

Change Your mind

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Preacher: Chris Wylie

[0:00] All right, please sit down. Thank you very much. Give yourselves a round of applause. Well done. Not bad, I think. Not bad, yeah? So the message was, the secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you.

Yeah. Okay. So Pastor Brian, I think they've done well. Please encourage them to continue hearing and sharing God's word. Okay. Now, who's been to the UK? A few of you. I've had a conversation with some of you who've been there.

Yeah. For the benefit of everyone else who hasn't been to the UK, I'm going to explain something to you about my motherland. In the UK, people don't eat a whole lot of rice. So before I came to Malaysia, I used to eat rice maybe once a month, maximum maybe once a week.

And that was usually with either an Indian curry or a Chinese takeaway. And by the way, Indian curries and Chinese takeaways are the best food in England. It's the best thing you can get there. But in the UK, I ate more potatoes than rice.

And in the UK, we can do dozens of things with potatoes. But you Malaysians, you can do hundreds of things with rice. It's amazing.

[1:21] It's so amazing that I've written a little poem for you about you and rice. And I promise you this was not made by AI.

Okay. It goes like this. Rice is nice once in a while, or so I thought. But who knew makan nasi kat Malaysia is a national sport?

Rice is nice once a month with a Chinese takeaway. But who knew Malaysians eat rice thrice a day? Breakfast, lunch and dinner, sek fan, tea time, snack time, rice also can.

Rice is nice as nasi lemak. Even blue rice is nice, as a matter of fact. Rice flour makes kuei and bihun tastes great. Even if I'm eating too much and gaining weight.

Rice. So thank you, Malaysia. You've changed my mind. I guess I'll leave boiled potatoes behind. Now seriously, Malaysians, you have changed my mind about rice.

[2:28] And that's good. Because if I want to live in Malaysia, if I want to enjoy living in Malaysia, I need to appreciate rice. I need to have a change of mind about rice. And if we're going to live in God's kingdom and be useful for Jesus, we need to change our minds about a whole bunch of things.

We can't be sharing the message of how Jesus can change people's lives if we ourselves aren't changing. And that includes our minds, our way of thinking, how we think about other people, or even how we think about ourselves.

But beware, Jesus isn't the only one who's out there to change people's minds. The world is constantly telling us what to think.

What to think about other people and what to think about ourselves. We're getting messages every day through social media, advertising, friends, family. So here's the question.

Who are you listening to? Are you listening to Jesus? Are you allowing his word to change you, including changing your mind? Because if Jesus doesn't, you can be quite sure that someone else will.

[3:44] Tonight we're going to look at three messages that the world is promoting to us. We're hearing these things all the time. They're shaping our thinking, and they may well get in the way of us serving Jesus.

The first one is promote yourself. The second one is believe in yourself. And the third one is justify yourself. So this is in your notes if you want to take note on these three points.

The first one, promote yourself. Those of you who are working or perhaps you're about to enter into the workforce, I'm sure you've been given this kind of advice.

If you want to get ahead in the world, if you want to be successful, you're going to need to promote yourself. You're going to need to let others know how good you really are.

Don't expect anyone else to do that for you. Make sure you are putting yourself out there. Make sure you look as good as possible. And then more opportunities will come your way.

[4:48] Or what about those of you applying for schools or colleges or university? And you'll probably feel the need to do this too. There's only so many places available, and these schools are not going to come knocking on your door and begging you to join them.

So what do you do? Well, you are going to have to put yourself out there. You're going to have to make yourself look as good as possible. You're going to have to list your results and your achievements and show everyone that you really deserve a place and not someone else.

Now, of course, there is a place for honestly presenting who we are, what we can do, our achievements, and so on. But there is a fine line, isn't there?

Before we stray into the realms of exaggerating, perhaps boasting, or maybe even deceiving people in the way that we promote ourselves.

