**Mark 10:35-45** PENTECOST 21b 845

Do you want to be somebody. James and John did.(**let one of us sit on your left hand and one on the right in your glory.)** Most of us probably want to be somebody. That’s why we get power struggles in 101 organizations across the nation. With everybody wanting to be top dog there comes only division and strife.

As usual Jesus turns everything on its head. He suggests you don’t measure a person by his or her position; by how many people are controlled, by how much weight he or she can throw around or even the size of the salary. The one burning question for him is: How many people have you helped? Be suspicious of anyone who **wants** authority and power. Ask why they want it.

None of this means that Jesus is against ambition. No, no, he’s all for it. He’s for the **right** ambition.It’s an ambition that sounds crazy. It’s the ambition to serve and to slave.

**Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must become slave of all.**

There is a slight difference between the word “servant” and “slave”. The first is a willing thing. One wants to do what the scriptures, say

” *looking not to one’s own needs, but to the needs of others* “

.We will see later why we actually want that. The second word “slave” suggests serving when there’s really no choice. We have to serve whether we like it in a given situation or not. It implies the unpopular word “duty”. The bible makes service also a duty when it says that we ought to

“*owe nobody anything except to love them,”*

The idea of a debt or duty is thrust upon us because our old nature which resists the promptings of the Spirit hangs around like a bad smell and never lets us go,. Anyway, none of this idea of serving people was any good to the ancient Greeks. It wasn’t dignified. “How can a person be happy when he or she has to serve someone,” one man asked. It was a crazy idea.

But Jesus comes along and says it’s the mark of a disciple. He served.

“*He emptied* *himself, took the* *form of a servant and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.”*

He washed dirty feet, for.

**The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.**

Aren’t you and I his disciples? Ready to be as he is? It should come easily. You see, you are somebody. When Jesus gave his life for you it became clear that you are valuable and important. You don’t have to prove anything to anyone. No need to try an impress anyone. You’re free from all that rubbish – free now to serve.

Think for a moment of really does have greatness. It’s the doctor who will come at any hour of the day or night. It’s the boss who takes an interest in the lives of his employees; it’s the person to whom we can always go without being made to feel that we are a nuisance; it is those who didn’t want things done for them, but were always ready to do things for us - our mother, siblings and friends. Years ago a British politician by the name of Curzon died. The then Prime Minister paid him a great tribute when he got up and said:

*I want before I sit down to say one or two things that only I can say. A PM sees much of human nature and it was my chance to see the departed twice when he suffered great disappointment. – the time when I was preferred to him as PM and the time when I had to tell him that he could give greater service to his country in a different role to the one he was playing and enjoying, But never for one moment did he show by word, look, or, any reference to the subject afterwards that he was dissatisfied. He bore no grudge and pursed no course than the one expected of him – of doing his duty where it was thought he could best serve.*

That’s a great person. True selflessness is rare. When it is found, it is remembered. The old Greeks had a story about a man whom we will call X. 300 men were to be chosen to govern Sparta, a city state, and X was a candidate. When the list of successful candidates was published, the name of x wasn’t there. “I am sorry,” said one of his friends, “that you were not elected. The people should have known what a wise choice you would have been.” “I am glad,” replied X, “that in all of Sparta there are 300 better men than I.” He became a legend. Why? Because he was prepared to give others first place will no ill-will. So much would be solved if we all lived for what we could do for other people and not for what we could do or keep for ourselves. The things that tear families and organizations apart would fade away if our only desire would be to serve, So, when Jesus talks of the greatness and value of the one who serves, he was laying down a very practical truth indeed.

One more thing. In the early church there were deacons. The word deacon came from the same Greek word for servant. During worship everybody had served one another just by being present, but also by their confession of faith and their building up of one another through hymns and songs. The service didn’t close with the blessing though. No, the deacons went straight away to the sick and housebound taking with them the greeting of peace from the congregation and the bread and wine from the altar. Their service continued. We serve and are being served this morning. Go out after the blessing for another week of continued service knowing that ransomed by Jesus you are somebody and can now help someone else be somebody. A little up-building word here and an act of kindness there. We can do it!

Hampstead 17/10/21