other places they need to go, etc. E.g., I recall in the first church I served, I had a friend named Tommy and he was always there to help me. I recall in that first appointment I served two churches, but when I arrived at the church I was told that actually I had a third church to serve— one that met on Tuesday nights, and was called Pine

Hill. This church involved a thirty minute evening service from like 6:00-6:30 PM, and then we ate a potluck in the sanctuary after that. Actually, the church was just an old sanctuary which was left open during the week, and about 15-20 people came to these services. Once in the winter we turned on the gas heaters, and while I was preaching wasps would come down from the attic rafters and hover just above our heads— so I was preaching and dodging wasps at the same time! Thankfully, no one was stung, and oddly, all those in attendance took the wasps in stride, like the same old thing they knew every year! But I was horrified, afterward, and I told Tommy about it. So Tommy said for me to meet him at the church later in the week at a certain time and we would check it out, and when I arrived I could tell Tommy had gotten there about thirty minutes before I did, and I tried to walk through the front door, but I could barely get in because hundreds of wasps were flying out the front door! Finally I got in and found Tommy was walking on the rafters in the attic with cans of wasp spray, and he came down to me eventually. I asked him about what it was like up there, and he said he got stung a couple of times, but all was good! I will never forget that sacrifice of service Tommy did for me so I could preach there the rest of the winter and not have to dodge wasps as I preached! Maybe you had a brother or sister in Christ serve you in such a way that was a great blessing. That is when we are functioning as the Body of Christ— not concerned about being recognized, getting credit, being the one in front, but rather the one willing to do what is difficult and naturally avoided by others. I like what Micah 6:8 says: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Jesus said elsewhere in Matthew 23:11-12, “The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted”.

READ v 45. “Jesus shared how He is the ultimate example of what He is describing— for He came to die so the many could go free. Cf. Isaiah 53:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19.” In popular culture today it is often thought that Jesus came to bring simply love, peace, and happiness. E.g., or as we see in the Charlie Brown Christmas, which I enjoy, and there is a quote from Luke 2:8-14 by Linus which says in part that the angels brought the shepherds good news of great joy for all people, and that the heavenly host said in God’s presence that there would be on earth peace among those whom he favors. This is true, but if this were the only meaning of Jesus’ coming then God could have sent one of the prophets. What needs to be included is Luke 1:76-77 where the father of John the Baptist, Zechariah, gives a prophecy over his son John the Baptist that he will prepare the way of the Lord who is coming to bring knowledge of salvation and forgiveness of sins. The way Jesus is to win salvation is by being a ransom for many. This phrase from Mark 10:45 is often seen, correctly I believe, to be an echo of Isaiah 53. K. Kertelge (in *λύτρον, ου, τό*, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, p. 365) states, “With a clear echo of Isaiah 53:10-12 Jesus’ sacrifice of his life is interpreted as a vicarious deed ‘for many’”, in reference to this word ransom (*λύτρον*), which is used only twice in the New Testament— Mark 10:45 and its parallel Matthew 20:28. READ Isaiah 53:10-12. Jesus died in your place and my place. It is an example of incredible love rarely seen. E.g., I am reminded of a story about a Catholic priest during World War II who was in a concentration camp run by the Nazis, and one day the Nazis were going to execute a man, and the man pleaded for his life and said he had a wife and family who relied on him, and just then the priest spoke up and said to take him in place of this man; startled by this, the guards recovered, and agreed, and placed the priest in a hot house where, without nourishment, died. In a similar way, this is what the Lord did for us. We all are born in condemnation because of our sins and unworthiness before

God, and the curse of the Old Testament law is that we have completely broken fellowship with God as a result of that. So Jesus, being sinless, took our place in being alienate from God on the cross, and being God, did this sacrifice for all of humanity, and proved this sacrifice was efficacious by rising from the dead. For more on this, please see Galations 3:10-14.

“How does Jesus here instruct us no both the how and what we share with those who don’t believe?” At least two things come to mind from this text. First, we are to be servants to one another and to the world in a way that honors God first. So, how can we do that this week? Second, we are to tell the world that all of the bad things we have done can be forgiven, for someone has paid our ransom. Just as I could have that freeing feeling riding the bike home way from being captured, we can live life free, knowing the complete freedom of God’s forgiveness.