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They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.”

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.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” 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?” 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; 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.” When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. 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. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be

slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

You may have heard the saying...

.... “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again!”

According to Wikipedia, that saying is attributed to...

... William Edward Hickson, a British educational writer...

.... in the mid 19th century.

Or you may have also heard the similar saying:

“Third times a charm.”

I was less successful tracing that saying...

...to anyone specifically that I could attribute it to.

But, either of these sayings...

... would well-describe Jesus’ attempt...

... to open the window of understanding...

... for his disciples on what was going to happen to him...

.... when they got to Jerusalem.

I added five verses from Mark 10...

...which precede the appointed lectionary text...

... In today’s reading...

...so that we could hear for the THIRD TIME...

... (in Mark's telling of the story)...

... Jesus' prediction of his death.

Hopefully this reinforces our understanding...

... of the interaction that is about to take place...

.... between Jesus, James and John.

Jesus has tried, tried and now, ***tries again...***

... to help the disciples "get it!"

But it seems his disciples still....just can't!

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The brothers, James and John, are part of...

...the inner circle of disciples....

....(*which includes Peter*)...

They are probably closer to Jesus than the other disciples.

Perhaps it is natural that in their seemingly closer...

... and more intimate relationship with Jesus...

... they think it is only right to ask him...

.... a question that might sound rather arrogant to us.

In **their** understanding...

.... Jesus is going to Jerusalem to claim his rightful place...

.... on the throne of David – FINALLY!

Who better than THEM...

.... to be his closest advisors and courtiers!

Haven't they been close to him all along the way:

“Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

James and John assume Jesus is a “shoe-in” for King...

...based on witnessing Jesus' teaching...

...his amazing miracles....

...and the crowds that are surrounding him.

Of course, that means...

.... when he ascends to the throne of David...

.... “Glory” and “Honor” will soon be his!

They don't get that Jesus' ascending to his rightful place...

.... will not happen by being elevated to the throne....

... but by being LIFTED UP on a CROSS....

...and that the NEXT time....

... any image of anyone being on his right and left hand...

... portrayed by Mark...

... telling who is crucified on Jesus' left and on his right.

While the scandal of Jesus death on the Cross...

...is reversed through the glory of his resurrection...

...he was not "raised up" to new life....

... so he could come back...

.... and "get even" or "get revenge" ...

... or FINALLY gain his rightful power....

... by might and a show of force.

Jesus's example turns logical and expected...

... and acceptable practice upside down and inside out...

..... when he comes back...

... and breaks the cycle of retribution...

.... by coming back ...

...and speaking "peace" and "reconciliation"...

... with the ones who were his friends and followers...

.... who abandoned him in his death.

In his words to his disciples...

.... he compares the “way of the world” ...

.... with “the way of the cross:”

*“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. ⁴³But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become **great** among you must be your **servant**, ⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

As followers of Jesus, that is our call too.

- Not to “conquer” – but to “serve.”
- Not to lord over others with the heavy weight of the law...
... and our self-righteousness—but to serve.

On more than one occasion you have heard me quote...

...Luther’s memorable saying from his writing:

The Freedom of a Christian:

“A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all”

“Evangelism” is one of the scariest words...

...in the language of the church.

Just like the disciples misunderstood....

... Jesus' call to the cross for the sake of the world....

..... perhaps we have collectively misunderstood...

... the role of this call of bearing “Good News” ...

....as Christian disciples.

What if instead of hearing “Evangelism” ...

... as “Go out and help somebody....

... change their mind about God and eternity” ...

...we heard it as:

... “Go tell them the GOOD NEWS...

... you aren't there to “change them” ...

....you are there to “SERVE” them.

God has invited us...

... to see things very differently than the world sees things.

As followers of Jesus, our call is not to “conquer”...

...not to **convert**....

– but to “serve.”

It is a costly call!

Last Sunday we heard Jesus tell the rich man:

“sell all you own and give it to the poor.”

That is an example about trading...

... the security and significance of our **possessions**...

.... for the security and significance we get...

... by giving our **whole selves to OTHERS**...

...as disciples of Jesus.

This week’s example is about...

... trading the **honor and glory**...

...associated with **power and success**....

... for the gift and grace of **SERVING OTHERS**.

We have also been given the gift...

.... of this weekly gathering with one another...

.... by God to worship, receive God's forgiveness....

...to care for each other....

...and to be cared for in community.

We cannot be reminded of that often enough.

We don't serve others SO THAT God will love us.

God already loves us.

We serve others **because** God loves us....

.... and sent Jesus to die....

....AND to Rise Again....

.... FOR US.

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