

MATTHEW 20:20-23

INTERCEDING FOR HER CHILDREN

“The mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to Him with her sons, and kneeling before Him she asked Him for something. And He said to her, ‘What do you want?’ She said to Him, ‘Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom.’ Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ He said to them, ‘You will drink my cup, but to sit at My right hand and at My left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.’”¹

It is easy to criticise Mrs. Zebedee. No doubt, she has often been cast as a mother who was overly ambitious for her sons—a conniving mother who sought to live vicariously through her sons. No doubt multiplied preachers have presented her in such a light. However, I wonder if she has received a bad rap. Perhaps we would benefit from taking a sober, second look at this incident recorded by the evangelists. Especially on this day set aside to honour mothers, we should think of how we can fulfil the ministry God has assigned mothers.

I do not believe we should criticise this mother. Her request of the Master was correct, even if not proper. She was ambitious for her children, but her ambition was honourable. We lose sight of that in our haste to condemn her for attempting to live vicariously through her sons. Her ambition sought to honour God through her boys, and that is commendable. Perhaps we will be encouraged to desire greater glory for Christ and effective lives for our children and for our grandchildren through a review of Mrs. Zebedee’s request.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND TO PROVIDE UNDERSTANDING — James and John are the boys for whom this mother interceded. Because he is always named first, it is likely that James was the elder brother, and John the younger. Some scholars have suggested that John was in his late teens at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. If this assessment is accurate, it means that he began following Jesus when he was about fifteen or sixteen years of age.

James and John were following the Master, being numbered among His Apostles [MATTHEW 10:1, 2]. This is not James, the brother of our Lord and the writer of the New Testament Letter of James; this son of Zebedee was the one who was killed on Herod’s order [ACTS 12:1, 2]. The mother of these two men was obviously supportive of their choice to follow Jesus. In fact, it seems likely that she may have encouraged them to consider the claims of Jesus. This must be considered a viable possibility in light of the relationship of James and John to the Master. You see, it would appear that James and John were cousins to Jesus, their mother being the sister of Mary, Jesus’ mother. Follow me as I demonstrate how I arrive at this conclusion.

We know that their father was named Zebedee. He is named twelve times in Scripture, though he appears only once. In every other instance, he is named as the father of James and John or as the husband of his wife. Scripture presents him as a businessman of some means. We are informed that Zebedee was a Galilean fisherman able to afford “hired servants” [MARK 1:20] and that he owned at least two boats [see LUKE 5:1-4]. It is reasonable to conclude that his sons made a decision to commit themselves to the cause of Christ at some considerable personal cost.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Zebedee was a businessman, and I conclude that he was generous toward the work of the Kingdom, if not through giving generously of his wealth, then assuredly through giving his sons. When Jesus called James and John, they were in the boat with their father Zebedee, and he did not object when they left everything to follow Jesus.

We have somewhat more information provided in seeking to identify their mother. Matthew names “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee” [MATTHEW 27:56] among the women who were beside the cross, witnessing the death of the Master. Mark identifies the two women named Mary and adds a woman named Salome [MARK 15:40]; this would lead us to believe that this is the likely name of the mother of James and John. If Matthew and Mark name the same women that John names [see JOHN 19:25], then Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This would make John and James cousins of Jesus. Admittedly, the relationship is not proven, but the fact that as He was hanging on the cross, Jesus committed the care of His mother to the Beloved Disciple (John), strongly supports the suggestion [JOHN 19:26, 27]. At the very least, Jesus counted John as a trusted associated—so trusted that He would entrust the care of His mother to John.

Historically, the churches of our Lord have accepted the accuracy of the relationship just described, and certainly the Scriptural evidence would appear to support this possibility. If this is accurate, and it does appear to be correct, then the woman who knelt before the Master was His aunt, and she was asking for Him to extend consideration to His cousins. Though it is possible that Matthew, Mark and John are naming three different women, it is not likely.

Our impression of the family from which these boys came is certainly positive. The parents of John and James were hard working, probably thrifty and willing to make wise investments in their business. Moreover, Zebedee and his wife were willing to invest the lives of their sons in a cause that was far greater than anything else they might ever do. They released their sons to pursue the work of building God’s Kingdom.

Superficially, it might appear that the boys tended to act impetuously, and Scripture indicates that this is probable; however, I suggest from the accounts of Scripture that they were acting consistent with the training they had received in the home. The boys were quick thinkers—able to assess the situation promptly and make decisions rapidly.

