Session 2

Servant/King

December 6, 2026

Memory Verse

"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."

– Mark 10:45, CSB

Servant/King

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Jesus is the King of kings, but He modeled humility and obedience in His earthly ministry.

CALL TO ACTION: We serve because Jesus has served us. Who can you serve this week?

Those in power have enjoyed special perks and privileges for millennia. It's easy to see with a quick look at history.

Take Louis XIV of France, for example. Every morning, he had a "getting-up ceremony" in which members of his court (this number was probably around one hundred men) would watch as the king was washed, shaved, combed, and dressed. He had a daily "going-to-bed" ceremony, too.[1]

England's Henry VIII famously kept a "Groom of the King's Close Stool," whose job it was to be on hand and ready for trips to the restroom. Kings of England kept someone in this position until King Edward VII did away with it in 1901.[2]

Biblical history gives us an example of this type of privilege, too. After deposing his wife for refusing to appear before his drunk friends at a banquet (interestingly, some scholars suggest her appearance at the men's banquet might have violated Persian law), King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) signed off on the idea to take beautiful virgins from every corner of his vast empire and bring them to him to find a new queen who pleased him (Esther 1–2). Many other examples of this can be found throughout Scripture.

Power, especially that of a king, usually comes with privileges, but thankfully, that's not the way Jesus, the King of kings, lived or led.

What other stories from history or pop culture come to mind when you think of people in power enjoying special privileges?

What do you know about how Jesus approached special privileges during His ministry?

Session Summary

Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He is sovereign and supreme over all people and things.

Yet Jesus didn't act like those with earthly power often do. Instead of requiring His followers to serve Him, which He certainly deserved as God in the flesh, He humbly served others. He acted in obedience to the Father's will for His life. He set an example of what true leadership and authority look like in the kingdom.

1. Suffering and Service (Mark 10:35-45)

What did James and John think they were asking for in this passage?

How did Jesus point to the reality they did not see in the moment?

In this well-known interaction, James and John asked to sit at Jesus's right and left sides in glory. To sit at the right hand of a king was a great honor, and the left hand was a close second. James and John sought honor in God's kingdom in the same way humans were honored on earth. But Jesus's perspective on greatness was entirely different.

In verse 42, Jesus described worldly leadership: people in positions of power "lord it over" those beneath them. Jesus described these rulers as "tyrants" (v. 42). This is the leadership that those living under the harsh authority of the Roman Empire were used to. But that's not the way it works in God's kingdom.

Jesus turned their idea of leadership and authority on its head:

> *"But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all."* —Mark 10:43-44

In the church Jesus is building, the expectation for those in leadership is to take on the role of a servant. A servant does what the master (in the case of believers, our Master is Jesus) requires, putting on a spirit of humility and working for the good of others.

Paul also wrote about this idea:

> *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.* —Philippians 2:3

And Jesus not only taught this way; He lived it. He modeled servant humility for His disciples (including us). If He lived this way, how much more should we?

> *"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."* —Mark 10:45

What are some ways you've been surprised by the reality of the kingdom of God compared with your expectations of it?

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2. The Servant King (John 13:1-17)

How did the disciples react to Jesus's actions in this passage? Why?

How do these events tie in with what Jesus taught in our previous passage in Mark?

In the Gospel accounts, we see Jesus serving again and again. He healed, helped, and taught, and in this passage, not far from His ultimate sacrifice on the cross, Jesus took on the role of a literal servant before the Twelve.

Imagine what it would have been like to live in the first century. Everyone walked everywhere, on dusty, dirty roads in sandals. So when a person entered someone's home, their feet were washed—but this was a lowly task only given to Gentile slaves. A Jewish slave would not even have been expected to do it. And in a household with no slaves, water would be provided for the guests to wash their own feet.[3]

One thing that never happened? Someone with high status or a position of authority washing others' feet. Such a task was beneath them. But Jesus was different.

Jesus "laid aside his outer clothing" (v. 4). This note might not mean much to us, but it provides incredibly important context. Jesus was taking the posture of a slave.[4] This is how the King of kings showed His authority and led in the upside-down kingdom He was building. He served.

Even without the historical context, we can see from the disciples' reactions that this was outside of the norm. Peter declared, "You will never wash my feet," but Jesus persisted (v. 8).

John notes that the enemy was already burrowed in the heart of Judas (v. 11). Jesus was fully divine, and He knew Judas would betray Him very soon.

But Jesus still washed Judas's feet. In the face of betrayal, He still loved and served. He set an example, and He charged His disciples to do the same: "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (v. 14). Jesus's emphasis here wasn't on literal foot washing but on serving others as a regular way of life.

This is made clear by His powerful words: "Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:16).

How does Jesus's service to us motivate us to serve others? How does it free us to do so?

3. King of Kings (Revelation 19:16)

What does this verse communicate about Jesus's identity?

Why is this relevant to our discussion today?

For those of you who weren't with us as we studied Revelation, this chapter presents an image of Jesus that might look different from images we frequently call to mind. This picture of Jesus is powerful, fierce, and victorious over the forces of evil, as evidenced by His titles of King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Old Testament features this "king of kings" title to refer to the rulers of powerful ancient kingdoms, whom God put in place and worked through to bring about His will:

> *"Your Majesty, you are king of kings. The God of the heavens has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and glory."* —Daniel 2:37

> *Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, an expert in the law of the God of the heavens: Greetings.* —Ezra 7:12

What an interesting progression in the pages of Scripture. This title, first ascribed in the Old Testament to human kings who were powerful by human standards, finds new meaning in the New Testament.

> *"These will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with him are called, chosen, and faithful."* —Revelation 17:14

Christ's power and authority are higher than those of any earthly king. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is more powerful than mighty ancient Rome, yet during His earthly ministry, He adopted the posture of a servant. Unlike so many leaders who came before Him and have come since, Jesus chose not to take advantage of the perks of His status. Instead, He humbled Himself, was obedient to God the Father, and served others. This calls to mind one of our passages from last week:

> *Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,*
>
> > *who, existing in the form of God,*
> > *did not consider equality with God*
> > *as something to be exploited.*
> > *Instead he emptied himself*
> > *by assuming the form of a servant,*
> > *taking on the likeness of humanity.*
> > *And when he had come as a man,*
> > *he humbled himself by becoming obedient*
> > *to the point of death—*
> > *even to death on a cross.* —Philippians 2:5-8



How does Jesus's humility further reveal His greatness?

Conclusion

Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matthew 28:18). His power and authority are higher than any kingdom or thing or person on this earth.

In His earthly ministry, Jesus didn't act like one with supreme power and authority. He taught that the truly great in the kingdom would be servants. He didn't come to be served, though He deserves service from all of creation. He humbly assumed the role of a slave and, in an act that would have been completely mind-blowing for His followers, washed His disciples' feet. Jesus came to serve and give His life as a sacrifice for His people.

How does the example of leadership and authority that Jesus set differ from what we commonly see in human kingdoms and organizations?

How are we called to be humble and serve others in light of our identity in Christ?

How might living this way give you opportunities to share Jesus with others?

Memorize

"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."
- Mark 10:45, CSB

References

[1]"A Day in the Life of Louis XIV," Château de Versailles, accessed October 5, 2026, https://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/history/key-dates/day-life-louis-xiv#mornings.

[2]Ben Johnson, "Groom of the Stool," Historic UK, March 2, 2015, https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Groom-of-the-Stool/.

[3]F. L. Anderson and Daniel Webster Kurtz, "Washing of Feet," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr et al. (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 3072.

[4]Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible*, One-Volume Edition, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 966.