

Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost – October 28, 2012
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Mark 10:35-45

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." 36) "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. 37) They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." 38) "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" 39) "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40) but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." 41) When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 42) Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43) Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44) and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Fellow Disciples of our Lord;

Competition is an ever prevalent part of our culture – Vince Lombardi's famous quip, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing" is deeply engrained in our mentality. The "I'm number one mentality" was alive and well also among Jesus disciples. It is for sins of selfishness and pride too that Jesus went to the cross.

Theme: Jesus Laid Down his Life for Us

1. May we gladly suffer for him (for our sins of selfishness)
2. May we gladly serve one another (for our sins of pride)

Jesus had recently spent some time with his disciples carefully explaining what would happen to him once they arrived in Jerusalem. He spoke of his betrayal, and the fact that he would be sentenced to death and handed over to the governing authorities who would mistreat him and put him to death. And he told them that in three days he would rise again.

It was shortly after this James and John the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with the request. James and John, together with Peter comprised the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. They had shared some special experiences with Jesus including being with him at his transfiguration. What strikes us as we think about their request is the way they presented it. "We want you to do whatever we ask." What's your first reaction to that request?

I'll tell you mine. It reminds me of a child trying to con their parents into giving them something that they feel just a bit guilty asking for. The child really doesn't expect to get what they are asking for that's why they want the promise first. They are trying to obligate the parent into doing something before they have a chance to think it through.

Another thought that comes to mind is that this request seems like a strange way of approaching Jesus who has promised us, that whatever we ask in his name, that it will be done for us. When Jesus gives that promise he's reminding us that it only because of his grace and forgiveness that we are able to ask anything of him. When we come not on our own merits but in his name we will also be seeking what is in keeping with his will. The humble prayer of the leper seeking Jesus mercy stands in sharp contrast to the request of James and John. **A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make**

me clean." (Matthew 8:2 NIV84) And speaking of contrasts the prayer of Jesus, the Son of Man, also comes to mind, "not my will but yours be done."

With that prayer Jesus expressed his willingness to suffer for the selfish sinful requests not only of James and John but for us as well. Our prayers aren't always the most humble or even in agreement with the Lord's will. The "I want it all and I want it now complaint" isn't a stranger to our thoughts. It's amazing to me that Jesus so often and so frequently ignored the obvious selfishness and immaturity of his disciples just as he does in our text for today. Jesus simply asked what it was that they wanted. And after he heard their request he pointed out the impossible nature of their request.

"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" 39) "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40) but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

Jesus had just told them that his path to glory involved suffering and even death. He's going back to that thought when he asked them if they could drink the cup (or endure the suffering) which he would experience and if they could be baptized in death as he would be. How hasty James and John were in their response. If it meant that they could sit at his right and his left – well surely they would be willing to make the sacrifice, to do whatever it would take since in their mind – receiving their goal was the "only thing."

You will suffer, you will die but it is only my death that makes will led to the throne because he alone could lay down his life for the sins of the world. And as far as those places of honor – those would go to whomever the Father had selected for those places.

What is it that we take away from this conversation? Our attention has been directed to the concept of suffering – especially the suffering and death of our Lord who laid down his life as the payment for our sins so that we might enjoy life with him. We may be called upon to suffer for his sake. John suffered imprisonment and exile on the island of Patmos for the sake of Christ. James was killed with the sword by wicked King Herod. (Cf. Acts 12:1-2)

Our life too may be filled with suffering – perhaps we will even be called upon to suffer directly for the sake of Christ and for our Christian beliefs. But considering him who suffered for us and understanding the outcome of his sufferings and ours will make us willing to suffer and even lay down our life for Christ. **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84)

Jesus willingly suffered because he knew that the outcome of his suffering would be a joyful rescue for us and an eternal inheritance for us in his kingdom. Through faith in Jesus the outcome our suffering will be life in his kingdom. With his strength we are encouraged to remain true to the faith even when it means that **"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,"** (Acts 14:22 NIV84)

Jesus laid down his life for our sins of selfishness.

