The Courage to Love and Serve

Pastor Jason Epperson on Purpose, Identity, Sacrificial Love, and the Servant Heart of Jesus

Pastor Jason Epperson | Monday, October 26, 2026 | Host: Mark Burns

Program Summary

In this Monday edition of Mark & Friends, Pastor Jason Epperson teaches from Mark 10:32–45, asking what fear or insecurity keeps believers from loving, speaking, giving, or serving as Jesus calls them to do. Jason identifies three sources of courage in Jesus' life: clarity about His mission, confidence in His identity, and sacrificial love. Jesus deliberately walked toward Jerusalem knowing He would suffer, die, and rise again, because He came to give His life as a ransom for many. Against that backdrop, James and John request places of honor beside Him, exposing the human tendency to seek status while overlooking Jesus' way of the cross. Jason contrasts worldly greatness with the kingdom's servant leadership, insisting that a conversation with one person has genuine kingdom value. He traces the growth of James and John from self-focused ambition toward courageous service and love, and invites listeners to trust God's revealed commands, love the people before them, and let the Holy Spirit reshape pride into Christlike humility.

Key Takeaways

• Courage is not the absence of fear; it means trusting God enough to act faithfully despite fear.

• Jesus' clear mission led Him toward Jerusalem and the cross rather than toward worldly power.

• Knowing my identity as God's beloved child can free me from insecurity and the need for status.

• Love gives courage to have difficult conversations, give generously, and serve others.

• Jesus predicted His suffering and resurrection, showing that His sacrifice was purposeful rather than accidental.

• James and John's request for privileged seats reveals how easily ambition can crowd out attention to Jesus' sacrifice.

• God's revealed call to love and serve is more important than anxiously controlling every detail of the future.

• Status, audience size, and public recognition are not reliable measures of kingdom faithfulness.

• Jesus redefines greatness: the one who would be great must become a servant.

• The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.

• The transformation of James and John offers hope that selfish disciples can grow into courageous, self-giving followers.

• The Holy Spirit continues shaping believers into the likeness of Jesus throughout their lives.

Scripture References

• Mark 10:32–45

• Mark 10:45

• Matthew 20:20–28

• Daniel 7:13–14

• Acts 12:1–2

• 1 John 3:16

• 1 John 4:18

• Romans 8:15–17

• Philippians 2:3–8

Quote of the Day

“A conversation with one person has just as much kingdom value as a conversation with millions.” — Pastor Jason Epperson

Broadcast Notes

Mark opens with Mark 10:45 and introduces Pastor Jason's message on love and courage. Jason begins by naming the fears that keep parents, leaders, teachers, and Christians from difficult but loving acts. He says courage grows from purpose, identity, and love. Jesus knew He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and ransom others. Jason then explains the title Son of Man and Jesus' deliberate submission to suffering, before contrasting Jesus' self-giving mission with James and John's request for positions of honor. He uses humor about their mother's involvement in Matthew 20 to expose how status-seeking can be encouraged even in families. He challenges listeners to focus on what God has already revealed—loving God and the people in front of us—instead of demanding a detailed future plan. Jason speaks emotionally about the church's temptation to measure success by fame, followers, and large crowds. Jesus' teaching turns the world's model upside down: greatness is service, and His own life is the ransom. The final movement revisits James, later killed for his faith, and John, who wrote about laying down one's life for others. The message closes with encouragement that believers are justified by grace and can continue growing in sacrificial love. Certain incidental historical illustrations in the spoken transcript, including details of John's later life, are retained as the speaker's telling rather than verified history.

❤■ Practical Applications

• Identify one fear or insecurity that has kept me from a loving action.

• Ask God for courage to have one necessary conversation with gentleness and truth.

• Remember my identity in Christ before seeking validation from others.

• Serve one person quietly without expecting recognition.

• Ask whether my plans are driven by faithfulness or the desire for status.

• Give full attention to the person directly in front of me today.

• Practice God's revealed commands while entrusting unknown future details to Him.

• Read Mark 10:42–45 and consider how Jesus defines leadership.

• Replace one comparison with a prayer for another person's flourishing.

