

INTRODUCTION

We live in a day of corporate mergers. Most of us can remember when there were many different airline companies, and now most of them have merged into the big three: United, Delta, and America.

In this time of merger mania, I got to thinking that if certain companies merged, they would end up having humorous names. For instance, if Fed Ex merged with UPS they might be called FedUp. Second, if Knotts Berry Farm merged with the National Organization of Women they might be called Knott NOW. In Russia, if Zippo lighters merged with Audi motors and Mountain Dew, they might be called...wait for it...ZipAudiDew, Da? (Da means "yes" in Russian).

If 3M merged with Goodyear and started a restaurant chain, it might be called MMM Good. They get worse. If Polygram Records merged with Warner Brothers and Zesta Crackers they'd be called Polly Warner Cracker. And thankfully, the last one: if Hale Business Systems merged with Mary Kay, Fuller Brush and W.E. Grace they might be called Hale Mary Fuller Grace.

Several weeks ago I saw a guy wearing a t-shirt with the letters WIIFM on it. Now, I've heard WWJD before, but I had no clue what those letters meant. I wondered if there was an FM station for a Wii game or something. So I pulled out my iPhone and googled it. It stands for "What's in it for me?" I discovered this is a popular question people ask in our self-centered culture. Whether or not you've asked that question out loud, experts say this is what drives many of your decisions. What's in it for me? Some of you come to church with the attitude, "What's in it for me?"

There's nothing new about this attitude. Jesus spent three years leading and teaching twelve disciples, and even up until the end they were asking the question, "What's in it for me?" We're in the tenth chapter of Mark, but we have now come to a point where Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem to die. Mark has 16 chapters, and over a third of the book is devoted to the last week in the earthly life of Jesus.

Mark 10:32. "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. '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.' Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.' 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked. They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.' '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?' 'We can' they answered. Jesus said to them, '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.' When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 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. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 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.”

This is the third time in three chapters Jesus predicted his death. In Mark 8 He predicted it and Peter thought, “What’s in it for me?” And Peter rebuked Jesus for talking about dying. Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan. Here’s your WIIFM t-shirt.” In the ninth chapter, Jesus predicted his suffering and death again. Then He asked the disciples what they were arguing about. They finally admitted they were arguing about which one of them was the greatest. Here’s your WIIFM t-shirt, guys.

And now, for the third time Jesus tells them He is going to suffer and die and James and John are clueless. They said, “Do for us whatever we ask.” Now, that’s a trap right there. Parents, if your kids ever ask you that question, don’t agree to it. Jesus didn’t either. He said, “What do you want?” They said, “Jesus, we know that when you get to Jerusalem, they are going to crown you and enthrone you as the Jewish Messiah. You’ll need a Vice President and a Prime Minister. We want to be your right-hand man and your left-hand man.” At some point, you’ve got to think Jesus had to slap his palm to forehead and say, “Didn’t you just hear what I said? Here’s your WIIFM shirt.”

There are three major themes addressed in this passage: Suffering, Servanthood, and Sacrifice. I want to take those three major themes and apply them to our lives.

1. FOLLOWING JESUS PUTS US ON THE ROAD TO SUFFERING

Jesus said, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.” (Mark 10:39) James and John assumed the cup was a royal goblet full of the finest wine. They assumed the baptism was an immersion into fame and glory. But Jesus was talking about a cup of suffering and a baptism of agony.

If the Lord tarries, we’re all going to die. But do you know, where, when and how you will die? None of us know that. But Jesus was God in the flesh; and He knew exactly where, when, how, and why he was going to die. He made eight amazing predictions about his death. He said, “1) I’m going to Jerusalem. 2) The religious leaders will condemn me to death. 3) They will hand me over to the Roman Gentiles. 4) They will mock me. 5) They will spit on me. 6) They will flog me. 7) They will kill me (in Matthew’s account Jesus said “they will crucify me.”) And the eighth prediction was the most amazing. He said, “Three days later, I’ll rise from the dead.”

Jesus knew his journey to Jerusalem would be a roadway to suffering. The King James Version says “He set his face toward Jerusalem.” He was determined to go, even though he knew he would suffer and die.

For all of His earthly life, Jesus knew He would be nailed to a Roman cross. In the 19th century English artist Holman Hunt visited the Holy Land and he painted a picture he called “The

Shadow of Death.” It portrays Jesus as a young man working in the carpenter shop. It’s at the end of a long day and He stretches His arms out. The setting sun casts a shadow of a cross on the wall of the shop. His mother, Mary, is pictured on her knees staring up at the shadow.

