

Mark 10:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

Analysis

What would ye that I should do for you? (τί θέλετε ποιήσω ὑμῖν, *ti thelete poiēsō hymin*). Jesus' question appears gracious—He invites James and John to state their request openly. Yet the question also tests and exposes their hearts, giving them opportunity to recognize the selfishness of their ambition before voicing it.

This question mirrors exactly what Jesus asks blind Bartimaeus in verse 51: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" The parallel is devastating—Bartimaeus humbly requests healing from his affliction, while James and John arrogantly request positions of honor. One man recognizes his spiritual poverty and need; two disciples presume upon Jesus' power for selfish advancement. The identical question exposes radically different heart conditions—humble dependence versus presumptuous entitlement.

Historical Context

This conversation occurs on the road to Jerusalem (10:32), immediately after Jesus' third passion prediction (10:33-34). Jesus has just detailed His coming suffering—betrayal, mockery, flogging, death, and resurrection. James and John's request for positions of glory demonstrates their selective hearing—they heard 'resurrection' and 'glory' but ignored 'suffering' and 'death.' Their request reflects persistent first-century Jewish expectations that Messiah would establish an earthly political kingdom, overthrowing Rome and restoring Israel's national sovereignty.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' question technique—inviting them to articulate their request—demonstrate wisdom in addressing selfish ambition?
2. What does the parallel between Jesus' question to James and John versus Bartimaeus reveal about the difference between presumptuous demands and humble requests?
3. When have you approached Jesus with 'What can you do for me?' rather than 'What would you have me do in your kingdom?'

Interlinear Text

ό	δὲ	εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	Τί	θέλετε	ποιήσαι	με	ὑμῖν
G3588	And	he said	unto them	What	would	should do	ye that I	for you
G1161	G2036	G846	G5101	G2309	G4160	G3165	G5213	

Additional Cross-References

John 15:7 (Parallel theme): If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Mark 10:51 (Parallel theme): And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.