

**May I never boast...
except...
in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**

Date: 17 October 2021
Service/s: *Across the Diocese*
Series: Questioning Jesus
Title: Who is the greatest?
Passage: Mark 10.35-45

- There are so many things about Jesus' life that are not what we would expect...
- The **creator** comes to earth and how does he come? As one of the **creatures** he has made... taking on their **form** and **flesh**.
- The creator of the entire **Universe** comes to **earth** – and how does he **come**? //
- As a helpless **baby** laid in a **feeding trough**!
- The **creator** comes to **his creatures** but they don't **recognise** him. /
- He comes to **reveal** himself – **but** the **creatures** put the **creator** to **death**... //
- It's not what you'd **expect is it?** //
- And he comes to earth (says Mark 10:45) – *not to be served, but to serve...*
- It's the very **opposite** of what you'd expect. /
- We'd expect the creator coming to his creatures, would **WANT** to be **SERVED** – **DEMAND** to be **served**
- To have all his **needs** and all his **demands** and all his **wishes met immediately**.
- To be **pampered. Adored. Bowed down to. Honoured. Waited on. Hailed.**
- to want to **control everything**.
- To give out **commands**.
- To expect nothing but **complete submission**.
- To be **served. All day. Every day.**
- **Whatever** he **wanted. Whenever** he **wanted** it. //
- Surely that's what greatness **deserves**!
- He's the **Creator**. //
- **SURELY** he **came** to be **served**! ///
- But no – he turns our expectations **completely** on their **head**.
- He says he came to **SERVE**. //
- But this whole **passage** turns our common thinking on its **head**.
- It **begins** with James and John wanting a **favour** – v35 – 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask'.
- '**Whatever** we ask' – that **could** be **anything**!
- Strange request isn't it?
- Jesus has just told his disciples once again that he is going up to Jerusalem to die... and James and John ask 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask'.

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- Like us saying to someone great 'do us a **favour** will you?' – without disclosing what the favour is....
- With great patience, Jesus asks, 'what **do** you want me to do for you'?...
- V37 – they reply - *'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.'*
- In **their** minds – they were thinking: "when you as Messiah boot the Romans out – we want a piece of the **action** Jesus!... We want to share the **kingdom**... and the **power**... the **glory!!**"
- But Jesus says – v38 – *you don't know what you're asking.*
- the path to **glory** – Jesus explains - is the path of **suffering** – v38 again - *Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?*
- Are you **sure** you want this Jesus is asking... ?
- **Yes** - !!! We can v39. We're with you Jesus!!!
- Jesus assures them (v39) that sadly they **WILL** share in his suffering... ...they will **both** face martyrdom in due course... James within a few **years**, John some **60 years later**.
- ...but even so – the places of **left** and **right** – will not be for him to **grant**. ///
- there is something so **wrong** about what James and John want...
- wanting **power, status, authority**, people bowing **down** to **you**, commanding the **respect** - yes wanting the **glory**.
- it's not a problem confined to the **disciples** of Jesus in the **1st** century.
- it is **greed** and **selfish ambition** - pushing others out of the **way** as you go - that is behind much of the **disputes, financial upsets, political instability** that we see right around the world.
- And it is this **divisiveness** which creeps even into our own **homes** - as one vies for **their** rights above those of somebody **else**. //
- but there is a great problem with such **power-hungry, position-jostling** moves – it goes on to cause **further** division and conflict...
- ... we see that **here** // because the request that James and John have made to Jesus has caused quite a stir among the other disciples.
- v41 - *and when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.*
- Indignant? – probably – outraged!!...
- can you imagine the discussion – 'who do they think they are asking such a thing?' – 'are they any better than we'?
- - why should **they** have those positions - and all the time what they **probably** mean is – 'why didn't **we** think of it **first!**?' //
- So Jesus turns it in to a **teaching** opportunity! – about the **true** nature of **greatness** – or the **nature** of **true greatness!**
- and the sombre note which they had to **learn** - and **you** and **I** need to **learn** and constantly **re-learn**, is that being **great**, has **nothing** to do with grasping at **positions of power**.
- in fact says Jesus - and this really would have given them something to think about - *you know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and **their** great men exercise authority over **them***