We hear a lot today about the dangers of bullying. Children and teens can sometimes be very cruel in mocking their peers. Jesus was the target of extreme bullying. Nobody likes to be mocked.

When I was a young preacher-boy in college I never gave up a chance to preach. One day I went with some other students to the Birmingham City Jail to preach. We walked into a hall outside a large cell where 8 or 10 inmates were sitting. I opened my Bible and started preaching. Some of the inmates listened, but several of them were talking and laughing and making fun of me. I finally made it through my short message, and asked if anyone wanted to be saved. There were several remarks like, “Yeah, can you save me from the judge?” But there was one prisoner who had listened quietly to my message, and he motioned for me to come closer. I thought, “Yes! This man wants to be saved.” He leaned his head between the bars and as I got closer to him, I leaned toward him. That’s when he spit right in my face. All the other prisoners started laughing. First, I was shocked, then I was angry. I wanted to punch his face. But I didn’t. I just made a beeline for the closest restroom to wash my face. I never went back to that jail to preach. It was a bad memory. But one day I was reading this passage of scripture where Jesus predicted that the Roman soldiers would mock Him and spit on Him. It took away the pain of the memory as I realize that Jesus endured much more than I did.

We shouldn’t be surprised when people mock us for our beliefs. The Bible promises when we follow Jesus, there will be suffering. Peter wrote, “Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ...If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.” (1 Peter 4:12, 16)

Jesus predicted if James and John followed Him, they would suffer. Of all the disciples, these two stand like bookends of martyrs. James was the first disciple to die, and we believe John was the last. According to Acts 12, James was the first of the Twelve to die for Jesus. Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, who had tried to kill the infant Jesus, arrested James. Then he had a Roman soldier behead him with a sword. Can you picture James kneeling there? As the sword flashed through the air, I wondered if James thought about a cup. He gulped down the full bitter cup of suffering.

Tertullian wrote that the Apostle John was plunged into boiling oil; that’s a literal baptism of suffering. But John survived this attempt to kill him and was exiled to the Island of Patmos where he was given the vision of the Revelation, which is the last book in the Bible. Tradition says he later died as an old man of natural causes in Ephesus.

If you follow Jesus you will suffer also. We have seen a shift in our culture from Christian to non-Christian. And the next step in the process is anti-Christian. We’re seeing it already. We live in a time where Bible-believing Christians are considered dangerous, intolerant, religious nuts. The time may well come when some of the remarks I make about God’s definition of marriage is

considered hate speech. Don't think this isn't happening. In February, Atlanta Fire Chief, Kelvin Cochran was fired because he wrote a devotional book for the men in his Baptist church about the Biblical view of marriage and sexuality.

So don't be surprised when you suffer. Jesus suffered and if you're following Him, you're on a road of suffering. How should we respond? Jesus said, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." (John 15:18) He said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven." (Matthew 5:11-12)

It's easy to praise the Lord when things are going well. But we must keep rejoicing and praising the Lord even when we're going through times of suffering. I love the words to Matt Redman's song, Blessed be Your Name. He writes, "Blessed be Your name; When the sun's shining down on me; When the world's all it should be; Blessed be Your name! Blessed be Your name; On the road marked with suffering; Though there's pain in the offering; Blessed be Your name." The first theme is suffering. The second theme is Servanthood.

2. IN GOD'S KINGDOM, THE SERVANTS ARE THE STARS

Jesus said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." (Mark 10:43-44) In Hollywood there is the Walk of Fame, where stone and brass stars in the sidewalk honor the stars of entertainment. There are 2,500 stars all the way from Bud Abbott to Keenan Wynn. But God has another list of stars and they are the ones who serve. The world values greatness by how many servants a person has, but God assigns value according to how many people we serve.

Jesus was willing to set aside his position beside the Father in heaven to come to planet earth and become a servant. This humble attitude is described in Philippians 2. Eugene Peterson paraphrases it this way: "Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion." (Philippians 2:5-8 MSG)

God's kingdom is an upside-down version of our world. In God's Kingdom, the servants are considered great. Jesus often said, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." It is our nature to push to the front of the line or the top of the heap. But in God's kingdom, greatness is seen in someone who says, "No please. You go first."

The truth, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first doesn't make sense in human terms. Let me illustrate this. Let's imagine we advertised we were going to give away 1,000 free HD televisions on a given day and time. We park an 18-wheeler full of the new televisions in our North parking lot. Can you imagine how early people would start lining up? Like Black Friday, there would be people camping out days early to get a place near the front of the line. Finally the

day and time arrives and there is a line of people stretching all the way behind the Student Center to the Mother Frances building. I step up on the back of the truck with a bullhorn and say, "Who wants a free HD TV?" The crowd is cheering. Then I say, "There's one thing I need you to do, everybody turn around and face the opposite direction." Then we drive the truck to the end of the line and start giving out the TV's to those who were last in line. Now they're first.

