

March 15, 2017

Matthew 20: 17-28

As the father of sons named James and John, I have a special interest in Gospel passages that include Zebedee and his sons, fishermen who were among the first to “drop their nets” and answer Jesus’ call to follow Him as disciples. James and John were considered among the closest apostles to Christ, yet in today’s Gospel passage, we see them try to exploit their relationship by requesting – through their mother – that they be given special commendation in the Kingdom by being placed “one at your right and the other at your left.”

Though Jesus had provided the Twelve, while en route to Jerusalem, a foreshadowing of his imminent passion, death and resurrection, the full picture and relevance of what soon would happen could not have been clear at that time to the apostles. I imagine the brash request by James and John was made largely out of fear. Nonetheless, the manner in which they were rebuked by Jesus stands as a primary lesson for all of us called to discipleship. Christ tells the other 10 apostles, who were understandably put off by the request of James and John, that the naturally human desires of obtaining the upper hand, a higher status, “shall not be so among you.”

Jesus says in the passage, “Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Reflection questions:

How ready are we to “drop our nets” and follow Christ by expecting to serve, not to be served?

In our days of Lenten journey, can we identify ways in which we have shown sinful pride, thinking too highly of ourselves to the detriment and disservice of others? Can we work to correct it?

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