• Invite the Holy Spirit to show me where pride can give way to sacrificial love.

Today's Challenge

For seven days, begin with Mark 10:45 and ask: 'Jesus, who can I serve today?' Each day take one courageous step of love—an honest conversation, a generous act, a quiet service, or encouragement to someone overlooked. At day's end, reflect on whether you sought a better seat for yourself or helped someone else find theirs.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that Jesus came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. When fear or insecurity holds me back, remind me of my purpose in You and the identity You have given me through Christ. Teach me to love people more than I love recognition, comfort, or control. Forgive my selfish ambition and my desire for status. Help me pay attention to the people right in front of me, even when serving them costs time or requires courage. I cannot change my heart by effort alone; continue shaping me by Your Holy Spirit. May I grow into someone who willingly gives up the best seat to bless another, following the example of Jesus. In His name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Pastor Jason Epperson serves at CU Church and teaches Scripture with humor, vivid illustrations, and practical application. His continuing messages through the Gospel of Mark invite listeners to trust Jesus more deeply and reflect His character. In this study of Mark 10, he explores courage, identity, humility, and Jesus' example of sacrificial service.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. With decades of Christian radio and ministry experience, Mark shares biblical teaching, testimonies, and encouraging conversations to help listeners know and follow Jesus.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here, fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near. It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear, everyone loves you, we're glad you're here. Reading from Mark chapter 10, verse 45, Jesus said, For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

That was Mark chapter 10, verse 45. O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together. It's Monday, October 26, 2026, and welcome to Mark & Friends.

Today, Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church reminds us how deeply Jesus loves us, and how his love gives us courage to serve others. Here's Pastor Jason on today, the Monday edition of Mark & Friends. What in your world are you afraid of that keeps us from following? It's not, all of us have fears.

All of us have fears attached to the gospel. All of us have fears attached to, can I really love this person by saying this? Can I really give this? Can I really serve in this way? Like even little things, like maybe you don't want to say the word fear, I'll say insecurity. But what stops you from doing what God wants you to do? What stops you as a parent from having a hard conversation? Because the truth is, as a parent, he didn't call you to be their friend, actually, that's kind of shocking.

He called you to be their parent. With your students, or the people that you teach music class to, or the people on a staff, and he's called you to lead them, he's called you to disciple them. Or in the moment when he gives you spiritual things to encounter them and encourage them, are you too afraid of that moment? This is what I want you to know, that every single one of us in this room, we have fears, we have insecurities.

Jesus in this moment, in order to have courage, you have to overcome a fear. But I think in my life, like the question I've been asking myself is what still in my life, am I willing to get up on this stage and say something that I don't normally say? Am I afraid? Or am I willing to say, I trust actually God, that he says he's God and I'm going to trust him because he knows what's best for you and he knows what's best for me. This is why Jesus didn't have fear.

Let's just teach for a second about courage. The reason I believe Jesus had courage, the first is, he understood very clearly his purpose or his mission. That's what I wrote in my notes.

Purpose slash mission. He knew exactly why he was born in this. He knew why he was wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

He knew why he grew up. He knew that as a small child, when his daddy died in his teenage years, and he was a carpenter and he provided for his family. He knew that when his brothers and his sisters and his family made fight.

He knew when he was baptized in that water and he came out and he was tempted in the wilderness. He knew in all of his perfection that in the end, the reason why he came was not only to teach us how to walk, to teach us how to love, to teach us how to serve, to teach us who he is. That's a big reason.

But I'm telling you from the very, very, very beginning, he had to get to that cross because he cared for the whole world, just not the people he was shaking hands with. His mission and his purpose was not in this moment in earthly kingdom. His mission and his purpose was so that the whole world could be ransomed.

The whole world could be redeemed. Like that mission is what drove him. The reason he walked into Jerusalem is he saw you and he saw me and he saw my sin.

He saw your sin and he knew we had no hope unless he took the beating. When you know your purpose and it's clear, someone breaks into my house and is stealing one of my kids. My purpose overcomes my fear real fast.