What do you think would happen? I would be the most hated person in Tyler. Those who stood in line near the front would be screaming and pushing to get the TV they think they deserved. But that's just it. The TVs were a free gift, and nothing was said about who lined up first. They just assumed since they were first they'd get a TV.

That's like grace. Grace isn't fair. We don't deserve it; it's a gift God gives. I believe one day when we line up in heaven to receive our rewards, our idea of who should be first in line may be different than God's. We think the celebrity Christians, or the global evangelists will be first in line. But God may say, "About face!" And that faithful woman who taught children in Sunday School for 30 years is now the first to hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

The first theme was suffering, the second theme was servanthood, and the last theme is sacrifice.

3. JESUS PAID THE FULL PRICE TO RANSOM US FROM BONDAGE

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

If you saw the movie "Captain Phillips," you know ships sailing off the coast of Somalia are often the targets of pirates. These pirates hijack ships and hold them and the crew for ransom. In 2009 alone, there were over 100 hijackings and shipping companies paid over \$58 million in ransoms.

Kidnapping for ransom is a crime in every part of the world. But there was a legal, loving ransom paid that affects all of us. Notice two things about this ransom.

(1) We are born in slavery to our sin

The reason Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born again is because we all suffer from a bad birth. We are born as sinners. The Bible says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." (Psalm 58: 3 KJV) Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." (John 8:34)

Spiritually speaking, we need to be ransomed because our own sin and disobedience has kidnapped us from our relationship with our Creator. And we can't afford to ransom ourselves.

Pastor John Piper comments on this verse. He wrote, "Our sin had kidnapped us and put us in a prison of our own making, far from God, in the chains of iniquity. We were under God's holy wrath, and powerless to free ourselves. One of the images the Bible uses for our liberation is ransom. A ransom had to be paid."

(2) Jesus paid the ultimate price to set us free!

He paid the gold of His blood and the silver of His tears. I've always loved the simplicity of Diego Velasquez' painting of Jesus on the cross. I chose a replica of it for our Gallery of the Life of Christ in Crosswalk. The Bible says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

When Jesus died on the cross, He paid the ransom for our sins. Who received the ransom payment? Some people corrupt this beautiful doctrine by saying the ransom was paid to Satan, but nothing could be further from the truth. It's not like Satan had to be "paid off" to let us go. What happened to Satan on the cross was not payment, but defeat. So who received the payment? God the Father accepted the payment in the form of a perfect sacrifice. Ephesians 5:2 says "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

CONCLUSION

We've learned about suffering, servanthood, and sacrifice. These are deep themes. But whenever you study the Bible you should always ask yourself these two words: SO WHAT? Now that I've learned this, what changes will this make in my life? Here's a good answer: Because Jesus gave His life away for us, we should give our lives away in service to others. I'm so glad that when Jesus approached the cross He didn't stop and ask, "What's in it for me?" He knew what was in it for us—our salvation and our liberation. So, take off your WIIFM t-shirt and start living a life of service to others.

An ancient legend tells the story of two kings, Cyrus the Great and Cagular. Cyrus' Persian army conquered Cagular's kingdom. Cyrus was known to be cruel and harsh to the kings of the lands he conquered. He had Cagular and his wife captured and put in chains. They were transported to Cyrus' palace sentenced to die. Cagular was a strong handsome man and his wife was beautiful, and Cyrus decided to give them a chance to earn their freedom. He said to Cagular, "What would you do if I spared your life?" Cagular bowed and said, "I would return to my home and be your loyal servant as long as I live." Cyrus said, "And what do you do if I spared the life of your wife?" Cagular stood and said, "Your majesty, if you set my wife free I would gladly die in her place."

Cyrus was moved by the answers and decided to set them both free and he returned Cagular to his home as his governor. When they returned to their home Cagular said to his wife, "Did you see the gold in the throne of Cyrus? It was pure gold. And did you notice the marble pillars supporting the roof? I've never seen pillars like that." She said, "I didn't really notice any of that." In amazement Cagular asked, "Well, what did you see?" She said, "I saw only the face of the man who said he would die for me."

And Jesus should be our focus because He died for us. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus—look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim. In the light of His glory and grace."

OUTLINE

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"Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ...If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name." *1 Peter 4:12, 16*

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SO WHAT?

Because Jesus gave His life away for us, we should give our lives away in service to others.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
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