The Master called them “Boanerges,” derived from Aramaic, meaning “Sons of Thunder” [MARK 3:17]. While it is possible that the name refers to a deep, resonate voice, it is more likely that it spoke of a fiery temper in these men. It has been suggested that they were involved with the Zealots as revolutionaries,² which merited the name, though I tend to discount this possibility. Simon was called “the Zealot” [LUKE 6:15], indicating that he had been a revolutionary, but neither James nor John are ever identified with the revolutionary party.

The two men earned the name Jesus gave them, for not only did they possess quick minds, but they were prone to rashness when responding to perceived insults. Perhaps you recall an incident that Luke recorded? “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, ‘Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them’ [LUKE 9:51-54]?”

It seems, then, that these two young men were possessed of fiery tempers, aided by quick minds that were able to rapidly assess a given situation and make decisions decisively. They were capable of acting decisively and courageously.

² Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, **Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible** (Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 1988) 368

Let's review this mother's prayer which she presented to the Lord. Make no mistake, she did pray. We imagine that prayer must be the recitation of carefully crafted requests, or precisely worded petitions. At least, that is the impression given by many within the Community of Faith. However, prayer is simply asking; and this mother asked the Master to give her what she asked.

The account of the prayer offered by this mother is mirrored by an account telling of an approach by the boys to Jesus. Therefore, we will benefit from considering the parallel account. "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.' And he said to them, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' 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?' 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, 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'" [MARK 10:35-41].

The verbal image drawn from reading the parallel accounts is that this mother, through the power of persuasion that mothers seem to exercise over their sons, marched them into the presence of the Master. They had been coached to ask a boon of the Lord, and she would follow up with a request of her own. The essence of her request was that her sons would have a central role in the Master's Kingdom. Certainly, she encountered the small band as they trekked toward Jerusalem. Her sons had no doubt discussed the plans of the disciple band, and she planned her approach based on that knowledge. The boys knew the substance of the request she planned to make, because they appear to have been coached in what to say. Matthew reports that she spoke, in the presence of her sons; Mark reports that the boys spoke. What likely happened is that she made a request, and they followed up by agreeing with what she had asked.

This, then, was her prayer: "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom." The ten overheard the request. In truth, they couldn't have missed what was happening since she undoubtedly created a bit of a stir with her coming. People were coming to the Master all the time, and many, when they came, knelt before Him to make their requests. Whenever that happened, without doubt the disciples stopped what they were doing and listened intently, partly out of curiosity and partly out of a desire to learn from the Master. However, since it was the mother of two of the disciple band that now knelt before the Master, and since she was His aunt, her presence was all the more prodigious.

Both Matthew and Mark note the indignation of the Ten: "When the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John" [MARK 10:41]. The disciples had been jockeying for position for some time. In Luke's Gospel we read of an occurrence of such jockeying that took place before the incident in our text. "An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side and said to them, 'Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great'" [LUKE 9:46-48].

There are several such incidents recorded in the Gospels. One time, before the day described in our text, "The disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, 'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

'Whoever receives one such child in my name receives Me'" [MATTHEW 18:1-5].

The disciples were just like us—they wanted to know what their standing was relative to one another! They wanted to feel important! Each one wanted to be somebody! Among the people of God, everyone wants to be E. F. Hutton; Christians want to have such stature in the eyes of fellow believers that when they speak everyone drops what they are doing and listens. What a letdown it must have been when the Master called the child and told His disciples to become childlike if they really wanted to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We read about another occasion when their ambition precipitated a rebuke from the Lord. “They came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’ But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, ‘If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.’ And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me’” [MARK 9:33-37].

Again, when Salome and her sons asked for recognition within the Kingdom, they were simply doing what had already been done for days before. They didn’t really have an appreciation of the rules for advancement in the Kingdom. Therefore, one more time the Master instructed the Apostles in the criterion for greatness in the Kingdom. Thus, we read that “Jesus called [His disciples] to Him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’” [MATTHEW 20:25-28].

Nothing has changed in two millennia; Christians still manoeuvre for position and power within the churches, failing to embrace the Master’s instruction concerning how to achieve greatness. Few Christians appear to be convinced that greatness is achieved through service. Fewer still are prepared to surrender personal rights in order to advance the Kingdom of God. We are thoroughly infected with the prevailing cultural attitudes that exalt rights over responsibilities, and we will not tolerate any threat to our efforts to promote our own greatness.