Knowing your purpose matters. The second reason I think that Jesus had so much courage in this moment is he knew his identity. Like for me, what stops me in my insecurities and my fear is not really knowing who I am.

See, if I know who God is, he's creator, he's sustainer, he's savior, like he's the man. And I know that I'm his kid, then me stepping into any, there's no moment too big. Like in this world, the greatest, like y'all, we should be the most confident people on earth, as well as the most humble people on earth.

That's the life of a Christian. It's not arrogance. It's not, also not, oh, I can't do that.

I'm no good. Shut your mouth. You're a child of the freaking king.

The creator of the universe knows your name. Get over yourself. Like, I'm sorry.

It's just like, wham, I'm done. He loves you. He's empowered you with the Holy Spirit.

It dwells inside of you. And the only thing stopping us from moving into those moments is us. It's a dad saying, hey, let go of the side.

You can walk. Cause they know you can walk. And you're just like, nah, I just need to hold on.

Come on, let go. Know your identity. Don't allow yourself to be a slave.

You know what a slave is? We talk about it a lot. The slave in this world is someone who allows himself or is, their identity is found in what they do. They're objectified.

A human that finds their identity in what they do has been objectified by somebody else. It's not your fault. It's just real.

And a slaver is someone who does what? Objectifies another human for their own benefit or the benefit of others. Know your identity. The third one is this.

He loved. Love is like this massive trump card that we throw around the word love. But when you love something enough, there's nothing that won't stop you from doing whatever it takes to love.

Love casts out fear. It's not just my love casts out that I shouldn't fear death. My love casts out fear because nothing is greater inside of me than expressing the love God's given me and receiving the love God's given me.

So in your life right now, if there's things that you're afraid of, first question, do you really trust Him? Second question is, do you know your purpose? See, your purpose in this world is to have a relationship with Him. It's to pour out your love on Him and love on people. And your purpose in this world is to continually love the people you're around.

It's to move forward. It's to love. It's to serve.

It's to grow. And your identity is you're a child of God, just like me. And are you loving and being loved? The passage then goes on and says this.

And taking the twelve again, it began to tell them what was to happen to Him, saying, See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes, and they will be condemned to the death and deliver Him over the Gentiles. There's two things I want to talk about real quick. Son of Man here, I underline that in my Bible, and you need to hear me talk about this for a second.

The Son of Man is a Jewish way of basically saying, whenever the Son of Man is in the Old Testament and there's prophecies, the Son of Man is the most majestic term you can give. It's God. He says Messiah.

Son of Man means God, Messiah, but it also means suffering servant. He doesn't say conquering king here. He says Son of Man.

He has to be the Son of Man so that He can be the replacement. He can be the ransom for man. That's the moment.

And so Son of Man is majestic, it's glorious, but it's also giving. It's basically Jesus tipping His hat to like the book of Daniel. It's Him tipping His hat to the Old Testament to say, all throughout the Old Testament, we talked about the fact that the Son of Man would have to come suffer and die, and you're not wanting to hear it.

You know, why don't we want to remember the hard things in Scripture? It's like, oh, why didn't the Jewish people know He was the Messiah? How'd they miss it? I don't know, because if you talk about the Messiah coming as a conquering king and suffering servant, which one do you want to preach on more? Which one's going to be the sign over your door and your living room? Does it make sense? It goes on and it says this, Son of Man will be delivered. Who delivered Jesus? Well, Judas delivered Jesus. Don't miss that.

Judas delivered Him, like literally sold Him out. He gave Him up. But you know who's delivered Jesus? He delivered Himself.

The Father delivered Him. In Romans, it says that He marched to Jerusalem. Do not think that Jesus got outwitted or tricked.

He's it. And He knew what He had to do. So not only did Judas deliver Him, but He delivered Himself.

Why? Because of love. It goes on and says this, And they will mock Him and spit on Him and flog Him and kill Him. And after three days He will rise.

I just want you to hear these words again. For any of us in the room that are going through a hard moment, and listen to me, I have hard moments too. This week's not been the easiest for me either.

We have hard moments. There's moments we feel isolated. There's moments we feel alone.

