

Father John's Gospel Reflection



GOSPEL – SUNDAY, 21st October 2018

**Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time
(Mark 10: 35-45)**

The Son of Man came to give his life as ransom for all.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus. 'Master,' they said to him 'we want you to do us a favour.' He said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand the other at your left in your glory.' 'You do not know what you are asking' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink or be baptised with the baptism with which I must be baptised.?' They replied, "We can." Jesus said to them, The cup that I must drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I must be baptised you shall be baptised, but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted.'

When the other they heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John, so Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them and great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

1. Jesus calls on us, his followers to resist the orthodoxy of our culture, that promotes power, prestige, and the pathological accumulation of possessions.
2. All in our Christian community- even those who constitute the hierarchy, should be servants to one another, and of service to our world.
3. The idea that Jesus is the sinless sacrifice carrying the full burden of human sin, so to satisfy a vengeful God- deeply embedded in some Christian traditions, should be resisted.

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This passage is preceded by the final and detailed prediction given by Jesus of his suffering, death, and resurrection. (10:32-34) It appears that the Zebedee boys, James and John just don't get it! Their request of Jesus is for places of honour at the right and left of Jesus. Jesus, with some exasperation, softly chastises them for their ignorance, and speaks about the "cup" he must drink and the "baptism" he must undergo.

It is a key to Mark's Gospel, that Jesus must undergo violence and death- such is the paradoxical nature of Jesus' kingship. His rejection and death are inevitable and required, because of who Jesus is- because of the boundary breaking character of his ministry, and because those who wield power in this world will do all they can to protect themselves and their privileged prerogatives from the implications of Jesus' ministry.

In v41-45 Jesus addresses the disciples' desire for power and prestige. He comments on the nature of human power- and the kind of power that will soon crush him. He puts his life and death, along with the lives and sufferings of his followers in complete contrast to expressions of power manifested by Roman and Jewish authorities. He contrasts the gentile socio-political system, (v42) with that of the followers of Jesus- in their ability to live as servants and slaves to one another.

It is important to remember that by the time Mark is written, James will have been killed by Herod Agrippa I, in 44ad, for his role as leader of the community in Jerusalem. Though the fate of John remains speculative.

Again speaking about "first" and "last" Jesus repeats his admonition that to be great is to be a servant and slave. His audience knows that slaves were at the bottom of the social ladder, and that there was no honour or reward in working for others as a slave.

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