To be certain, Mrs. Zebedee was ambitious for her sons. It is doubtful that she truly understood the Master’s teaching concerning greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven. However, it is important to note that Jesus did not condemn either her or her sons. He accepted her request, indicating that her sons would indeed discover the cost of ambition within the Kingdom.

“Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking.’” Then, turning to the boys, the Master asked, “‘Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ He said to them, ‘You will drink My cup, but to sit at My right hand and at My left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.’” James would be murdered by a rogue ruler [ACTS 12:1, 2], and John would be exiled to Patmos [REVELATION 1:9]. They would indeed drink from the Master’s cup, but seating arrangements and responsibilities within the Kingdom are under the purview of the Father.

For the remainder of our time together today, I want us to focus on the positive aspects of this mother’s request of the Master. She did have great ambitions for her sons, and though I am unable to say that her motives were pure, she was asking for that which can honour God—after He has purified the motives. She asked that her sons be part of the Kingdom. She prayed that her boys would be involved in Kingdom work. And she requested that would be great in the work of the Kingdom. These are noble requests that all parents should make for their children.

SHE PRAYED THAT HER SONS MIGHT BE PART OF THE KINGDOM — “The mother of the sons of Zebedee ... said to [Jesus], ‘Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom.’” It is not likely that Mrs. Zebedee had a thorough grasp of the theology of the Kingdom, but she did know that the Kingdom of Heaven would be instituted and that the Master would reign over that Kingdom. She was not looking for some existentialist experience that would depend upon what each disciple felt; she anticipated a physical Kingdom over which the Messiah would rule with might and authority, as foretold by the prophets.

Matthew alone, of the Evangelists, uses the term “Kingdom of Heaven”; and he speaks of the “Kingdom of Heaven” thirty-two times. He does employ the term “Kingdom of God” five times, and the other synoptic evangelists use the term “Kingdom of God” forty-six times, while John speaks of the “Kingdom of God” twice. At one time, theologians held that these two terms referred to distinct rules (one being the present reign of Christ over the hearts of His people, and the other speaking of the Millennial reign of the Messiah). However, today, it is virtually universally accepted that the terms are synonymous, as is evident from Levi’s usage of the two terms in **MATTHEW 19:23, 24**. These verses give Jesus’ commentary on a rich, young man who turned away from following the Master. Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the *Kingdom of Heaven*. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the *Kingdom of God*.” Obviously, he is using the two terms synonymously. To speak of “the Kingdom” is to speak of submitting to the reign of the Master, which begins now and continues beyond the Millennium. Mrs. Zebedee, however, is reflecting her Jewish training as she looks forward to the reign of Messiah on earth.

What is important for our study today is to note that she did pray for her sons to be included in the Kingdom. She was asking for nothing less than their salvation—their inclusion in the Master’s Kingdom. This is a good thing for any mother to ask for her children or for any grandmother to ask for her grandchildren. I hope that each parent listening to the message prays for her or his children, but I am led to believe that Mrs. Zebedee did more than simply pray (though that is a great thing)—she pointed her sons toward the Kingdom.

I draw this conclusion from the response of the men when they were first approached by the Master. Mark provides an account of their calling, as does Luke. Let’s focus on Mark’s account for the moment. “Going on a little farther [after calling Simon and Andrew], [Jesus] saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Him” [**MARK 1:19, 20**]. What is of particular interest is the alacrity with which these brothers forsook their trade and followed the Master. There was no hesitation as they were no doubt prepared to respond to His call through prior training received from their parents.

I would conclude that Zebedee and his wife had trained the boys, instructing them in the Scriptures and teaching them to worship the Living God. They were living in anticipation of the Messiah’s coming, and thus recognised the call of the Master as the Messiah’s call to them. Both Zebedee and his wife had undoubtedly prayed for their sons, perhaps even in their hearing.

Among the blessed memories I have of my childhood are those of my father seated in an old wooden rocker before a coal stove on a winter’s evening. He read to his sons from the Bible, and then he led us in prayer. I remember him praying for my brother and me, asking God to save us and to spare us from sin. Then, after my brother and I had crawled into bed, I could hear his voice pleading with God in the room next to ours, asking that God would keep us from sin and make us godly men. What a rich heritage I received from a praying father.

Was there ever a time when our children were young that my wife failed to plead with God for each one, asking Him to save them and to keep them from sin. To this day, when we pray before our meal, seldom does she fail to ask God for her children, naming each by name and asking God to equip each one to be godly and to meet the demands of their particular situations.

