

Matthew 20: 20-23 Not Knowing What is Asked

Introduction: Jesus told the woman and her sons that they did not know what they asked. Many times that is the case today.

I. The explanation of the presence of the woman.

- A. Ordinarily women did not travel with Jesus and His disciples.
 - 1. This raises the question: How do we account for the presence of the mother of James and John?
 - 2. Matthew does not explain.
- B. Remember that many were traveling to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. (The men were required to go and many women voluntarily went.)
- C. Remember also that Jesus and the disciples had turned aside for a private conversation.
- D. Apparently when they returned to the road, they met with a group from Galilee going to Jerusalem. (The woman was in the group along with many other woman. Many were at the crucifixion.)

II. The favor that they asked of Jesus.

- A. Upon the arrival of their mother, James and John brought her up to date on what had happened since they left Galilee.
 - 1. They told her about their excursion into Perea.
 - 2. They told her that Jesus had promised them thrones in His kingdom.
- B. Matthew says that mother and sons come to Jesus and that the mother is the one to ask a favor.
 - 1. Mark does not mention the mother but says that James and John ask the favor.
 - 2. Both are right. The request came from James and John but they used mother to ask Jesus for them.
- C. Jesus inquired and was told what they wanted, verse 21. (One on His right hand and the other on His left.)

III. Not knowing what they asked, verse 22.

- A. Jesus said they did not know what they asked.
- B. They did know what they asked as far as positions were concerned.
 - 1. The man on the right hand of the king at official functions would be top man in authority under the king.
 - 2. The one on the left would be next in authority.
- C. But they did not know what all this involved; they did not know the suffering this would require on their part.
- D. Jesus asked them if they were able to suffer for Him?
- E. They answered, "We are able," but again they did not know.
 - 1. They did not know the pressure that would be put on them.
 - 2. They did not know that they would forsake Jesus.

IV. The generosity of Jesus in his response, verse 23.

- A. Jesus could have looked to the time of the crucifixion and pointed out their failure.
- B. But instead, He looked beyond to the time after the resurrection and He saw that they would be strengthened.
 - 1. He was that James would die for Him at the hands of Herod.
 - 2. He saw that John would be exiled to the Isle of Patmos.

V. Not His to give, verse 23b.

- A. Jesus said that nevertheless it was not His to grant.
 - 1. Not that He lacked the authority to do so, Matthew 28:18.
 - 2. Not that He lacked the right to do so.
- B. But Jesus had voluntarily surrendered Himself and His kingdom to the Father.
- C. God the Father already knows in advance who will get these positions.
 - 1. He will not grant them to anybody just because they are the first to ask for them.
 - 2. He will give them on the basis of merit.

VI. Lessons this passage teaches us.

- A. To be on guard about our own fleshly motives.
 - 1. These two were motivated out of fleshly desires.
 - 2. So we may be. (We may not want the top position in the millennium but desire the top position now.
 - a. In church someone may want to dominate.
 - b. In an association a preacher may want the honor.
 - c. In pastoral work a preacher may want the big church.
- B. To be very careful about what we ask of God.
 - 1. Let us never ask to honor and glorify self.
 - 2. But let us ask to honor and glorify God.
- C. To be willing to suffer for the Lord.
 - 1. In is easy to serve Jesus when all men praise us.
 - 2. It will not be easy when it seems that all man speak evil about us.
 - 3. The question now is “Are ye able ?”
- D. To be willing to serve Jesus faithfully no matter the position might be.
 - 1. Not everybody can choose the positions of limelight and honor.
 - 2. Somebody must be willing to take the positions and do the things that draw no special attention and bring no special praise.
 - 3. But if we love Jesus as we should, we will be willing to serve in anyway we can.

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