There's moments we feel overlooked. There's moments we feel abused. There's moments we are abused.

There's moments we are spit upon. There's moments we are beaten. We've had those moments.

I get it. But I want you to hear this. But in those moments, what Satan wants you to think is you're alone in those moments.

But I want you to hear this again. It says this is what's going to happen to Jesus. this is what's gonna happen and they will mock him they will spit on him they will flog him they will kill him and after three days he will rise hear me say this very clearly you're not alone you're not a lot like suffering and pain I hate it I hate it for myself and I hate it for you but in the midst of that pain here this is what he's gonna do when you look for him he's gonna wink at you he might not take it from you but he's gonna be with you and sometimes he will take it and I don't understand the workmanship of God when he does I say thank you and when he doesn't I say thank you for being with me but either way my response is what thank you it goes on and says these words and James and John so this here don't miss this this is the say this is the third time this happens so you've heard me preach this sermon this is number three Jesus tells them he's gonna suffer and die your best friend your mom your dad your brother your sister your boyfriend like the person you love the most tells you they're gonna die and they say man I'm gonna suffer I'm gonna die and then your next time comment is this hey can I have your car that's what's coming I don't want you to miss that like I'm not under selling this at all like Jesus just tells them he's going to die he also telling them he's going to rise and this is what James and John James and John are part of the inner three they're the one that got up on the mountain like they were a part of like one of the most glorious moments in human history in that in that moment and this is what it goes on and says it says and 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 he's do you hear that hey teacher we want you to do basically whatever we want and he said to them what do you want me to do for you and they said to him well we want you to grant us to sit one on your right hand one on your left hand in your glory basically Jesus we know you're the king but we want to sit right next to basically Jesus we want to be on the top we want the highest status we want the highest thing now Jesus we want it for you in the book of Matthew sorry moms I never pick on moms you're ready in the book of Matthew I always pick on the dads moms in the book of Matthew chapter 20 it's this exact same moment and Mark leaves it out because I think he's like you know what I'm not gonna throw James and John's mom under the bus well Matthew throws her under the bus because guess who led them to talk to Jesus in the moment mama bears like you're gonna go talk to Jesus right now and you're gonna tell him that since you were 14 years you have fasted more than them you have prayed more than them you have a better arm than them you're better volleyball than them you're a better center than them you're better pitcher than them I don't know what that coach is thinking now I know we can't relate to this moment at all Wow I read it the first time I thought man what would give these guys the thought process they should ask that question mama bear I do think it matters for us to always encourage our kids in the character and nature of Jesus because that's what we want to raise them to be when we encourage our kids in the character and nature of the world they're gonna want the world it goes on and says this Jesus said to them so fellas like you do not know what you're asking are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized that baptism which I mean baptized basically

