

Title: “Discarding the Mirror”

Chris Ryan

Mark 10:35-45

3/21/2021

Lesson: By the death of Jesus we are set free from the bondage of sin self-centeredness. We are baptized into Christ and through the continued power of the Holy Spirit are able to turn our prayers towards God will instead of our own.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

There was once a little boy, a toddler, really, who knew how to pray. His parents took seriously their responsibility to raise him in faith and so as he learned to talk, he also learned to pray. Many a time, all throughout the day, his parents would prompt him to pray - after waking, before meals, and after the final bedtime story. His parents loved to hear his prayers, those beautiful little petitions only a child could be so moved to come before God with. They smiled as he would pray, “Dear God, please let my teddy bear be happy tomorrow because he had a bad day, today.” As the boy matured, so did his prayers. Now a teen he turned to God for far more important things. “Jesus,” he would beg, “please keep me from acting like a fool on this date, tonight!” Or, “God, I didn’t study for this test but I have to get a good grade. Help me get at least a C!” The boy grew into a man, married, and formed a family. Through the years he grew in relationship with God and his prayers seemed to reflect that fact. He and his wife would pray over their own children, would pray for the health of their marriage, and would pray for whomever happened to be on their heart at the time.

Prayer had always been a part of his life. It was natural to him. And so, he was quite shaken when his friend asked him a question one afternoon. He still remembers that moment at the café when the two of them were talking. There was nothing unusual about the conversation but towards the end of the meal his friend looked at him and nonchalantly asked him a question. “When you pray, do you talk to God through a mirror or through a window?” “When I...” what? He just sat there for a moment, replaying that question in his mind to confirm that he had heard it correctly. “What do you mean,” he asked? “I don’t even understand the question. Do I talk to God through a mirror or through a window? What? I... I don’t... I just talk to God. What are you asking me?” His friend smiled and began to explain what he meant.

“Everyone talks to God through one or the other. Those are really the only two ways that you can converse with God. When you talk, when you listen, you are doing so either through a mirror or through a window.” He then pulled out his bible app and began to read Mark 10. He started with verse 35:

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

Picture James and John talking to Jesus but between him and them was a mirror. When they looked at Jesus, as they were speaking, what were they seeing?”

“They were seeing themselves,” he said. “Right,” the friend replied. He then continued. “What they saw were themselves, their own needs, their own desires. They didn’t see Jesus because he was blocked by their own reflections. But how does Jesus respond? What does he do? Listen:”

³⁸ Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

“What Jesus did was remove that mirror and replace it with a window. He says to them ‘You don’t know what you are asking for. You must look past yourselves and your own desires. You must look through the window and place your eyes on God. He’s standing there in front of you when you pray, and he is the only one you should be focused on. Sure, there will be a hint of *your* reflection visible in that window, but it will only be a hint and it won’t obscure your view. Your real focus will be on God. But you can’t see him if you are talking to him through a mirror.’”

His friend then described how Jesus modeled this for us in the garden before his arrest. Twice Jesus spoke to God through the window when he prayed ““My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” At all times, Jesus was perfectly focused on God, perfectly focused on him *through* a window and *never* through a mirror. That perfect obedience led him from the garden to the cross, where he suffered and died. But he did so because it was God’s will. And his will was not to remove the cup, was not to circumvent the suffering and death but for Jesus to endure it all the way to the cross. And it was his will that Jesus would become our sin and bear his judgement. And it was his will that upon that cross Jesus would give up his life. Jesus prayed through a window, was obedient to God’s will, and it led to his death, but it also led to his resurrection. And it earned for us our salvation. *Because* of that obedience our sin was atoned for, our relationship with God restored.

And that is how we are to pray. We are to pray like Jesus prayed. And *it is hard* to pray like this when our spouse or child is in need of healing. It’s so hard to pray like this when we have real world problems and *know for ourselves what his answer should be*. It’s hard to pray that God’s will be done. It’s hard because we are afraid of what his answer might be. We are afraid that it will not be the answer that we *know in our hearts it should be*. But with the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray it anyway. We turn the answer over to God because we know that he is good, and he is wise, and he loves us. We turn the answer over to God because we can look back in our own lives and in the lives of those we love and can see how God *always* answered our prayers in the best way - even when we didn’t think so at the time. And so, we pray “not my will, God, but yours be done.” And we set aside the mirror and we pray through a window. Can we do that, now?

Let us pray.

We come to you with so many needs. Some minor, some major, but all important. We believe we know what is best for us but this morning we are reminded that you know more. In faith and trust we set aside the mirror. Instead, we speak to you through a window. We offer you our needs and even our desired responses but pray in confidence that you know better than we do. We pray in confidence that you will answer our prayers in ways that are truly best for us. In your name we pray. Amen.