

Mark 10: 35-45

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' 36 And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' 37 And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' 38 But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' 39 They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.'

41 When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. 42 So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Meditation: The journey to Jerusalem continues as does the persistent misunderstanding and worldliness of the disciples. They are still taken with their fantasies of what God's kingdom will be like: patterned after the splendour and glory of worldly kingdoms. Such fantasies are rooted in the self over against others. It creates competitiveness, mistrust, resentment, hostility and conflict. James and John ignite the fire by requesting key positions in the new kingdom. Little have they absorbed that Jesus' glory will be manifested on a cross and those on his right and left will be criminals! That's how far their desires and understanding are from Christ's passion and path. But fear not, he tells them, you will follow in my footsteps (predicting the crosses they will have to bear when they are ready). But for now, Jesus puts out a potential fire of conflict among them. Those who want to be great in God's kingdom must be servants of one another, ready to lay down their lives for one another. And this is being modeled most beautifully by Jesus himself who came 'not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

This time of Covid-19, is also a time of what the philosopher Nietzsche called a "re-evaluation of all values". What masters are we serving? What idols are we worshipping? What are the prisons or attachments or compulsions and obsessions that have got a hold of us for far too long and have done their work of entrapping us or anesthetizing us to what are lives can be as servants of God and followers of Jesus? In what ways have we given up or given in because we're too helpless, hopeless or apathetic to fight in order to manage and overcome? In what ways is this time of Covid-19 further feeding false agendas and concerns and undermining our will to better ourselves as servants of the only Lord worth serving?

Prayer: You call us to more, O God, not because we have to work harder. You call us to more, by letting go, giving up and letting you in. You call us to more because you know

the fullness and peace you have called us to live. You know what is in us yet to become. You know that there is a sweetness yet to be tasted for us and a victory yet to be won. May we find our peace not by settling for less, O God, but by getting better clarity as to your way for us. And may you grant us the grace and courage to stand up and walk... to healing and transformation... to servanthood... Amen.