What drives us to behave like that? I think in part it's probably FOMO. You're all familiar with FOMO? The fear of missing out. FOMO drives us to put ourselves out there and put ourselves ahead of others because if we don't do that, someone else will do it for themselves.

[6:03] And apparently that's just how the world works. And so we might be tempted to think that's how it must work everywhere, maybe even in the church. James and John, two of Jesus' disciples.

We met them on day one in the evening. I think they were two disciples who thought like that. Maybe they were experiencing some FOMO. Having left the family business behind, remember they left dad and the hired helpers in the boat, left behind that family business in Mark chapter one. And so perhaps now, after patiently following Jesus for, well, almost three years at this point in Mark's gospel, perhaps they're feeling the need to do something, to promote themselves, to ensure a good future for themselves.

And I think they're sensing that an opportunity is coming. You see, now is the time to night pangkak. After all, by Mark 10, Jesus has set his sights on Jerusalem.

Finally, he's going to Jerusalem. And Jesus seems to be on the verge of doing something very special. Perhaps finally, Jesus is going to turn the world upside down.

[7:23] And they want a prominent place. They want to be on Jesus' dream team. So what did they do? They tried to take charge of their own destiny. They went right up to the big boss, and they boldly asked for a promotion.

Now listen again to verses 35 to 37. Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him.

Teacher, they said, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.

That's a red flag, isn't it? 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.

Notice how Mark, the writer of the gospel here, deliberately reminds us that this is James and John. This is the sons of Zebedee. And yet now they have become followers of teacher Jesus.

We don't actually know. We don't have much insight into what made James and John jump ship literally in Mark chapter 1 and keep company with Jesus instead of working for the family company.

[8:35] We don't have those insights really, do we? We just know what they did. But if we were to be really cynical, really cynical, then maybe part of them liked what Jesus was saying about a coming kingdom.

I mean, taking the top slots in their dad's company, filling up the organizational chart at the top end, that's one thing. But what if Jesus has space for two brothers at the top of his kingdom?

If Jesus is going to rule the world, surely he's going to need some help. A right-hand man, a left-hand man. And if James and John don't work together and grab those two positions now, well, who knows who else might steal them along with all the glory.

That's the kind of FOMO I'm thinking about here. And very often this is the kind of attitude that will open doors and get you ahead in life. But in God's kingdom, in God's kingdom, promoting yourself is completely the wrong way of thinking.

You won't be any use to Jesus or the world if you're out to prove how much better you are than everyone else. Climbing up the ladder like that, what does it mean?

[10:00] It actually means stepping on others, pushing them down so that you get up. And that either, I think, induces FOMO in those other people, and so they just act like you, or it makes others

just feel terrible about themselves.

Either way, it won't help you or anyone else change to become more like Jesus. FOMO is no-go. Promoting ourselves is just pushing others down.

Jesus doesn't want us to think like that. But what about this message? Believe in yourself. I mean, we hear this all the time, right? I mean, I can't tell you how many Hollywood movies I've seen where this is basically the message at the end of the movie.

Believe in yourself. And it feels good. It feels good to be told to believe in yourself. Now, again, of course, there is a place for developing our self-confidence.

It's good to grow in confidence about our own gifts and abilities that God has given us, as long as we know where they've come from. And we use them for God's glory and to help others.

[11:14] But often, this believe in yourself message can push us over into a kind of a pride, and a kind of a misplaced trust. And what do they say about pride?

Pride comes before a fall. And no wonder pride comes before a fall, because believing in ourselves, it blinds us to our weaknesses.

We have strengths. We have weaknesses. We need to have a sober judgment of ourselves. Now, let's see how James and John fall for this believe in yourself message.

Let's pick up the story again. After they've made their big request to Jesus, so look at verses 38 to 40. It says, well, Jesus says, You don't know what you're asking, Jesus said.

Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I'm baptized with? We can, they answered. Jesus said to them, You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I'm baptized with.

[12:17] 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. Hang on. Cups? Baptism?

I thought James and John were asking about sitting in the best seats. How did this conversation move on to drinking and dunking in water?