Let us suffer here with Jesus, To his image e'er conform;
Heaven's glory soon will please us, Sunshine follow on the storm.
Though we sow in tears of sorrow, We shall reap in heav'nly joy,
And the fears that now annoy Shall be laughter on the morrow.
Christ, I suffer here with thee; There, oh, share thy joy with me. (CW 452, 2)

Jesus laid down his life for our sins of pride.

We've spent a bit of time analyzing the request that James and John brought to Jesus along with his response to their request. Now let's direct our attention to the reaction of the other disciples as it is reported to us in our text. **When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.**

In their pride the ten reacted in anger against James and John. One gets the impression from the comments that Jesus shared with them that their anger was not only the result of sinful pride (we're glad we didn't do what you did) but also the result of their own selfish desires. The ten wanted to make themselves look good by pointing the finger at two who had the audacity to ask for something they secretly wanted for themselves. Maybe they were even hoping to score a few brownie points by giving James and John the "lecture" that Jesus didn't deliver. Maybe they were thinking some of the very same thoughts we thought about the selfishness and immaturity of the two. And maybe you and I are guilty at times of the same sinful pride they expressed with their indignant reaction. We tell our children it's not good to point fingers but at the same time we like to pat ourselves on the backs for being better parents than the parents of the kid who caused our kid to point fingers. It's easy for us to get upset and angry at the sins of others while trying to make excuses for our own.

It's much easier for us to think about being served than being a servant. So what does Jesus have to say to us?

"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43) Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44) and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

We can easily understand what Jesus is talking about when he talks of rulers lording it over the people and high officials exercising authority over the people. That's just the way it is in society people in high places have all the advantages and they use them for their own good – not for the good of others. Not so with you!

The Lord's disciples are different, because we have been given a different spirit. The Holy Spirit who has called us to faith has also changed our minds about living only for self and given us a spirit of love and compassion and a willingness to give of ourselves for the sake of others.

It's not easy to be humble but those who offer humble service to others are noted by our heavenly Father. You might recall another occasion when the disciples were arguing over who would be the greatest. Jesus took a little child said to them, **"Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all – he is the greatest."** (Luke 9:48 NIV84)

Humble service can be as simple as welcoming a little child in Jesus name. We humbly serve others when we speak not of our selves but of Christ Jesus our Savior.

Christ Jesus is the very Son of God and yet he became a man to be our Savior. He humbled himself to serve us and others. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary in order that he could place himself under God's law. He humbled himself as he got down on his hands and knees and washed his disciples' feet. He suffered the agony of hell as he hung on the cross with our sins laid upon him. He gave his life as a ransom for all, that all might be saved. Therefore let us die to sin and live with him!

Once again it is only through the wonderful working of the Holy Spirit that we enjoy this new life. The apostle Paul reminded the Romans of the meaning of Christ's sacrifice for them.

We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3) Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4) We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5) If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6) For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- 7) because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8) Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (Romans 6:2-8 NIV84)

Because we have been set free from sin when we were baptized into Christ we are no longer under the control of sin. Therefore we can by God's power say no to ungodliness as Titus 2 reminds us: **For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12) It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13) while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14) who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.** (Titus 2:11-14 NIV 84)

Let us also die with Jesus. His death from the second death,
From our soul's destruction, frees us, Quickens us with life's glad breath.
Let us mortify, while living, Flesh and blood and die to sin,
And the grave that shuts us in Shall but prove the gate to heaven.
Jesus, here I die to thee, There to live eternally.

Let us gladly live with Jesus; Since he's risen from the dead,
Death and grave must soon release us. Jesus, thou art now our head.
We are truly thine own members; Where thou livest, there live we.
Take and own us constantly, Faithful Friend, as thy dear brethren.
Jesus, here I live to thee, Also there eternally. (CW 452, vss. 3-4)

Amen.