saying fellas do you know like to cut like what does Jesus say in the garden before he goes to the cross take this what cup from me do you want to suffer and die like I suffer like if you want to sit on my right and left and you're gonna experience what I experienced basically saying this bro you want that smoke cuz you can't handle that smoke why would they have asked this question why do they want to be on the right and left why would they have thought they knew what was better than Jesus this is why don't miss this they didn't understand the resume of Jesus they had been with Jesus his whole ministry life and they didn't know who he they did not know is read they did not know actually trusting him is better than trusting my selfish desires does that sound familiar to anybody in the room except for just me but there is times in my life I am going to God and I'm saying God this is I know this is what we need to do Lord I know and ultimately it's like do I understand the creator of the universe if I just listen to his spirit and know his word he's got this God I got a trump card here called my whatever GPA from Grinnell High School you should listen to me you know that I'm a life coach you know what's awesome is then Jesus says these words and they said to him we are able and Jesus said to them the cup that I drink you'll drink fellas and the baptism which I am baptized by you'll be baptized fast forward to James life what happens to James in Acts chapter 12 James is confronted in this moment incredible selfishness don't don't miss that like this is why it's okay for us in this moment to laugh a little bit of James and John because they're out is we're laughing at who ourselves we get it and James here's the beauty though you fast-forward we're not sure exactly how long it could have been 10 could have been 15 years James finds himself in Acts chapter 12 Jesus has died on a cross he's risen from the dead James and John are leaders in the church James finds himself in Acts chapter 12 confronted with the moment hey James if you will deny Jesus James if you will stop preaching you can live you can grow you can have a business but if you continue to do that we're gonna kill you and James is like he sets his chin he has courage and people are amazed his courage why because he knows his purpose he knows his identity and love drives him and so you know what they do they kill him by the sword John they literally throw the brother in oil and they boil him in oil and he survives why because in that moment the resume of God wasn't just on a paper the resume of God was in their heart and was called the Spirit of God listen to me the resume of God dwells inside of you do you know him we're gonna unpack that a little bit more coming up it goes on and says this but to sit at the right hand or the left hand is not mine to grant but it's for those whom it has been prepared so Jesus looks at and said you're gonna drink of this cup but it's not like I'm not the one that's gonna put do on the right and the left this is what God like this is what Jesus says the specific will of my father it ain't my business okay here it comes are you ready open up your ears and I need to hear this too how much of your life are we chasing after something specific from God versus doing the things that have been revealed by God God what do you do you want me to go here here do you want me to do this or this you know what God is he's the creator of the universe and if he wants you to know guess who they'll do he can tell you God is not a two-year-old child it's hard to understand and most of the Christian life we have been confused into thinking I don't want to step wrong I don't want to step right yes you need to pursue God yes you'd ask God God what do you want from me today but hear me say this the specific will of God sometimes in my life like where's our next facility gonna be what are we gonna look like in five years what's the five-year ten-year fifteen vision I can write something now but it's gonna change but but the route is I can make myself feel better about myself saying well this is our idea no listen to me I'm gonna wake up every day I'm gonna chase after Jesus I'm gonna go after how where my kids gonna be in five years where am I I don't even know but if I spend my like God you need to tell me this so we can do this this is what I think he says to me Jason it ain't your business bro like just love the people in front of you and love me like crazy and I will bring you to where you need to be do you think I can't handle this do you think I need your strategy are you kidding me I said kidding out loud quote me I need to hear that because I spent more than a decade of my life trying to figure out what God wanted and I missed so many beautiful moments my heart would it was our hearts are right we wanted we want to honor and love God but we really think we're just a bigger deal than we are and then he goes on says verse 41 and when the ten heard it they began to be indignant at James and John so the other disciples they get mad at James and John why are they mad at James and John well James and John and their mom beat us to it I'm just gonna apologize for something is in the church today like if there should be one place in the world where status doesn't matter it should be here I'm gonna get real emotional about this I think like when I look at Christian culture today just breaks me because it's like driven by status and it's driven by sales and it's driven by followers and I'm not anti anybody but I'm telling you the picture of Jesus is a suffering servant and the picture of the Holy Spirit in us is loving the person in front of us it's not trying to gain status for the Lord's sake and I'm so sorry that the picture of the church is not to end my prayer I want us to be a place of humility I want us to be a place that only God could do what's happening does God use people he does do we like listening and talking with different people we do I'm not I'm not stupid but it's stupid to think that the world's statuses and objectives and behaviors should be the church nowhere in Scripture do you find oh man David did this we should copy that fellas ladies that's not how it works God wants to flex his muscles in Champaign-Urbana he wants this city to desperately know I did this he doesn't want anyone else to take credit for it anyone else that's take credit for it he wants to lessen so that he can elevate himself because guess what them knowing a status of a man is irrelevant to their salvation but them knowing the status of who God is is everything and it's the same