Well, we'll have to come back to cup and baptism. We need to figure that one out in a moment. But for now, just notice that Jesus has rebuked James and John. Painful.

Why the rebuke? Well, because in their minds, being great in God's kingdom is about being at the top. Now, not everyone in church is looking for the top slot.

If your church is like mine, many people actually are very reluctant to take on leadership roles, even if actually they are perfectly well suited for them. But even if we plan to say, no thanks, Pastor Brian, or no thanks, Elder, if they're asking us to consider becoming an elder or a deacon or a home fellowship group leader or a Sunday school teacher, even if we're thinking that, we might also at the same time be harboring in our hearts this idea that, actually, if no one ever asked me, I would be offended.

[13:37] I mean, I don't want to do it. I would say no. But I believe I could if I wanted to. I believe I could do it better than many people, actually. I wonder when someone will ask me.

Of course, I'll say no. But I wonder when they'll ask me. Well, if you're honest and you know these things have crossed your mind, then you need to change your mind.

If your prayer is, God, why doesn't somebody notice my gifts and my talents? When will someone recognize that I'm clearly capable of doing things that others are doing?

Even if your plan is, as I said, to reject to serve in church, then Jesus would say to you, you don't know what you're asking. You see, Jesus is looking for people who live for others, not themselves. But let's get back to this business of a cup and baptism. Verse 38. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I'm baptized with? Now, we might be confused what Jesus is talking about here.

[14:42] But James and John obviously think they know. And they quickly and confidently reply. Memang belay. You can hear the self-confidence in their reply.

They really do believe in themselves. They really do. But do they really know what they're talking about? Maybe they thought, yes, Jesus, we can drink whatever you drink.

Milo, kopi, te, cham, even tuat, maybe. You name it, we can drink it. And yes, yes, Jesus, we've been baptized just as you have. You know, we're not afraid to get wet in the name of God.

We can do whatever you do. We believe in ourselves. So you, Jesus, believe in us too. Well, what do you think the cup and the baptism are all about?

Take a minute with the person next to you. Maybe take a couple of minutes. Have you got any ideas? Can you think of anywhere in the Bible you might go to figure out what that's about, the cup and the baptism? Take two minutes to talk about that.

[15:46] All right. Let's start with the cup. So the cup Jesus has in mind, for those who want to be like him, it's definitely not sweet like Milo.

In fact, it is more bitter than kopi o kosong kau kau. We can get a clue in Mark's gospel itself, but you just have to read on further. And so I think this is a helpful reference.

I'm not sure if any of you went there in your discussion. But in Mark 14, 33, it's the night before Jesus' crucifixion. He goes to the Garden of Gethsemane with three of his disciples.

And this is what it says. It says, Jesus took Peter, James, and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

He said to them, stay here and keep watch. Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him. Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you.

[16:47] Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will. Jesus is talking about a cup that he himself can barely bring himself to drink.

There is an Old Testament background to this. This is Old Testament language. A cup could speak of God's wrath being poured out often on the nations.

In some of the prophets, for example, Isaiah 51, 17, Jeremiah 25, 15. It is a cup of God's wrath. It is a cup of God's punishment for human sin.

And it's coming to Jesus on the cross. And it's terrifying. That's the cup. That the greatest man to ever live, the king of the universe, Jesus, will have to drink.

Can James and John really drink that? And then there's the mention of baptism. Okay, so we all know what water baptism is. But I think we also know that baptism can talk about something that is difficult, painful.

[17:56] You heard the expression going through a baptism of fire, perhaps. And baptism was also a way that Jesus used to talk about his impending suffering as well. So I think we have a reference in Luke 12 for this one.

I had a terrible baptism of fire when I first came to Malaysia. Within my first two weeks here, my rented house was broken into.

Someone tried to snatch my phone at a food stall when I was having lunch. And I found various wildlife in my house, including a scorpion. That was my baptism of fire.

