

Joel 2:21-27
Psalm 126
1 Timothy 2:1-7
Matthew 6:25-33

Sermon October 17th, 2021

Jesus Lives in Service for Us

James and John have been loyal to Jesus. Committed to Jesus' movement. They have given up so much to follow Jesus across Galilee. They have given up their jobs in the fishery (**Image**). They have given up time with family and friends. They have become more vulnerable to persecution as they stand behind Jesus when he challenges the authorities.

And yet, they stay committed to Jesus' movement despite all that they have had to give up, because they believe Jesus will become the next king. A king who hopefully does more for James, John, and their community than the current king has. So, with all of what they have sacrificed for Jesus in mind, a moment of self-preservation takes over in their brains.

Without thinking of the other ten disciples, they ask Jesus if they can sit next to him when he becomes king (**Image**). They want to make sure they take care of their fate in this new kingdom. No more being known as part of the peasantry class. They want to be given a high rank in Jesus' kingdom.

Of course, the other ten are left out of this initial conversation. When they eventually find out they are outright mad. Maybe, at themselves for not thinking of this first. Maybe, at James and John for leaving them out of the loop. They too have given up so much to support Jesus and his movement.

Sometimes when we show loyalty to someone or are committed to a movement we can fall in this same trap. We think our loyalty and commitment should be rewarded. We think more about how this movement, this person will benefit me, instead of the positive impact this person or movement could have on the community at large.

Even when we are getting involved in an organization or community that's main purpose is to care for others. We can sometimes find ourselves motivated by self-serving principles. What does this do for me? Instead of thinking, what does this do for my neighbour?

Jesus could use this opportunity to assert his authority, and punish the disciples for missing the boat on his message. But this isn't how Jesus leads.

Instead, Jesus uses this opportunity to talk about who he is as a leader, and how he wants to set an example for those who follow him.

Jesus isn't a self-serving leader like they have experienced in the Roman Empire. Jesus doesn't make decisions that will benefit himself. If he did, he would have spent all his time hanging with those in the community that had a greater status.

Jesus doesn't abuse his authority. If he did, he would be much harder on his disciples and those he encounters.

Jesus comes into this world and chooses to serve us. He turns that M in the word me upside down (**Image**).

According to Isaiah and Hebrews, Jesus will go above and beyond to care for our needs. To reconcile us with God and one another. Jesus will suffer at the hands of those self-serving leaders in the Empire, to drive home the point that he is the opposite. His leadership is about serving others. Not himself.

Many of us have probably experienced a boss or a leader in our community who is driven by self-interests instead of putting the wellbeing of the community ahead of their own. We know how this kind of leadership impacts us and the people around us. The old saying goes: Attitude reflects leadership.

We start to care more about our own self-interests instead of the wellbeing of the people around us, because we are feeling neglected and ignored. Selfish leadership often leads to a selfish community.

During this pandemic we have seen first hand how important it is to think of the wellbeing of others, and the negative impact on our community when we think of ourselves first (**Image**).

It is hard in a society where we are taught to look after ourselves to suddenly start putting the well-being of others in front of our own. But this is the example Jesus sets for us when Jesus puts our well-being ahead of his own.

Jesus offers us a different way of leading, of being God's children. Jesus invites us to serve others in the same way Jesus serves us. Following Jesus isn't about getting what we want all the time or being seen in a greater light than others, because we do so much for the church. The church was never meant to have the same kind of authority as kings and emperors. The church was meant to be a place that reached out to meet the needs of people in the community. The church was meant to put the wellbeing of others ahead of their own. The church was meant to challenge the kings and emperors who put their needs ahead of the community.

Now that doesn't mean our needs are unimportant. When we lean on Jesus, we see that Jesus serves us. Jesus meets our needs. Jesus invites our neighbours to serve us. To meet our needs. But we also are invited to serve Jesus. To serve our neighbour.

To meet their needs. This way no one is above anyone else. We work together as a community to love one another. Not to argue over who should have a closer seat at the banquet table.

And when we can work together in service for one another than all our needs are met. Then it doesn't matter where we sit at the table. What matters is that we are invited to the table (**Image**).

In our gospel today, we hear a message that can sometimes get forgotten in times like these. Jesus serves us. Jesus meets our needs. Jesus gives up his life for us. Jesus breathes new life into us and our communities, so that we can take up our crosses and follow Jesus (**Image**). So, we can drink from the same cup as Jesus. So, we can receive the same baptism as Jesus. Serving one another as Jesus serves us.

Being a community that isn't self-serving, but self-giving. A community where we genuinely care for one another. Putting the well-being of others before ourselves. A community that reflects the leadership of our saviour and leader, Jesus.

Let us pray, loving God, thank you for showing us the way. For sending your Son to serve us, so that we can serve others. **Amen.**

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