

*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."*

I like a bargain. Whether it is buying a car, getting an oil change, buying a shirt or purchasing some crisp Fuji apples I love a bargain. It just feels good to get something for less. It is not so much about the money as it is about the bargain.

There is no bigger bargain than the one we get with God. Isaiah describes it in today's lesson. "He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." All your sins, all your failings, all your insincerity and insecurity piled on Jesus. And all his righteousness and all his goodness given to you in exchange. What a bargain! The judgement and the death that you and I deserve loaded upon Jesus and all the life and the honor and privilege of the only Son of God given to us. For three days he is imprisoned in death and for all time you and I are freed for life. What a bargain!

The other night in the new member class I asked each to respond with what they hoped to learn that night and one answered, "I want to know how much God expects of me. How much must I give and do?" Well, the answer to that questions is, "Simply believe in Jesus. That is what God asks of you - that you have faith in Jesus Christ." Jesus is the biggest bargain of all.

When the grocer or the big box store offers a bargain do they win me as a faithful customer? Only if the bargains keep coming. The store across the way offers a better bargain, next week I am there. In my shopping I have no loyalty.

It was not like that when I shopped at KB Jewelers in Hettinger, ND. KB was Kent Brakel who ran the store along with his wife Kathleen. Partly I went into the store to shop – mostly I went into the store to talk. I never did any price comparisons on the things I bought there. I might have saved some money in a competitor's store but I never even checked because of what Kent meant to me. He is a good friend. That made all the difference. Here I do not know the people where I shop. Money is all that matters.

What do you think it is that matters with God? Getting all the sheep loaded up on the livestock truck that is bound for heaven? Seeing how many people can be gathered by the bargain of trading our sins for Jesus' righteousness? No, God wants a whole lot more. God wants a relationship with you. A relationship that is not pegged to the bargain of the week but that involves your love and your heart. Jesus does not want to be a means to your getting what you really want but Jesus wants to be what you really want - that you would love him – not just what he does for you but him - that you would gather here with God's people not as a way to fulfill an obligation nor as a way to guarantee a bargain but because Jesus gives you joy. Jesus wants you to be here because you want to be like him – the way a young child wants to be like mom or dad – not to gain something from them but just because mom and dad are so special.

In our gospel reading James and John want to be in on the glory – they want thrones in heaven – one on Jesus right and one on his left in his glory. But Jesus wants them to be like him – serving rather than being served. For Jesus this serving will lead to his suffering and death but Jesus knows it is God's will for him and he wants God's will to be done most of all. Jesus wants to be like his Father in heaven more than anything else – giving himself in love for those that are undeserving. Jesus wants the disciples he loves to be caught up in that same giving.

And you? As you become more and more a friend of Jesus and want to be more like him, what does Jesus want for you? I hope that you come here each week seeking the answer to that question. No longer looking for a bargain but coming to receive the very life of a friend – holding out your hand to receive all that he is and has given for you – and then responding.

Today and in the coming weeks we are emphasizing a part of that response – your giving of your money. St.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians urging them with these words: “On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and store it up, as you may prosper, so that offerings need not be made when I come.”

On the first day of the week. We Christians do not gather in worship on the day of obligation – Saturday – the Seventh day, the Sabbath. That is the day commanded for rest in the Ten Commandments. But it is not our usual day of worship. We gather on the first day of the week – the day of celebration as we remember our Lord being raised from the dead. Not obligation but celebration.

I hope that your giving will be the same, not obligation – a burden to be carried but celebration – a joyful response to God for all that God has given in Jesus. Whether that giving is through this congregation or is carried out in other ways of your healing those who have little – you become more and more like Jesus when you are generous.

For money is not what matters most of all – Jesus is. Amen.