for us in our families it's the same for us with our kids that doesn't mean I don't want you to be successful sure basic God will do it and the reason I'm so emotional is because in my flesh there was years of my life that I thought if I could just do this I can do this for God if I can preach in front of more people and all of a sudden I find myself preaching in front 60 70,000 people and I got up there I just thought what and I don't want you to do that like I want you to know that a conversation with one person has just as much Kingdom value as a conversation with millions and that doesn't mean it's bad to have thousands of people come to church they come here like I'm not mad but it's not driving what we do and it says this and Jesus called him to him and said to them you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them and they're great ones exercise authority over them basically it's just the world's standards what the world does I'm not mocking anybody what governments do historically is unfortunately they use the people to get what they want it's not best it goes on and says these words but it shall not be among you but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be a slave of all for even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many ransom here's the illustration all of us in this room have chosen at a moment sin sin has led us into a place that's called captivity we are in a place of captivity we're in a place where death affects us where pain affects us where sorrow affects us where abuse affects us where isolation affects us where anxiety affects us everyone in this room because of the decision we've made in sin it's put us in a place where there was someone who lorded over us who held us and we were in chains we were in prison and we had no way out like the whole world every human that walked the earth the whole world was in captivity the whole world was enslaved there was a giant in front of them they could not slay not only death was undefeated but so was sin but Jesus but Jesus in that moment was born into this world and he was perfect and he's lived his life perfect he was the son of man and he lived his life perfect and what Jesus did is he set his jaw and he went to Jerusalem he bowed his chest and he walked forward and as he walked forward what he said is you can have me I will be the ransom for your deliverance I will be the one I will pay the price and what the enemy said what Satan said is I want to kill you and so as he steps in and is willing to die all of us are set what free and what we're doing now in life is you're free like if you said Jesus I need you you're free so now in life what we find ourselves doing is we play in a castle that we put chains on it's like we run outside and we're free and then we run back into death and we put chains back on then we say Lord deliver us from the chains and the reason why life becomes hard is we're in a world that's collapsing around us but the reason the reason we have our own collateral damage is we put the chains on that he's taken off but he's ransomed and why did he do it he did it ladies cuz he loves you and well we have the courage to just love him back this passage started with James and John it's gonna end with John and this is what I want to tell you is in this room today I don't want you to just feel bad cuz you're selfish cuz hear me say you're selfish so am I all of us have said to Jesus Jesus can I sit here right can I sit on your left are you with me nod your heads or blink your eyes that's right we've all said it most of us when we came to know Jesus we probably did it for selfish motives like I'm not like well man I this health thing doesn't sound like fun Jesus or man Jesus my marriage or man Jesus my life or man G like I need like listen to me we come to know Jesus in this moment and we're still full of selfishness full of pride full of it all you're right that was James that was John they were like Apostles leaders in the church that's what they were like in this moment they wanted a seat next to the king but then you fast forward with James James dies for his faith he's willing to give his seat to someone else John you fast forward like 70 years John's an old man and John's writing the book of Revelation and as he's writing the book of Revelation he has visions from God then in first John chapter 3 verse 16 John says these words here's the words that he says he says by this we know love that he lay down his life for us and that we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers John says this old John wisdom John the older version of John says not hey Jesus can I have the seat John says listen to me you can have my chair that's the journey we're on do not be discouraged hear me say this there was a moment in your life when Jesus saved you you were justified by God and you were set free and that grace is free you don't earn any of it you've been justified by his grace the rest of your life in my life the question is will I continue to take off my selfishness and my pride so the image of God grows brighter and the more the image of God grows brighter the less collateral damage my family and you have to deal with from me and the more glory of God you see and then my prayer for me is not at 49 but at 79 or 89 when I'm hobbling up on this stage is you're gonna see a dude that even looks more like Jesus than he did at 49 because that's the journey we're on do not feel bad be blessed that the Spirit of the Living God lives inside of you and is willing to coach you into a place to represent the image of the King stop avoiding conflict with God he loves you he wants to encourage you he wants to remove your selfishness remove your brokenness and he wants to pour gas on him like he wants your light to shine family what an adventure we have in front of us it's incredible we're so blessed he loves us so much that his spirit lives inside of us and he's given us this word to encourage us on this journey we got to know his resume we got to have courage because we know who he is we know who we are we're measured by love it's really incredible listening friend to realize how much God loves you be encouraged because it's so wonderfully true and may his love give us courage to serve others as Jesus served us you have been listening to a message by Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church hear it again and find additional resources under the Mark & Friends tab at greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org thanks for listening

thanks for being a part of our radio listening family this is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Media God bless you and have a great day and night