

WELCOME 21st March 2021 – 5th Sunday in Lent '21 B

Mark 10:35-45

Welcome! It's great to be together again. We are delighted you are here.

As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources in your hands. Please use them so *that worship is an all week long experience. As God leads you into the fullness of His word & his work in your lives he will then introduce you to someone this week who needs to hear the good news from you.*

We are still doing those things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks while we sing. Sign in. No morning tea just yet. Offering. Communion. Pastor John is away at a nephew's wedding this week so we'll pray that all goes well & he returns safely later today.

As we move into this week... What do you want to be when you grow up? What are your plans after year 12? Why should our company hire you? What're your intentions if you marry my daughter? More times than we can imagine we are given a chance to voice our ambitions. We are often asked to set the bar for our lives & we learn quickly to set it high. We learn to shoot for the stars...to go for the gusto...to go big or go home.

Jesus set his bar differently...*"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead."* And his vision for us was exactly the same: *"You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, & officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, & whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others & to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Jesus did not come to assume a position of greatness. He abandoned greatness & glory so he could take the life of a servant. He came to die to pay the price of freedom so that we could be set free. And he chose you & me so we could follow the same road...away from greatness to the glory of servanthood – to the glory of self-sacrifice – to the glory of giving it all for the sake of his kingdom claiming another heart for all eternity.

In Christ there is only less ambition and more submission...less me more Jesus...less death and more life abundant full and overflowing with joy.

We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God our Father, thank you for calling us into your presence where we worship without fear & delight in your presence. You alone know our needs. Satisfy them with your unchanging love. In your presence grant comfort in sorrow, guidance in perplexity, strength to meet temptation, grace to overcome the fascination of disobedience, & courage to face up to the hostility of this rebellious world. Above all, may we meet Jesus & live filled by his spirit. We pray in Jesus Name --- Amen.

Let's sing & then we'll hear God's Word...

5 Lent – '21 B – ADDITION BY SUBTRACTION: LESS AMBITION MORE SUBMISSION

THE FIRST DEVOTION

We often note that when the Bible repeats something or Jesus says something 2–3–4 times...It's a big flashing sign "Pay Attention!" So...Pay Attention! because here in Mark 10, Jesus is telling the disciples something he has told them 3 times before & every time **they** miss the point...just like here. Let's listen in...so that we get it.

In Mark 8...Jesus asks who the crowds think he is. The general take on Jesus is wrong among the mobs. But then Jesus asks who the 12 think he is & Peter says, "*You are the Messiah.*" 100% 10 out of 10. But Jesus told them not to tell anyone else what they now know. *Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things & be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, & the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took Jesus aside & began to rebuke him for saying such things.* - Mk 8:31-33 We know precisely what happens next. Jesus rebukes Peter for having solely human interests in mind (namely his own) & not the interests of God.

Then in Mark 9 immediately after the Transfiguration, *As they went back down the mountain, he told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept it to themselves, but they often asked each other what he meant by "rising from the dead."* - Mk 9:9-10 They just don't get it. But later, *He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead."* They didn't understand what he was saying, however, & they were afraid to ask him what he meant. - Mk 9:31-32 And as they travel toward Jerusalem they argue about which of them is the "greatest." It's clear, they still aren't getting what Jesus is saying.

Now in Mark 10 Jesus is even more specific about what his destiny is: *They were now on the way up to Jerusalem, & Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were filled with awe, & the people following behind were overwhelmed with fear. Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus once more began to describe everything that was about to happen to him. "Listen," he said, "we're going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests & the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die & hand him over to the Romans. They will mock him, spit on him, flog him with a whip, & kill him, but after three days he will rise again."* And immediately James & John ask to have places of honour in Jesus' kingdom.

But when James & John pull Jesus aside to ask their "favour" Jesus asks a critical question: "*What is your request?*" he asked. The literal translation is better: "*What do you want me to do for you?*"

Imagine Jesus asking **YOU** that question. How would you answer? Maybe you'd ask for a family member to be healed of an illness or a condition, or to find peace in their struggles. Maybe you'd ask for some upcoming surgery to go well or tests to come back with a good result. That your kids would find a God-honouring direction in their lives or Christian friends & spouses. Maybe you'd ask for something here...for LW. Maybe it'd be something like the brothers asked...I'm not sure any of us have just one answer, but I know what answer we **wouldn't** give...I know what **no one** would ask: "Jesus, may I please have some suffering like yours?" Nobody asks for that.

But self-sacrifice – serving without limit & at great cost – giving our lives so that others might experience life in Christ – is the only offer Jesus makes & the only life he gives.

"The cross is laid on every Christian...As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing & happy life. It meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls someone, he bids them come & die." Dietrich Bonhoeffer...imprisoned & then killed for resisting Hitler's Nazism & proclaiming Christ above every earthly ruler got it exactly right. The cross is laid on every Christian... When Christ calls someone, he bids them come & die.

It's interesting...a few verses after this encounter with James & John, Jesus asks that question "*What do you want me to do for you?*" again. This time, it's Bartimaeus, a blind beggar who shouts at Jesus from the roadside begging for mercy. So Jesus asks, & Bartimaeus simply wants to see. But when his eyes are opened he immediately follows Jesus down the road...the road to Jerusalem, the road of suffering, the road to betrayal, crucifixion, death & resurrection. Mark tells us that a disciple is someone who knows that he or she is blind, & who simply wants Jesus to grant eyesight so that we can follow him on the road wherever it leads.

THE SECOND DEVOTION

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote, "Life's most urgent question is this: 'What are you doing for others?'"

Jesus called them together & said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, & officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, & whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others & to give his life as a ransom for many."

This is the most direct Jesus ever gets in explaining his purpose. Jesus did not come to assume a position of greatness. He abandoned greatness & glory so he could take the life of a servant. He came to die to pay the price of freedom so that we could be set free. 18th century revival preacher Jonathan Edwards writes: He suffered, that we might be delivered. His soul was sorrowful, even unto death, to take away the sting of sorrow, & to grant everlasting consolation. He was afflicted & oppressed that we might be healed. He was overwhelmed in the darkness of death, that we might have the light of life. He was cast into the furnace of God's wrath that we might drink of the well of living water. His soul was overwhelmed with a flood of sorrow, that our hearts might be overwhelmed with a flood of eternal joy.

Deliberate discipleship is about total obedience to the will of God, whether that leads to good things or bad, easy times or hard. *We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.* – 1 Jn 3:16 On the cross, Jesus becomes everything that we are afraid of – everything we don't want to be — needy, weak, slave, a nobody that we might be his. So that we might know with certainty that we are his & his forever. So that we would be children of the King of all creation...In Jesus God says to each of us, *"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine"*

In His Name freed from our fear and are called to live his love in service to the rest of this world. The Methodist Church has a New Year's Prayer...a prayer that offers the Father our total submission to his will...We'll close with that:

***"Lord God, I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. Amen."***