



GOSPEL GOSSIP

Jesus said, 'Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant...'

Mark 10. 35-45

Sunday 20 October 2024

Two of Jesus' disciples approach Jesus, and he recognises that they have a favour to ask of him. It's an unusual request: they want to sit flanking Jesus when he enters his glory. Jesus asks the obvious question, 'What do you want me to do for you?'. Initially, they must have thought that their request was going to be granted, but Jesus goes on to outline what following him actually entails – suffering. He challenges them as to whether they're up to it, to which they say they are, but that it's not up to him to allocate places in the Kingdom. Jesus points out James and John that he himself would suffer, and that if they expected the same outcome, then they also would have to suffer.

The point that Jesus is making is that eternal life, the 'kingdom' can only be the result of sacrifice. His sacrifice, and ours as well. And in eternal life, there are no rewards or privileges other than its living. In the kingdom there are no 'us and them', no higher or lower, but true equality. The joy of the kingdom is solely the joy of being eternally in the presence of God.

- Do you expect to have privileges as Christians over others?
- Is the kingdom a reward or a goal?
- Do you think you have an immediate right to enter the kingdom?
- How much are you prepared to suffer?
- What does 'suffering' mean in terms of your discipleship?

In order to underline the reality of kingdom life, Jesus goes on to tell those rather naïve disciples that not only is suffering, sacrifice, pre-requisite of fully entering the kingdom, but that aspects of that reality have to be practised here on earth. If there is no hierarchy in heaven, then we need to live in this world according to the standards of the next.

That means the rejection of worldly values and norms and expectations. At the heart of so much in our society is the perceived understanding that the self is all-important. Jesus points out this literally revolutionary doctrine, by stating that the greatest are actually those who are considered the least. He cites how in the Gentiles (that is amongst those who have no relationship with God) the powerful use their power to their own ends, whereas in God's eye power is expressed in humility – some people would call it weakness, wrongly.

- How much do you think of your self?
- Do you consider humility weakness?
- What do you understand by 'greatness'?
- In what ways do you collude with worldly standards rather than be faithful to the gospel?
- What is the extent of your servanthood?

Jesus asked a simple question. 'What do you want me to do for you?' James and John thought that that question gave them permission to seek advantage over the others. Jesus does not dismiss them or ridicule, or rebuke them, but answers patiently, and outlines what he WILL do for them – gain for them eternal life, the life of the kingdom.