

MARK 10:32-45

32 They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him.

33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."
35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

MARK 10:32-45

ONE DEFINITION OF GREATNESS IS HAVING AN UNUSUAL DEGREE OF POWER OR SKILL. JESUS CERTAINLY COULD FIT INTO THAT WORLDLY DEFINITION OF GREATNESS.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND THOSE WHO ARE CALLED THE GREATEST, EITHER BY OTHERS OR THEMSELVES, IS HOW JESUS' POWER WAS REVEALED.

HIS GREATNESS WAS NOT FOUND IN GETTING TO THE TOP, NOR IN RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, OR POLITICAL POWER OR POPULARITY. NOR WAS IT FOUND IN MONEY OR POSSESSIONS.

THE GREATNESS OF JESUS WAS SHOWN IN HIS POWER THAT WAS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.

A POWER USED IN SERVICE TO GOD'S WILL AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS.

I CAME ACROSS A QUOTE ABOUT POWER THAT SEEMS TO DESCRIBE JESUS WELL, ALTHOUGH I DO NOT KNOW IF IT WAS WRITTEN ABOUT HIM.

IT SAYS: "THERE IS A POWER IN GENTLENESS WE MUST DISCOVER. IT IS A POWER THAT TOUCHES HEARTS, A POWER THAT CHANGES PEOPLE FROM WITHIN THE DEPTHS OF THEIR SOULS."

THIS BRINGS US TO HOW POWER IS VIEWED. IT IS NOT ALWAYS SEEN AS A POSITIVE FORCE AMONG SOME PEOPLE UNLESS WE ARE SPEAKING ABOUT THE POWER OF GOD.

THIS IS LARGELY BECAUSE WHEN IT COMES TO HUMAN BEINGS- HAVING OR WANTING TO GAIN POWER OFTEN LEADS US INTO SIN.

INDEED, POWER EASILY CORRUPTS US BY LEADING US TO SAY OR DO THINGS THAT GO AGAINST GOD'S WILL, IN OUR QUEST TO GAIN, HOLD ONTO, OR INCREASE OUR POWER.

HOWEVER, POWER CAN BE A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING, DEPENDING ON WHO HAS IT OR LACKS IT.

IF WE THINK ABOUT OUR OWN POWER OR THE POWER WIELDED BY THOSE WE ADMIRE, IT SEEMS LIKE A POSITIVE FORCE.

CONVERSELY, POWER IN THE HANDS OF THOSE WE DISLIKE OR, ARE FEARFUL OF, IS OFTEN SEEN AS A NEGATIVE THING, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OF THE HARM IT MIGHT DO TO US OR LOVED ONES.

AND YET, POWER IS A GIFT FROM GOD, WHO AFTER CREATING ADAM AND EVE AND GIVING THEM THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO LIVE IN, GAVE THEM ONE THING MORE- FREE WILL, WHICH IS ACTUALLY A FORM OF POWER.

SO THE REAL PROBLEM WITH POWER IS NOT US OR ANYONE ELSE HAVING IT, SINCE IT IS A GIFT FROM GOD ALONG WITH LIFE ITSELF.

INSTEAD, THE PROBLEM ARISES IN WHAT WE DO WITH THE POWER WE HAVE, AS WELL AS WHAT POWER DOES TO US.

THINK ABOUT THE FIRST TEMPTATION, THE ONE WHICH CHANGED MAN AND WOMAN AND THE REST OF CREATION, AND NOT FOR THE BETTER.

IT WAS NOT REALLY THE LOOK OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT THAT DREW EVE, AND ADAM WHO WAS RIGHT THERE NEXT TO HER, TO EAT THE FRUIT.

WHAT TEMPTED THEM WAS THE PROMISE THE SERPENT GAVE TO THEM THAT THEY COULD KNOW WHAT GOD KNOWS, AND THUS BECOME LIKE GOD.

THE STORY REMINDS US THAT KNOWLEDGE IS ANOTHER TYPE OF POWER.

IT ALSO WARNS ABOUT THE PITFALLS OF SEEKING MORE POWER WHEN YOU ALREADY HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED.

ADAM AND EVE WERE TEMPTED TO USE THE POWER OF THEIR FREE WILL TO TAKE FROM GOD WHAT THEY HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN, WHICH WAS THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

THEY WERE LURED INTO SIN BY THE PROMISE OF MORE POWER, THE KIND THAT THEY THOUGHT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO BECOME LIKE GOD, AND PERHAPS NO LONGER NEED GOD.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR THEM AND US, THINGS DID NOT TURN OUT LIKE THEY EXPECTED, BECAUSE THEY LOST SO MUCH MORE THAN THEY GAINED.

THIS IS A REMINDER THAT THERE ARE TIMES THAT GOD DOES NOT GIVE US WHAT WE DESIRE BECAUSE IT WILL NOT BE GOOD FOR US.