SHE PRAYED THAT HER SONS MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN THE WORK OF THE KINGDOM — “The mother of the sons of Zebedee ... said to [Jesus], ‘Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom.’” Mrs. Zebedee wanted her sons to be in the Kingdom, and she wanted them to have responsibility within the Kingdom. She wanted them to labour in the Master’s work, and thus secure an honoured place in His service.

This mother had perhaps heard her sons speak of the time the Master said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out labourers into His harvest” [MATTHEW 9:37, 38]. In an earlier message we read of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman who came to the well at midday.³ After she had returned to the village, Jesus spoke to His disciples. “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?’ Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.”

John adds the commentary that “Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world’” [JOHN 4:35-42]. Could there truly be a more vital service with eternal worth than that of turning our friends, family and neighbours to life in the Living Saviour.

Let me speak to this, as I see a serious deficit in our day. There was a time within the churches of our Saviour that parents would plead for the Master to appoint their children to service in His Kingdom. It has been years since I heard a Christian mother who was exercised for her children to serve in the Kingdom of Heaven. I have heard many prayers that children would obtain a good position in the workforce, get a fine education preparing them for a secure job, or even to have fun at church camp or during youth group meetings. However, it has been a long time since I last heard a Christian mother—or a Christian father—pray for God to appoint her son to serve as a preacher of the Gospel, or pray for God to accept her daughter to serve through a rigorous mission. It simply isn’t done today, to the detriment of the Faith.

In part, I suspect that we have been co-opted by the culture of the day. We are convinced that our children must have what we did not have. Each one has the “right” to precisely 1.35 children, 2.4 cars, a house with 4 bedrooms and 5 baths; and in order to have these “things,” they must get a “good” education and find a “good” job. “Good” usually means that which brings in lots of money. Preachers don’t earn a lot of money; moreover, they face the impossible task of convincing self-satisfied people that there is more to life than money and things. We imagine that we want something “better” for our children. Missionaries don’t have it easy, and they cannot be around for grandma to enjoy the grandchildren.

³ Doctor Michael Stark, “Jesus, the Great I AM: ‘I Am He,’” May 3, 2009
(<http://newbeginningsbaptist.ca/clientimages/42652/sermonarchive/john042526jesusthegreatiam-iamhe.pdf>)

One must admire Hannah who could say before Eli, “For this child I prayed.” Recognising that God had granted her petition, she lent the child to the Lord to serve Him throughout His life. To Eli, Hannah said, “I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD” [1 SAMUEL 1:27, 28].

Perhaps it is not too late and there are yet mothers and grandmothers who will plead with the Master to accept the offer of their own children to fill the need for labourers. There is something noble about a godly man or woman who serves within the Kingdom of God—finding a task within the assembly of the Lord and faithfully filling that place they were assigned. May God raise up a generation of men and women who will plead for their children to serve.

SHE PRAYED THAT HER SONS MIGHT BE GREAT IN THE WORK OF THE KINGDOM — “The mother of the sons of Zebedee ... said to [Jesus], ‘Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom.’”

The account is reminiscent of a dispute between the disciples about this same time. Perhaps Salome’s request served as the genesis for constant jockeying for position among the disciples. The ministry of the Master was moving toward a climax; and we read that “A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest” [LUKE 22:24]. It is the same motivation that infects false teachers to this day—they see religion as a means to advance their own interests. The disciples had not yet learned the reality of a cautionary note that Peter would sound in days to come, “Those [false] teachers are never satisfied. They want to get something out of you. So they make up stories to take advantage of you”⁴ [2 PETER 2:3].

Isn’t it tragic that so many preachers treat the ministry as a means to advance their career, rather than advancing the Kingdom of Heaven? I’ve known more than a few such self-serving individuals. If only they can get a larger place, they can do so much good. I recall a pastor in a nearby community who begged the Area Minister to find him a church because ministry was so hard where he was. The tragedy of that pitiful whine was that within the coterie of ministers to whom he bleated, none except for me attempted to encourage him to stay, standing firm. The reason for the pastoral reluctance was that each of the other ministers present had already bought into the lie that the ministry was a means to advance their own careers.

Vance Havner, a great preacher of a prior generation, called such ministers of convenience “Louisville Christians.” He told a story of a man who served a series of small churches, always complaining that if he could only back to Louisville he would really do something great for the cause of Christ. The man of God is responsible to serve where the Master has assigned him. He has no business always seeking a “better” position; he must seek rather to serve the Master to the best of his abilities where he is planted.

