

March 18, 2018      Text: Mark 10:35-45  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

Grace, Mercy and Peace be unto you from God, our Father and from our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ. Pray with me: Father, may the word of my mouth and the meditation of our heart be acceptable in Your sight, through Christ our LORD. Amen.

Jesus feet were on the road to Jerusalem but His mind was on His death. He was in the middle of explaining they were, **“we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles”** when the Zebedee boys ask for cabinet appointments.

In the minds of two disciples (and probably the other 10) is the positions of honor when Jesus takes the Messianic Throne and has all of Israel under His command. They want the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense positions. The heck with those other guys.

The request shocks us, surprised us. They’re walking along the road to Jerusalem, with Jesus speaking openly about His impending death, and they step forward with their request: **“Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.”**

Some admire their forwardness. No guts, no glory. They named it and claimed it. And if the others weren’t as bold and imaginative, well too bad for them. Perhaps you’ve placed yourself over others good before. Or maybe we just think it to ourselves quietly. “God owes me one.””

Jesus plays along. He knows where He’s going, and He knows where He’s leading them. **“What do You want Me to do for You?”**

**“Grant us to sit, one at Your right and one at Your left, in Your Glory.”** It doesn’t matter who gets which spot, You can decide that, Jesus. We just want to put in us in the topspots when you come into Your Glory. After all, we left the family fishing business, everything, our whole lives to follow You. That should count for something, right?

Wrong. **“You don’t know what you’re asking,”** Jesus says. The error of their thinking is the word “Glory.” James and John did not see the cross, and because they don’t see the cross, they don’t get Jesus’ vision of Glory. They’re thinking, it’s going to be a short and sweet battle and then the Glory comes. But Glory for Jesus means betrayal, suffering, and death on a cross. In John, He calls His being lifted up on a cross His hour of Glory. It’s His Crowning Glory to die for the sins of the world. It’s His Glory to defeat sin, death, and devil by an overwhelming display of weakness. It’s His ambition to fulfill His mission as the servant-Son of God, to voluntarily lay down His life as a sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Jesus Glory was going to be a sour bitter cup of death. Our sin, our rebellion against God, our misdeeds and murders, our terrorism, our attempts to be God in place of God. The cup of our warfare and bloodshed and greedy ambitions to control others and kill anyone who gets in our way.

Jesus alone must take this cup. He alone, is baptized into Death. He alone was qualified, there is none other on earth who can lift the miserable cup to His lips and drink it to the dregs. There is none other on earth who can be baptized into our death and rise up out of it to life. Only Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, the Creator become the creature, and stand in our place and do for all what we can’t do for ourselves.

He drinks our cup and offers us His cup – the new wine of His Blood, Covenant Blood. The Covenant of which Jeremiah spoke, “**I will forgive their iniquities and forget their sin.**” He fulfills the old and brings in the new.

Jesus has a baptism awaiting Him. No nice gown baptism but a bloody immersion into our death and the grave. That’s what Jesus was talking about. He is baptized into our death, so that we might be baptized into His death and His life.

Are James and John able to drink of Jesus’ cup, or able to be baptized with Jesus’ baptism? They seem to think they are, so sure of themselves, so confident. “You will drink,” Jesus says. And they would. They would drink from Jesus’ cup, on the night when Jesus was betrayed, when He took the cup and gave it to His disciples and said, “**Take this and drink it. This is my blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many.**” They would be baptized with Jesus’ baptism, united with Him in His death. He would give each of them, and all of us, a share in His death.

The other ten disciples are understandably indignant when they find out about all this. The nerve of those Zebedee boys! What gall! Truth is, they probably wished they’d gotten to Jesus’ first. But Jesus chides His ambitious disciples. He says, “this is how the Gentiles behave ... They want world authority and power and control. They want to climb to the top of the heap This is the world’s business and politics. **But it shall not be so among you.**”

We need to let those words of Jesus rattle around in our ears and marinate our minds. It shall not be so among you. No power games in Jesus’ kingdom. No lording authority over others. No scrambling to the top on the backs of others. No attempts to control. If you want to be great in this Kingdom of the crucified King, then become a servant of everyone. If you want to be first, you must be a slave of all.

Think of Jesus, in the upper room, on that Thursday evening when He was going to celebrate Passover with His disciples. It’s the evening of His betrayal and arrest. In just a little over twelve hours, He was going to be crucified. And yet, there He is, the LORD of all, the Son of God, with a towel tied around His waste, washing the feet of His Own disciples, doing the work of the lowest slave in the household. The LORD of all becomes the servant of all; the Master of all becomes the slave of all.

Jesus doesn’t need our service; we need His. We don’t rise up to God; He stoops down to us. He baptizes us. He absolves us. He feeds us. He forgives us.

He was pierced for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him,  
And by His wounds we are healed.  
We all like sheep, have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Is 53:5-6)

Early in the course of the Reformation, Martin Luther penned this famous saying on Christian liberty: “**A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.**” Before God you are free by virtue of what Jesus did for you and the world on the cross. You are free from the lordship of sin, from the chains of death, from the condemnation of

the law. And in that freedom, you are free to be a servant, to reach out to the needy neighbor, as Jesus reached down to you.

That's what greatness looks like in Jesus' upside-down kingdom where the last are first, the humbled are exalted, sinners are justified before God, and the dead are raised to life. If you want to find greatness in Jesus' Kingdom don't look high, look low.

**“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”**

In the Name of Jesus, Amen.