TRULY, LIKE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE THINGS WE DESIRE THE MOST ARE THE VERY THINGS THAT ARE THE WORST FOR US TO HAVE.

THEREFORE, ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL THINGS WE CAN DO FOR OURSELVES IS TO SAY "NO" TO TEMPTATION.

JESUS UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE USING AND NOT USING POWER.

WHAT HE DID WITH HIS POWER, AND THE FACT HE NEVER ALLOWED IT TO DRAW HIM AWAY FROM GOD, WAS AT THE HEART OF THE THREE TEMPTATIONS JESUS EXPERIENCED IN THE WILDERNESS.

FIRST, JESUS, WHO WAS VERY HUNGRY, WAS TEMPTED TO USE HIS POWER SOLELY FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT.

NEXT, HE WAS TEMPTED TO TEST HIS FATHER'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIM, AND FINALLY HE WAS TEMPTED WITH THE POWER AND GLORY OF WORLD DOMINION.

NOTICE, THAT EACH TIME SATAN TEMPTED JESUS IT WAS LURING HIM TO USE THE POWER WITHIN HIM TO ACT IN WAYS THAT ULTIMATELY WOULD NOT BE GOOD FOR JESUS, OR FOR THE WORLD HE CAME TO SAVE.

AND THE DESIRE FOR POWER OVER NATURE OR OTHER PEOPLE IN ORDER TO SELFISHLY GAIN SOMETHING FOR OURSELVES IS AT THE HEART OF ALMOST ALL OF OUR TEMPTATIONS.

ONE OF OUR GREATEST DANGERS TO OURSELVES AND TO OTHERS IS OUR FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THIS TEMPTATION.

IT IS A DANGER WE BECAUSE THE FAILURE TO SEE AND ADMIT THE TEMPTATION OPENS THE DOOR FOR US TO USE OUR POWER IN WAYS THAT DISPLEASE GOD, AND HURTS OTHERS.

THINK ABOUT THE TWELVE DISCIPLES, THEY WERE IN POSITIONS OF PRIVILEGE WITH JESUS, WHICH GRANTED THEM SOME ADDITIONAL POWER.

ANOTHER RESULT OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM WAS THE DREAMS THEY HAD OF RECEIVING A SHARE IN HIS POWER AND GLORY WHEN HE CAME INTO HIS KINGDOM.

THIS, AS WE KNOW, WAS THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT JESUS CONTINUALLY TOLD THEM ABOUT HIS KINGSHIP.

TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY OFFERS US YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HOW THOROUGHLY THEY IGNORED OR MISUNDERSTOOD JESUS' MESSAGE.

THE DISCIPLES HAD VISIONS OF POWER AND GLORY, NOT ONLY FOR JESUS, BUT ALSO FOR THEMSELVES WHEN HE TOOK THE THRONE.

AND THOSE VISIONS CLOUDED THEIR RESPONSIVENESS TO JESUS'S TEACHING.

THE SAVIOR TOLD THEM OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT GOD'S KINGDOM WOULD NOT BE BUILT ON WORLDLY VALUES.

INSTEAD, THE FOUNDATION FOR THE KINGDOM WOULD BE HIS AND THEIR: LOWLINESS, VULNERABILITY, HUMILITY, AND SELF-SACRIFICE.

BUT EVEN AS THEY NEARED JERUSALEM, AND THE CROSS GREW LARGER AND LARGER ON THE HORIZON AND IN THE MASTER'S TEACHINGS, THE TWELVE HAD THEIR MINDS ON OTHER THINGS.

THEY REMAINED WRAPPED UP IN LOOKING FORWARD TO THE KINGDOM THEY WANTED TO COME, NOT THE ONE JESUS SPOKE ABOUT.

IN SPITE, OF WHAT JESUS ACTUALLY SAID, THE TWELVE, IT SEEMS, ONLY CAUGHT THE KEY WORDS LIKE- KINGDOM, POWER, AND GLORY.

THEY MOST LIKELY PICTURED JESUS SITTING ON A THRONE IN JERUSALEM WITH A GOLDEN CROWN ON HIS HEAD, SAW THEMSELVES CLOSE BY HIM.

THEY HAD THEIR MINDS SET ON POLITICAL POWER, MORE THAN ON RELIGIOUS REVIVAL.

AND SO THEY DID NOT HEAR HIS MESSAGE THAT HE HAD NOT COME TO CONQUER ROME.

IT WAS ALMOST AS IF THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD FORCE JESUS TO DO THEIR WILL, RATHER THAN GOD'S WILL.

CONSEQUENTLY, JAMES AND JOHN WENT TO JESUS TO SEEK A PERSONAL FAVOR, WHICH WAS TO GIVE THEM THE PLACES OF GREATEST HONOR ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM.

PERHAPS THEY WERE MOTIVATED BY SEEING MOSES AND ELIJAH ON EITHER SIDE OF JESUS WHEN HE WAS TRANSFIGURED.