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- - in other words - **wanting** the **power** and the **right to rule** - that's for the **Gentiles** – the **unbelievers** – the **pagans** to worry about !
- ...And you are **reaping** the **results** of that sort of **power-hungry self-seeking rule** right **now** as Israel has been under Roman rule for about **25 years!**
- leave that to the **Gentiles...**
- but in the **Kingdom of God** - among the **people** of **God**, things will be very **different.** /
- **position jostling** will be replaced with **outdoing** one another in being of **SERVICE** - being a **slave**.
- the **GREAT ONE** is not one that looks to be **served**, but looks first and foremost **to serve!** ///
- this is about as **opposite** to **20th century** living as it was to **1st century**.
- For we are now are encouraged to get along to the latest **self-assertiveness lectures**, so we can learn how to **impress** ourselves on **others** - even how to **control people** and **manipulate** them to our own **purposes**.
- if **WE** don't move to get ahead, well someone will be there soon enough to take our **place**.
- and it can happen and does happen in the **church** as it does in the **business world** – church meaning **denomination** – and church meaning – **local church**.
- but here is Jesus encouraging his disciples - then and now - to **turn** it on its **head.** //
- You **want** to be **GREAT?** ///
- I'll tell you how to be **great...** it starts not with **grasping** to be **CEO** – but by putting out the **garbage**.
- It starts not with wanting the position with all the **power** and **greatness attached** – but the position **no one else wants** – it starts with the **washing up...**
- It starts not with **gaining** control but **relinquishing** control. //
- It starts not with **wanting** all the **attention**, but **giving** all the **attention.** //
- It starts not with **taking** the position of **power**, but **washing feet.....** ///
- ...this can't **help** but challenge us **can it?**
- we **all** like to be served by others - want people to pander to our **needs** our **desires** - at least we all do **some** of the **time**.
- we want some of the **kudos**, some **claim** to **fame**, some reason for others to **revere** us.
- ...we all like some sort of **power** over **others**. Even if it is only in our **homes!**
- but the **power** is **illusory**, the **fame temporary**, the **glory // short-lived....**
- And we know from elsewhere in Scripture that the whole exercise in the end is **self-defeating** because God brings down the **proud** but exalts the humble.
- the one who **exalts themselves** will be **humbled** - humiliated; the one who **humbles themselves** **WILL** be **exalted.** ///
- What right does Jesus have to **teach** these things? What **insight** does the **King of Kings** have... what **credibility??** – what **authority?** //

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- the **superb example** of his **own service**; for he caps off this teaching opportunity with the words... v45 *'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.'*
- Jesus gives **himself** as the example as one who although he has all the right and authority in the **world** to be **served**; he actually came that he might **SERVE**.
- and **where** do we see that service and that servant attitude at its most **clearest**? - at his **death**!
- how is his death a **service** to you and me?
- because it's a **ransom**.
- We know what a ransom is.
- It's a price paid to **redeem** or **rescue** something.
- ransom means **liberation** - a **liberation** that the person could **never** have brought about for **themselves**.
- and the liberation Jesus made possible for you and me, cost him his **life** - his life which he **freely gave** - in the form of a **shameful death** on the **cross**. ///
- We have been wonderfully set free from **sin** and **death** – from **evil** and **Satan**. //
- **Because** Jesus rescued **us**.
- he died as a **substitute** - "he himself bore **our sin** in his body on the **tree**" (1 Peter 2:24);
- "he who **knew no sin became sin** for us, so that we might become the **righteousness of God**" (2 Cor 5:21).
- and God tells us in the letter to the Philippians - Jesus did not **cling on to** his rights and riches as the eternal Son of God -- but gave it all up for the **poverty** of our **existence** and **served** us all the way to the **cross**. //
- That's the **standard** says Jesus in **servicing others**.
- That's the standard in becoming '**great**' through **servicing**.
- That's the **standard** in seeking not to **BE** served, but to **SERVE**! ////
- I want to ask you - **have YOU been served by Christ?** //
- the **first step** in becoming a Christian is to acknowledge that you are in a very serious and dangerous position which you cannot dig yourself out of.
- ...and then allowing Christ to **serve** you. //
- and many people stumble at just this point.
- it's a severe blow to the **pride** and again cuts against the **grain** of all **new-age thinking** and **20th century sophistication** to acknowledge there is a problem you can do **nothing** about **yourself**!
- Many people believe that if only they can score enough **points** in serving God... then they'll be put **right** with him...
- But - ah no - it starts with allowing **Jesus** to serve **you**!
- **admitting** your **sin** and that you been serving your **own needs** instead of **God's**.
- for if you **haven't** asked Jesus to **rescue** you - to be your **ransom** – to **serve** you – you haven't yet '**got**' the Christian faith... ///

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- have you been **served** by **Jesus**?
- Was it **your** place he took on the **cross**?
- Do you have new life because Jesus **served you**?
- Jesus said the *Son of Man came not to be **served**, but to **serve** and give his life as a ransom for many. ///*
- And in so doing, he showed us what **true greatness** is all about.
- For if we are **followers** of **his**... if we are becoming more and more **like** him – then we **too** are to become **slaves** of **all**.
- ‘whoever wants to be **great** among you must be your **servant**’.
- **There** is the path to **greatness**... **servicing others**.
- Whatever the **need**.
- Whatever the **cost**. ///
- is **your** life marked by that attitude which wants to **serve others**?
- Or are you looking for a bit of glory and greatness of the kind **James** and **John were**?.... //
- ...or are you just wanting to **serve** – to **help** – to **give** – to **love** – as a **slave** – a **servant** – a **nobody**... ??
- *for even the Son of Man came not to be **served**, but to **serve** and give his life as a **ransom** for **many**.*