But that was still nothing. Nothing compared to the baptism that Jesus was facing. So if we look at Luke 12, 50. And this is from the NLT translation.

Because it's a slightly difficult sentence to translate. But the NLT, I think, brings out the sense. It says, Jesus says, I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me. And I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished.

[19:01] Can James and John be baptized with this baptism? Their belief in themselves has led to this overconfidence. And frankly, blindness.

But all is not lost. Jesus is very kind to us. Even when we think too highly of ourselves, he doesn't give up on us. He's determined to keep shaping us into the people he wants us to be.

And yet we need to understand that means that things won't always work out the way we had planned them to. Maybe surprisingly, given all that I've just said about Jesus' cup and baptism yet to come, Jesus actually says to James and John, Yes.

Yes. You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with. But what could that mean? It means that they will taste something of what Jesus must go through.

Not of the same degree. But as they continue to follow Jesus, they really will experience some of the very same rejection and suffering that Jesus must face on the cross.

[20:11] What did that look like in the case of the Apostle James? Well, ironically, Jesus is going to reward James with a certain privilege, a privilege of being first.

And I know Malaysians are kind of obsessed with the idea of being first. I'm sure you will know the Petronus Twin Towers, the tallest Twin Towers in the world.

At one time, even the tallest building in the world back in 1998. But did you know they were also, it's the first building ever to claim that title outside of the United States?

Well done, Malaysia. And then guess which country was the first in the world to issue biometric passports in 1998? Yes, that was you.

Not only that, but the first country to issue biometric photo ID cards in 2001. Wow, way to go, Malaysia. Although, if Mr. Bean really has a Malaysian IC, I'm going to be very jealous.
[21 : 17] Because I'm trying to get PR and it's not easy. Maybe some of you like the idea of being first in your class. Or first in your basketball team.

Maybe some of you are parents and you're obsessed with your children getting first place in school. The world tells us to believe in ourselves and to be first.

But guess what? In the end, yes, James does get the privilege of being first. First among the apostles. He gets the privilege of being the first apostle to be martyred.

To lay down his life for Jesus. There you go, James. Not the first Christian martyr in the Bible, but the first apostle to be martyred.

We read about that in Acts 12. King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.

[22 : 18] Yes, James, you will drink the cup I drink. You will be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with. And John too, although he lived a long life, he also suffered.

And we know from the book of Revelation that in his old age, he suffered the Roman punishment of exile on the island of Patmos.

What's in your mind as you follow Jesus? Do you believe in yourself and now you want others to believe in you? Is church where you come to be recognized for your talents, whether it's in playing music or singing or in designing or cooking or preaching?

A place where you can validate your belief in yourself? Or are you here because you want to follow Jesus and follow him wherever he leads?

Even if that is a path of suffering. Yes, maybe even death. Do you need to change your mind? It's something to think about, isn't it?

[23 : 26] But let's get back to the story and we need to catch up with the other disciples. You see, the other disciples, they've been listening to James and John and they cannot tahan any longer. No one likes to listen to people promoting themselves or people who believe in themselves so much that they think they can do anything.

And maybe this describes some of you. Maybe you're not the kind of person to put yourself out there and you have a deep dislike for people who do. Well, if that's you, then pay attention. Pay attention to what the rest of the disciples do next and what Jesus has to say to them. What do they do? Let's look at verse 41. When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

Now, just to be clear, indignant means really, really angry because you believe that someone else is wrong. It's actually a word that described Jesus earlier in Mark's gospel.

Jesus was indignant in Mark chapter 4. No, I don't think it's Mark chapter 4. I think it was somewhere else. Sorry, I got the reference wrong. But Jesus gets indignant with all of his disciples when they tried to stop people bringing little children to him so that he could place his hands on them.

[24 : 43] Jesus was angry with them because they were wrong to stop the children coming. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Jesus was indignant. Well, now it's the disciples' turn to be indignant.