OR MAYBE THEY ASSUMED SINCE SOMEONE HAD TO BE ON HIS RIGHT AND LEFT WHEN JESUS CAME INTO HIS GLORY, WHY NOT THEM?

BUT THE OTHER DISCIPLES WERE NO BETTER SINCE THEIR ANGER WAS NOT SO MUCH THAT JAMES AND JOHN SOUGHT PLACES OF HONOR, AS IT WAS THAT THEY GOT TO JESUS FIRST.

YES, JAMES AND JOHN WENT TO JESUS HOPING HE WOULD GIVE TO THEM WHATEVER IT WAS THEY ASKED OF HIM.

LET'S THINK ABOUT THAT REQUEST. IT WAS A BLATANT POWER GRAB, AND IT WAS DONE IN A DECEPTIVE WAY.

ONE DOES NOT HAVE TO LIVE VERY LONG BEFORE YOU REALIZE THAT WHEN ANYONE WANTS YOU TO PROMISE TO SAY "YES", BEFORE YOU HEAR THE QUESTION, IT IS MOST LIKELY SOMETHING YOU WOULD SAY "NO" TO.

OF COURSE, A GOOD WAY TO GET THAT PROMISE IS TO APPROACH SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY DISTRACTED IN THE HOPE THAT HE OR SHE WILL MAKE THE PROMISE WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES.

AND JESUS, AT THAT POINT IN TIME HAD A LOT ON HIS MIND AS HE APPROACHED JERUSALEM. SO IT MIGHT HAVE SEEMED TO THEM LIKE A GOOD TIME TO ASK HIM FOR THAT FAVOR.

FORTUNATELY, JESUS WAS NOT SO DISTRACTED THAT HE FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THOSE TWO DISCIPLES' FEEBLE ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE HIM.

BUT INSTEAD OF SIMPLY TELLING THEM YES OR NO, JESUS RESPONDED BY ASKING THEM IF THEY WERE WILLING TO DRINK FROM HIS CUP.

THAT CUP, AS WE KNOW, WAS THE CUP OF SUFFERING HE WOULD DRINK FOR OUR SAKES, IT WAS THE CUP OF GOD'S WILL FOR THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD.

JESUS TOLD THEM THAT THEY AND THE OTHERS WOULD IN FACT DRINK FROM THAT CUP.

BUT HE ADDED THAT GOD ALONE WOULD CHOOSE THE ONES WHOM GOD DETERMINED BELONGED ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM.

JESUS ALSO WARNED THEM THE POSITIONS THEY SOUGHT WERE NOT THE HONOR THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.

IT WOULD NOT BE A PLACE OF POWER OR GLORY FOR THE TWO ON EITHER SIDE OF JESUS.

REMEMBER HOW JESUS CAME INTO HIS GLORY. IT HAPPENED WHEN HE WAS CROWNED WITH THORNS AND ENTHRONED ON THE CROSS.

CONSEQUENTLY, IT WAS A GOOD THING FOR JAMES AND JOHN THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE PLACES ON EITHER SIDE OF JESUS.

JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED BECAUSE HE CAME TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY.

IT WAS A POWERFUL ACT OF HIS FREE WILL THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR JESUS TO ENABLE A CHANGE WITHIN THE DEPTHS OF PEOPLE'S SOULS.

PART OF THE PEACE PRAYER, WRITTEN BY FRANCIS OF ASSISI, EXPRESSES A DESIRE TO BE LIVE OUT THAT KIND OF CHRIST-LIKE GREATNESS. HE PRAYED:

"O DIVINE MASTER, GRANT THAT I MAY NOT SEEK SO MUCH TO BE CONSOLED, AS TO CONSOLE; TO BE UNDERSTOOD, AS TO UNDERSTAND; TO BE LOVED AS TO LOVE;

FOR IT IS GIVING WE RECEIVE, IT IS IN PARDONING, WE ARE PARDONED, AND IT IS IN DYING THAT WE ARE BORN INTO ETERNAL LIFE."

NOTICE THE PRAYER ACKNOWLEDGES OUR INHERENT NEED FOR CONSOLATION, UNDERSTANDING, LOVE, RECEIVING PARDON, AND LIFE.

BUT SAINT FRANCIS PRAYS FOR THE POWER AND DESIRE TO SEEK THOSE THINGS MORE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS THAN SELF.

MAY WE LEARN FROM JESUS, TO USE WELL WHAT POWER WE HAVE WHETHER WE HAVE A LOT OF POWER, OR ONLY A LITTLE.

MAY WE USE THE POWER OF OUR FREE WILL, THE POWER OF OUR WORLDLY SKILLS AND RESOURCES, THE POWER OF OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS, AND THE POWER OF OUR FORGIVENESS NOT SIMPLY FOR OUR OWN BENEFIT, BUT TO GLORIFY GOD, AND TO BENEFIT OTHERS. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY MARK 10:32-45 "POWER"

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