



Mark 10:35-45

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus. 'Master,' they said to him, 'we want you to do us a favour.' 36 He said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' 37 They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.' 38 'You do not know what you are asking,' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I must be baptised?' 39 They replied, 'We can.' Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I must drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I must be baptised you shall be baptised, 40 but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted.' 41 When the other ten heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John, 42 so Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. 43 This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. 45 For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Other readings: Isaiah 53:10-11 Psalm 32 (33) Hebrews 4:14-16

As we have followed the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem in previous gospel passages we have heard him speak repeatedly of what faces him there. Each time he tells the disciples of his coming death and resurrection, they are reluctant to face the painful reality. In this passage, once Jesus has spoken of his death for a third time, James and John demonstrate how disconnected they are from Jesus. They crave the best places in the kingdom.

Jesus' response focuses once again on the call to martyrdom. Are they willing to drink the cup and to be baptised in suffering? The two brothers say they are. Nevertheless, rewards in the kingdom are not assured. For Jesus such matters are for the Father.

The disciples need further teaching from Jesus. The ambitions of the disciple should not be those of the people of the world. They should not crave status and power, but the place of the slave, for they are the disciples of the one who came 'not to be served, but to serve' and to give his life as 'a ransom for many'. Jesus seems to be alluding here to the role of the servant as described in our first reading from the book of Isaiah. The servant offers his life in 'atonement' for the sins of many. 'By his wounds we have been healed.'

Do I share the ambition of James and John for the best seats in the kingdom?

Do I endeavour to unite the sufferings in my life with the suffering of Christ?

Let us thank God for the saving work of Christ the servant.

Let us be grateful for the witness of the martyrs of our own time.