

Mark 10:35-45  
Pentecost 22  
St Mark - October 20, 2024  
Michelle Cox

### **Mark 10:35-45**

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What is it 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." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They replied, "We are able." Then 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."

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

### **Teach Me To Serve**

Jesus has a way of turning our failures into good and important lessons. Today's failure belongs to James and John. They are missing the point of Jesus' earthly life when they ask to be elevated instead of asking how to elevate others.

Like John and James we compare ourselves with others hoping to come out on top. Who's best? How do I measure up? Our very human nature leads us to ask that question over and over again.

We many not ask it out loud, but somewhere within us that question bubbles up. We are, by nature, competitive. Jesus doesn't care about who is best. Jesus cares about who does their best and those are two very different things.

Jesus does his very best for us. He comes to serve and he calls each of us to do that very same thing.

Just before our gospel reading this morning, Jesus told his disciples (for the third time) exactly what would happen to him when they reached Jerusalem and it's not good.

The very first thing he hears from his disciples after he tells them what's ahead is a self-serving request from John and James. Not sorrow or shock or even appreciation for his life-losing sacrifice, but a request to elevate them above the rest. To make matters worse they don't just ask the question outright, they try to trick him. They begin by saying, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." Hoping that Jesus would agree.

They ask like a child who wants something they know is wrong. Deep down, John and James know that their request is a bad one.

The important lesson we learn from their misstep is that it is in serving others that we become the people God wants us to be.

Serving not out of duty, but serving out of love. Serving as Jesus served.

Thinking about the ways in which we serve others today it is evident that serving takes many forms. Humble service is patient and puts our own needs off while we focus on the needs of others.

Waiters gives better service when they wait patiently instead of interrupting a conversation.

Just as we serve other drivers best when we react to their poor driving with patience instead of anger and frustration.

We serve best when we quietly forgive someone who offends us with their words instead of escalating a heated and emotional conversation.

We serve well when we anticipate the needs of others and stand ready to help at the appropriate time.

We serve others when we listen instead of telling our own story.

We serve others with love when instead of taking credit for our good acts we point to those around us who have aided in our efforts and thank them.

We elevate others with our service, loving them just as Jesus loves all of us.

Jesus speaks to another side of this question of service when he says,

“You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.”

We can see this in some of the leaders of our country and in some of the leaders in our church and in countless other situations.

When any of us are elevated by position or rank we could be headed for trouble. When praise and appreciation move into the realm of adoration and we begin to believe that we are more important than others, Satan is delighted.

When ‘humble service’ becomes only words instead of action, Satan gains strength in us.

When we answer the question, Who is best? with, “I am”, the failure of John and James becomes our own.

Jesus doesn’t care about who is best. Jesus cares about who does their best.

I pray that each one of us will give God our very best. That we will learn from the example Jesus gave us.

I pray that we know that each and every one of our gifts come from God and that we will share those gifts with those around us.

Amen.