

On the Way to Servanthood
Read Mark 8:27-38

Peter's grimy feet were aching in their sandals. *You would think that Jesus would know we're tired...time to settle down for the night...in a shelter or somebody's cozy home...and get our stinkin' feet washed.* But Jesus seemed to have a predetermined destination—"on the way to someplace," Peter had earlier said to Andrew, "just don't know where." As a result of the pace, when Jesus did stop, Peter missed a step. Jesus had a question for him.

"Who do you think I am, Peter?" said Jesus. Peter's reply reflected three years of contemplation. Jesus had called Peter and told him to get behind him and follow him. Peter had hoped—*yes, please, Blessed One*—that Jesus was the one they awaited. Because he had seen the miracles that only the one longed-for could accomplish, he answered Jesus: "You're the Messiah."

Peter saw that Jesus was pleased with his response. He was disconcerted, therefore, when Jesus went on with a bizarre declaration: "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." Though the matter was plainly stated, "It was just too absurd," Peter said later to his friends, "too contrary to the image of the Messiah we'd been brought up with. So I rebuked him."

Jesus' reaction dumbfounded Peter. He chided Peter before the other disciples, calling him by the name of the Tempter, and reminded Peter to "get behind" him (where he was told to be when he became a disciple). Jesus, softening, --"Thank you, O Blessed One"--summoned a crowd along with Peter and his disciples. Instruction was needed.

But Peter's eyes became unfocussed. *Heard this before...anyway, don't need this stuff on servanthood. I'll be alongside him in the Kingdom...and I'm still tired.* As a result, Peter missed "He must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

Several days later, Peter and the others listened, without comment or understanding, as Jesus reiterated his peculiar prediction: "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." An uncomfortable silence was soon interrupted by an under-toned squabble between the disciples—each wanted to be the greatest. When Jesus later said, "What were you discussing on the way?" there was no reply. Then Jesus sat down and called the twelve over.

"If anyone wants to be first," Jesus said, "he shall be last of all and servant of all."

In spite of treading zigzag from town to town, Peter began to realize that their destination was Jerusalem.

"Look, guys, do you see where we're headed?"

"Is there any way to change his mind?" James said.

"I don't think so." Peter moved the men further from Jesus' earshot. "Haven't you noticed he's moving fast lately?"

"But the religious leaders..."

"I know, I know," Peter groaned.

On the way, Jesus, for a third time, predicted events he would not avoid. And then he added, "The Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they

will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him”

Unaffected by Jesus’ description, James and John jostled their way forward to Jesus. “Can we sit on your right hand and left in your glory?” Jesus had instructed them on servanthood twice before. Nevertheless, he said: “whoever wishes to become great among you will be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you will be slave of all.”

Jesus went ahead of his disciples to emulate his own teaching. His path was to a cross; his destination *was* predetermined. Jesus had said, “Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” He lived his entire life “on the way” to servanthood. And His disciples, through numberless generations, *would* follow behind Him.

(Author’s note: The article is adapted from Mark 8:27-34; 9:30-35 and 10:32-45. Notice that each of the three texts has three things in common: Jesus is “on the way,” He gives a prediction of His death, and He explains servant-hood. Mark links the three stories through repetition and, thereby, gives a triple application: We who are called followers of Christ must follow Christ into servanthood.)