They're really angry with James and John. But you know what I think they're really mad about? I think they're really mad that James and John jumped the queue and asked for the top two positions before they did.

And now perhaps their FOMO is kicking in. But of course, they can't ask for a promotion now. James and John have already been rebuked for asking for that. So there's no way they can go down that path.

So what do they do? Well, they can join in the scolding. And that way, they'll look as if they were always on the right side in this discussion. They've seen Jesus being indignant before.

Now's their chance to show Jesus that they can be indignant too. There's nothing like showing a bit of righteous outrage to communicate to everyone how morally superior you are.

[25 : 48] I can't believe they asked Jesus about that. Oh. This is really self-righteousness on show. Or what I'm going to call justifying yourself.

It's about pointing out the sins of others. Because that's a great way to make yourself look better. To look right. To look clean. To look innocent in the eyes of everyone else around you.

And so now in verse 41, everyone's trying to justify themselves and prove how righteous they are in comparison to the others. But I'm afraid to say that's just one more message being promoted by the world today.

Apparently, we need to show that we are right and others are wrong. We need to make sure that everyone can see how good we are compared to all the bad people out there.

We need to justify ourselves. And if we do that, we will once again get ahead in life. It's subtle. But we perhaps even do this in the workplace. Imagine a situation where someone gets caught by the boss for always turning up to work late.

[26:52] And you see this playing out. And you're kind of glad that they got caught and they faced the music. After all, you make it to work on time. Most of the time.

But in actual fact, perhaps we're not any better than them in other respects. We might be happily helping ourselves to the office stationary and we get away with that.

Or perhaps we're able to add a few extra kilometers on our travel claims and we can get away with that. So we're just relieved that we haven't been called out. But, oh, I can't believe it. He's always late. Ah, yes, he's got it.

Instead of showing grace or compassion to the person who's been caught or changing our ways, we take the chance to leverage on other people's wrongdoing because it's going to make us look better.

Well, if that's how our mind works, once again, we need to change our minds. Not only is this way of thinking uncharitable and deceptive, it's also divisive.

[27:57] Notice the effect this wrong thinking has on the group of disciples. How it divides them. There is a very unusual description of the disciples in verse 41. I don't know if you can see it.

The description is the 10. The 10? I've never heard of the 10 before. I mean, I've heard about the 12.

I know who they are. But the 10? Mark's gospel mentions the 12 many times. It only mentions the 10 once. Here. Is that a thing?

The 10? I think this is Mark's way of pointing out the effect of all this wrong thinking among the disciples.

Basically, now they are dividing themselves up. They are no longer the 12. Now they are the 10 and the 2. And I think if this goes on any longer, the 10 will also start dividing as well.

[28:56] But how are we going to serve Jesus? And how are we going to reach the world if we ourselves can't even stick together? If we can't forgive each other? If we can't work together?

And instead, we're just trying to get ahead of each other. We must change our minds. We need to stop listening to the messages of the world.

Promote yourself. Believe in yourself. Justify yourself. We need to start listening to the radically different message of Jesus. And that message we finally get in verses 42 to 45.

It's time for Jesus to straighten a few things out. He needs to straighten the twisted minds of his disciples. So he calls them together and he gives them a pep talk.

And it starts in verse 42. And Jesus has got three points, really. He's going to talk a bit about how to be great in the world, if you needed to know. But then he's going to tell you how to be great in God's kingdom.

[29:58] And then he's going to show how you can know which is the right way to go. First, how to be great in this world. Well, it's simple. Just look at all the lofty leaders of the world.

Verse 42. You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. And their high officials exercise authority over them. How to be great in this world?

Well, we've already seen it, haven't we? Promote yourself. Believe in yourself. Justify yourself. And you might just make it to the top. Go on, disciples. Keep doing what you're doing. Until you're in a position just to tell everyone else what to do.

Except even then, there's usually someone more important above you telling you what to do.

Because you're all in this rat race, aren't you? Trying to get ahead of everyone. Trying to get as high up the ladder as possible.

