

Mark 10:35-45      22nd Sunday after Pentecost      October 19, 1997

*35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." 36 And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" 37 And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." 38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 39 They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

*41 When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. 42 So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

If your life was to be most captured in one picture, what would it be?

A picture of family, all scrubbed and shiny.

A picture of you, hammer and nails in hand, building, fixing.

A picture of you the teacher, explaining to a student.

A picture of you, rocking your baby through the dark night of illness.

A picture of you and a child, fishing, playing ball, walking.

A picture of you dancing with your partner, all smiles and joy.

A picture of you, praying, or singing, or reading?

A picture of you, the athlete, shining with the sweaty glow of victory?

A picture of you the nurse, joining the patient in the fight for life?

A picture of you, the friend, walking alongside?

A picture of you, the businessman, brisk, confident, competent, successful?

A picture of you beside your home?

If your life were to be captured in one picture, which would you choose?

James and John had a picture in mind that day. Jesus enthroned -gold and silver and jewels and the purple robes of royalty and they, James and, John sitting right beside him, on his right and on his left, there in glory.

Like the football player who carries in his heart that moment when the team is victorious and the crowd is cheering and Mom and Dad are so proud. Through the long

practices and the pain of injury this vision carries him. Through fears this vision gives him courage. What will be at the end will make it all worthwhile.

James and John carried this vision of glory with Jesus in their hearts.

Until one day they spoke to Jesus about this. *"Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."*

*But Jesus said, "You don't know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*

*And they replied, "We are able."* It didn't take them a second to decide whether it would be worth it. To be beside Jesus in glory, nothing else could matter beside that.

*Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

Jesus could make no promise to them about the glory they were seeking, only that they would be able to be with him in his suffering for that is what the cup and the baptism signified.

When the other ten disciples heard about what James and John had asked, they were angry. They must have wanted those same two glorious seats.

*But Jesus taught them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all."*

Jesus intended to replace in their minds the picture they had drawn of greatness. Not robes and thrones and silver and gold, but the dress of the lowly household servant, preparing and bringing the food for others to feast upon. The dress of the slave, daily digging in the soil and caring for the livestock and washing the owner's fine clothes.

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

*Why? For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve. From the very beginning, before any beginnings that ever were Jesus as the Son of God had all glory and honor and power. But he chose to enter this world as your servant. He chose to give his life as a ransom for you.

IF there were to be one picture of Jesus what would it be? Glorious king upon the throne? No, he came to be servant, slave.

Gentle teacher, blessing the children?

Faithful friend calming the troubled sea?

Shepherd, feeding the lambs on a green hillside with five loaves and two fish?

Soldier, driving out of the temple those who preyed upon the poor, little ones who came seeking God?

So many pictures of servant, slave.

But more than all the rest are the pictures of the one stricken, struck down by God, afflicted. The one wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the punishment that made us whole and by his bruises we are healed.

Jesus on the cross, taking upon himself all the iniquity of the straying sheep.

*For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

If you want to capture a picture of God and God's glory, go to the cross. For upon the darkest day the light shone most clearly.

So who would be Jesus' right and left hand men in Jesus' glory? A couple of nameless robbers were chosen for the honor - miserable sinners.

In Arlington National Cemetery is the tomb of the unknown soldier. Thousands have come there, knowing that grave as belonging to their loved one.

The two robbers are like that tomb. For you and I take our place in them beside our dying Lord every time we confess our sins. We are in that confession those for whom Jesus died – Jesus, our servant, our slave.

Put yourself in that picture and you will see the most revealing picture of your whole life. You are one for whom Jesus died.

But let there be a second picture also. You dress as servant, as slave, following Jesus. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, listening to children, caring for the sick, walking beside a friend. Let the picture of your life look just like Jesus. Amen.