

King of Glory Lutheran Church

October 17, 2021

Year B: 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost: Mark 10:35-45

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**Mark 10:35-45**

*<sup>35</sup>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.” <sup>36</sup>And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” <sup>37</sup>And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” <sup>38</sup>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?” <sup>39</sup>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; <sup>40</sup>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.”*

*<sup>41</sup>When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. <sup>42</sup>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. <sup>43</sup>But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

Have you ever wanted to reserve a good seat? Maybe as a kid you liked to call shotgun so that you could sit in the front seat next to the driver. Or maybe there is a table at your favorite restaurant or coffee shop that you like best. Or when you buy tickets for a concert or play or game you want to be up front.

Having a good seat is something we have all been focused on at one time or another. Sometimes that special seat or important place reserved just for us makes us feel good, or secure or important. It can even make us feel like we belong.

I remember that when I was a child, my sister and I would make place cards for each person in our family at our holiday table. For Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, when our extended family would gather there was always a big meal at a big table. My sister and I loved making place cards for each person and giving each person a special place at the table.

If you have ever reserved a good seat or looked for your name on a table for a special meal you just might be able to relate to James and John in our gospel reading today.

These two disciples really want to reserve seats next to Jesus. They even try to warm him up before they make their request. “Teacher” they say, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” But Jesus won’t agree before he knows what it is they want. Then he learns that James and John want to sit at his right and left hand when he comes to glory.

I wonder exactly what James and John thought Jesus’ glory would be like? Probably something very different than Jesus knew it would be.

In the three verses before our reading today, Jesus predicts his death and resurrection. He takes the twelve disciples aside, including James and John and points them to the cross, tells them he must suffer and die. And after he says this, James and John come forward with their request.

I can imagine Jesus taking a moment for a deep sigh right about now. “You don’t know what you are asking,” he tells them. They don’t get it.

James and John are looking ahead to their hopes for the future, their understanding of glory. But they have failed to understand that without the cross, there will not be glory. They don’t know that to be at Jesus’ right and left hand means suffering and death. It will in fact be two thieves on either side of Jesus when he is crucified. And those two thieves will die next to Jesus.

In the gospel of Mark we see the disciples with all of their imperfections, their ambitions, and their misguided thoughts and questions again and again. Today it is their hope for a special seat next to Jesus. And yet Jesus loved them. And he continued his ministry teaching and healing and forgiving all the way to the cross. He invited his disciples to follow him and continue his ministry.

Now you and I today may wonder at the questions and actions of these disciples. But we know that we are probably not so very different from those first disciples.

Jesus reaches out to us in love even as we go our own way, hoping to save the best seats for ourselves, worrying that there isn't enough room for everyone. We forget again and again that Jesus calls us to serve rather than be served. To love God and love our neighbor every day.

The good news for us this day is that we don't have to worry about reserving seats for ourselves with Jesus. He has already made a place for us here on earth and in heaven. Our seat is reserved, our name is known. God knows you, loves you and has a place ready for you. That is good news!

Assured by Jesus that we are loved and known, forgiven and welcomed into God's presence how will we respond? How will we live today? How will we serve instead of waiting to be served? Who will we make room for at the table so that everyone has a special place?

Jesus says to his disciples today, after James and John ask to sit next to him, "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave to all."

Jesus calls his disciples, those who follow him, to a life of service. To put the needs of others before our own. To be willing to sacrifice our possessions, our time, our very lives for the sake of our neighbor. Jesus asks us to make room at the table for everyone, not just hold a place for ourselves.

This life of service, of servanthood, is not an easy calling. For most of us it doesn't always fit our natural instincts or desires. And yet Jesus calls us to serve, he tells us to put away our human desire to get ahead, to find glory, to reserve special seats. It's counter cultural, it is radical, this way of life Jesus calls us to.

So what does being a servant look like for you today?

Consider the ways that you are already serving. Maybe you pray each day for people who are struggling or suffering. Maybe you share your time with someone who is lonely. Maybe you buy extra food to give to one of our local food banks.

Jesus wants us to serve in ways that we might consider small but are huge to the people who experience love from our words and actions.

Choose one small act of service that you will practice this week. Put a note on your frig or your bathroom mirror to remind yourself to serve someone else each day. Talk to God about it, pay attention to those who serve you, notice ways you are serving already and find one new way you can serve.

For larger acts of service we can begin by learning more about the ways this congregation serves. We feed the hungry with food from our own garden and our own giving and by making sure children have food to take home on weekends. We offer care and connection for those who are grieving, homebound or in crisis. We serve in community organizations that provide housing, education, diapers, school supplies, gifts at Christmas. We make prayer shawls and quilts to surround people with warmth and love. None of these ministries happen without people serving.

King of Glory is a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. And together our congregations and ministries throughout the United States serve people around the world and in our own community. Together we work to end hunger and homelessness. We support children, youth and young adults through outdoor ministry and campus ministry. We educate leaders and provide resources and opportunities for our faith communities to grow in love and service. Our church serves in ways that we aren't always aware of but our gifts and support make them possible.

Jesus' invitation to serve is accepted by us in small ways when we give someone else our place in line or when we put our resources together to feed thousands of people.

Whether it is big or small you and I are called to serve, called to give, called to look around, pull up another chair and make sure everyone has a good seat.

Because Jesus wants each person to know that they are important, that they are welcome, that there is a special place for them. And you and I, we serve in his name. So let us continue to be servants together asking Jesus each day to show us the way.

Amen.