I mean, if we had to take an example from the world today. And I don't want to get political. But I think Donald Trump just illustrates this kind of leadership that Jesus is talking about.

[31:01] At 80 years old, he's the president of the United States for the second time. It seems that he has even more power than before. I guess he's spent his whole life trying to get to a position like

that.

From businessman to TV celebrity to president of the United States. He hopes to make America great again. Again. And he hopes to bring peace to the world.

And he does it all by believing in himself. By promoting himself. By justifying everything he does. And never admitting a mistake. Oh, that would be a mistake to admit your mistakes.

Such a great illustration of what is not the mindset that Jesus calls us to have. That will not work in God's kingdom. It might work in the world. But how to be great in God's kingdom?

God's kingdom is different. Not so with you, says Jesus in verse 43. So how? How to be great in God's kingdom? Well, if we go on in those verses 43, 44.

[32:02] He says, instead, whoever wants to become great among you must become your servant. Must be your servant. And whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

What? Servant? Slave? Can you imagine Donald Trump announcing to the people of America, Today, I am your humble slave.

No, I can't imagine it either. And because of that, I believe Jesus says to Donald Trump, You keep on this path. You're not destined for greatness. Greatness doesn't come when we promote ourselves or believe in ourselves or justify ourselves.

It comes when we deny ourselves. When we promote others. When we believe in others and we defend others. Oh, that's greatness.

Put others before yourself. You'll be great in God's eyes. You will deeply impact the lives of people around you. But I don't know.

[33:07] How do we really know that's the way to go? I mean, lots of people in the world do number one instead of number two. And they seem to be doing all right.

Can we really trust Jesus on this one? It sounds a little bit too radical. It doesn't sound like the way to greatness. And yet we should choose number two.

We must choose number two because this is the way that Jesus himself chose. Look at verse 45. Jesus starts talking about himself. He says, 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. Give his life as a ransom for many. That's King Jesus looking forward to the cross.

Where he's going to suffer and die and pay the penalty for our sins. And save the lives of many instead of saving himself.

[34:15] If anyone could be great in this world, it's King Jesus. He could have commanded the whole world to do whatever he wanted. When he was arrested, he could have justified everything that he did and said.

And instead, he chose to deny himself. Deny himself of his rights even. Because he wanted to save sinners like you and me.

He put all of us before himself when he allowed himself to die on a cross. Jesus doesn't just tell us to change our minds about greatness.

He shows us the way to go in this life and with his death. He chose the right way. And therefore, God vindicated him and raised him from the dead to be exalted at the right hand of the Father.

That's the path to greatness. You know, it is a downward path. It is a downward path long before that path will take you upward.

[35:18] The world will never tell you to take such a downward path. But Jesus is telling us to change our minds. To follow him down. Down.

Down. Become like him. Serve like him. And then one day experience glory in the presence of God. Brothers and sisters, don't listen to the world. Change your minds. Become a servant. Think of others the way Jesus thought of them.

People to be loved and served. The people in your church. The people in your home group. The people in your class. The people in your office. The people in your family.

Picture them. Just bring them to your mind right now. As you see those people. These are people to be loved. They are people to be served. They're not people to be impressed.

[36:18] They're not people to compete with. They're not people to put down. They are people to show love and kindness and compassion and grace and mercy and forgiveness to.

Do that and you'll be thinking like Jesus. And you'll be ready to serve them like Jesus. For even the son of man came not to be served.

But to serve. And to give his life as a ransom for many. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we confess. There are many things. There are many things. In our way of thinking. In our mindset. In our world view. That just don't line up with your kingdom. Forgive us. Help us. Point these things out to us. Help us to hear Jesus. And help us to have a mind like Jesus too.

[37 : 28] That we might serve others. Not use them. Not compete with them. Not put them down. But love them and serve them like Jesus. Thank you. That Jesus came not to be served but to serve. Thank you that he gave his life as a ransom. Even for us. Help us. Change us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.