

Mark 10:35-45 - “Jesus’ Glory”

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In our Gospel reading for today, our Lord speaks of His glory, and how it relates to our lives in this world as His body, the Church. Jesus’ glory is not something that we, like Jesus’ first disciples, can easily process in our selfish, sin-infested brains. That’s mainly due to the fact that when Jesus speaks of His glory it often sounds like He left out the letter l. Did He say glory or gory?

Take for example James and John’s request that Jesus “*grant [them] to sit, one at [Jesus’] right hand and one at [His] left, in [His] glory.*” They, like you and me, were no doubt picturing in their minds beautiful thrones of gold, along with all the wealth, power and prestige that goes along with them; paradise.

But there’s more involved in Jesus’ glory than His and our eternal life in paradise. That’s why Jesus, just before James and John’s request, spoke for the third time about being “*delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.*”

This, for the most part, is the gory bit which we don’t associate with glory. And yet, before Jesus rises from the dead and sits on His throne of glory in heaven, He (in this world) sits on the throne of the cross to save us. Jesus, therefore, turns the cross (a gory instrument of suffering and death) into a glorious instrument of salvation.

Therefore, who was Jesus referring to when He said that the two positions James and John wanted, to sit at Jesus right and left in His glory, had already been filled? Those glorious positions in this life were filled by the two robbers crucified next to Jesus, “*one on His right and one on His left*” (Mark 15:27). One of the reasons we probably didn’t think of that is because suffering or discipline is not usually associated with glory. That’s because it hurts, especially our ego—our thinking that we know what’s best for us. This is part of our thinking that we’re God and we can save ourselves, which is insane, especially in this valley of the shadow of death.

We’re seeing more and more of our sinful nature’s insane thinking through the actions of people, (controlled by their sinful nature) who are doing their best to save themselves—to secure for themselves lives of peace and happiness by trying to get rid of any voice or punishment which calls a spade a spade, a man a man, a woman a woman, a sinner a sinner. This insanity extends even further when people (controlled by their sinful nature) also want to make laws which use our tax dollars to pay for their sinful ways. This has already been happening in this country through laws which, for example, not only support abortion for any reason (which in most cases is the pre-meditated murder of unborn children), but also the use of tax dollars to pay for such abortions. These are some of the ways of our sinful which is in each of us.

The more we see how twisted and self-destructive our sinful nature is, the more our God given faith in Jesus Christ enables us to see times of trouble, discipline and suffering in this world not as a curse, but as a blessing—as a way of helping us to open our eyes and keep them open to our need (and the need of those around us) for God’s continual help to free us from our sins and our sinful nature’s desire to separates us from God forever in hell.

What was better for those two robbers next to Jesus, to allow them to continue stealing from others to make themselves happy only to find out after their death and in hell that they were wrong, or for them to be punished for their crimes. Not only was their government telling them and others, through the punishment of the cross, that it's wrong to try to preserve your happiness at the expense of others, but crucifixion was considered to be a damning death and a reminder that our sins not only cut us off from society but also from all that is good—from God.

Of course, punishment, suffering and death by themselves can't save anyone. But when the man being crucified between the two robbers was also God, Jesus Christ, who was allowing Himself to suffer a damning death not for His crimes but for ours, that's a whole different message. For, "*the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*"

Thankfully at least one of those two robbers crucified next to Jesus, by the grace of God, not only acknowledged that he was getting the damning death he deserved because of his selfish ways, but he also believed the words of those who were saying that Jesus was the Christ, and Jesus' words from the cross, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34). This combination of law/punishment and the Gospel of God's forgiveness caused him, in repentance and faith, to pray to Jesus for forgiveness and salvation. And, by the grace of God, Jesus assured him, "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise*" (Lk 23:43).

This same Good News of our forgiveness and eternal life in paradise enables us to live our lives in a whole new way. Through the Good News that Jesus' death is the all sufficient "*ransom*" price for our sins (which He verified through His resurrection from the dead), God at the same time gives us the faith we need to repent of our selfish, sinful ways, believe in God's promise of forgiveness and eternal life in paradise, and to also want to share this message of salvation with others, no matter what suffering may come as a result. As the body of Christ, we too are here not to be served but to serve, especially when it comes to serving or sharing the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ with other sinners like ourselves.

All glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's sermon] Who here likes to be punished by their parents? Whether it's having something we like taken away, not being allowed to do something we like, or a smack on the bottom, we don't like it because it hurts.

Why do our parents punish us? [Because we've done something wrong]. We usually don't agree with our parents at the time, and may have a hard time understanding why we need to be punished. That's when it helps to remember all the times when our parents have told us they love us, and all the good things they do for us because they love us.

These are some of the things that Jesus reminds us of through the cross. Why did Jesus suffer and die on a cross? [He was being punished for our sins, so that He could save us from the punishment of death]. And why did Jesus rise from the dead? [So that He could give us these good things, like our faith in Him and eternal life.]

Here's a bottle of water with a cross on it to remind you of the water of your Baptism, where God washed away your sins so that you can live with God forever. All this is possible because Jesus was punished for our sins, and rose from the dead to give and keep on giving us good things, like parents who love us and who sometimes punish us for a short time for our good.