Greatness is measured by fidelity to Christ and by fidelity to the Word which He has given. Greatness is not measured by the income of the congregation, but by the investment the congregation makes in the work of the Kingdom. Greatness is not measured by the numbers in the congregation, but by the breadth of the congregations’ heart. Greatness is not measured by how many people know the name of the preacher, but by how many people know the Name of the Saviour. Greatness is not measured by how great the influence of the church may be in the world, but by how great the prayers of the congregation are before God. Greatness is measured by the degree of selfless service to the people of God, by the degree of sacrifice to advance the cause of the Master. By this criterion, the saying the Master will create surprise, “Many who are first will be last, and the last first” [MARK 10:31].

⁴ **New International Readers Version of the New Testament** (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1998)

I trust that I am speaking to people who have a desire to be great in the Kingdom of God. We will need to assess our motives for service, ensuring that we are indeed convinced of the need to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” [MATTHEW 6:33]. I know I am speaking to mothers and grandmothers who have great influence in the precincts of Heaven. You pray for your children and for your grandchildren. My encouragement is that as you pray you ask the Master to appoint your children to service within His Kingdom.

There are so many places for our children and grandchildren to labour—as preachers of the Word and as missionaries, to be certain, but also as deacons, as elders, as pianists, as hymn writers and musicians, as Bible translators, as godly men and women who serve through fulfilling the multiplied responsibilities required for a growing congregation. In our own congregation there is need for people to assist in the media ministry, for dedicated saints to assist in maintaining and expanding the web site, for Christians to assist with the music service of the congregation. There is always need for each of us to always be telling others of the Lord Jesus. It is the Master who appoints to service, and it should be obvious from even the cursory review we have conducted today, that it honours Him for parents to offer their own children to serve.

Throughout the course of my ministry, I have witnessed a large number of parents who requested a service of dedication for their children. Conducting such services, I have witnessed a multitude of parents who pledged to raise their children in the Faith, instructing them in righteousness and teaching them of Christ Jesus the Lord. Tragically, the majority of those who made such pledges soon cease bringing their children to the services and cease family devotions after a few years. The intent is there, but they conclude that raising children in the Faith, going against the flow of culture, is too demanding, or their lifestyle requires so much money that they haven’t time to invest in spiritual training, or they complain that don’t have enough time for fun.

Of those parents who dedicated their children, I am dismayed at the numbers who have ceased to take seriously the vows they made before the Master. I am not saying that these parents are not Christians, but they discovered that raising godly children was hard work, and they bought into the lie that houses and cars and possessions was the supreme reason for their existence. Consequently, they excuse their failure to continue training their children in righteousness. I suppose most would insist that they are raising moral children and that their children are “good kids”—however, they are not Christians and they do not seek the Lord.

At the return of the Master, these parents will discover they have bought into a lie. Before His return, their children are compromised by the pressure of a godless society that indoctrinates them to believe that their personal pleasure is the greatest good they can achieve. Yet, somehow, this contemporary army of youth are bored by life, and they seem somehow never to find the satisfaction their parents imagined they would find.

Let me remind you of a great truth: the Kingdom of Christ the Lord will come to earth. When that Kingdom is at last instituted, all the wealth we have now accumulated will be of no consequence. All the prestige we now enjoy will be meaningless. If our children are not serving the Master, will we have anything to show for our investment? The question Jesus asked still looms large in the thinking of conscientious believers. “What will it profit a man [or a woman] if he gains the whole world and forfeits his [child’s] soul? Or what shall a man [or a woman] give in return for his [child’s] soul” [MATTHEW 16:26, 27].

On this Mothers’ Day, let Mrs. Zebedee, who had the audacity to ask the Master to ensure that her children were in the Kingdom, to ask the Master to ensure that her children would labour in the Kingdom, to ask the Master to ensure that her children would be great in the Kingdom inspire each woman to boldly ask for her own children or grandchildren.

No service should ever conclude without reminding each one who listens that the most important decision we can ever make is to believe Christ the Lord. The Son of God gave His life because of your sin, and He conquered death and rose from the dead in order to declare you right with God. You need but believe this truth, inviting Him to take control over your life. God's Word declares, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." According to God's own Word, "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved" [**ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**].

Believe this message. Receive the life that is offered in Christ Jesus the Lord. Do it now. Do it today. Amen.