

I heard a story this past week that I would like to share with you.

A little girl had a very large sheet of paper on the floor, and all around that paper were crayons of every color. Her teacher entered the room looked around and asked: "Sally what are you doing?"

I'm drawing a picture of God, was Sally's reply.

But Sally, the teacher responded, "no one knows what God looks like."

well, when I get done they will.

Only a child ~~on a fool~~ ^{world} could make such a claim. A child, ~~on a fool~~.

In the gospel according to St. John we read: No one has ever seen God, the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

Jesus is that child, the child of God, drawing a picture of his Father for all the world to see. He drew not with pens or crayons, the picture he painted was not a picture of words, I'd like to say that he used his life to draw the picture of his Father, but as I think about it, that's not quite true. It is more like Jesus life was the paint itself, revealing the brush strokes of his Father's hand. It is more like Jesus is God's self portrait for a world that had never seen him.

No one knows what God looks like.

But God said, of his work in Jesus, "when I get done, they will."

And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, "Behold we are going up to Jerusalem; and the son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

At first glance this was not a very pretty picture. Not a kindly old man with a flowing gray beard, but a mocked and scourged and crucified one. Even within and under those broad strokes of victory, the being raised on the third day, the suffering and the pain would still be evident. Hands still marked, scarred. Who could have thought that this was the picture of God?

Not the mother of James and John. She said to Jesus, "Command that these ~~two~~ two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."

She wanted glory for her boys, positions of highest power. She wanted them to be right next to Jesus, where she knew they belonged.

Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking, Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" And James and John answered, "We are able." Jesus said to them, "You will drink my cup 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 by my Father."

Now the other ten disciples were upset by this, but Jesus called them and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of man came not to be served ~~but~~ ^{not to serve and} to give his life as a ransom for many."

The mother of James and John, James and John themselves, and the ten other disciples all were expecting ~~axpaxxeffx~~ that today's sacrifices would pay big dividends tomorrow. They had left everything, they had followed from dusty village to dusty village. They had left behind their own dreams to become a part of Jesus dream. ^{they expected a healthy return on their investment,} ~~and say they if they are like me, I'll bet they spun some new dreams in their minds of just how glorious that tomorrow of Jesus kingdom would be. Certainly the mother of James and John did.~~

Sometimes I marvel about churches. Everywhere you look there are churches and in most every one a pastor, or two, or even more. No one is taxed, no one is forced to give, yet billions of dollars are given. What do we buy with our money? A building, a place in a community of believers, someone to visit us when we are sick or lonely, a chance to hear God's word? Or do the billions of dollars represent in our minds a down payment on some heavenly property?

I wonder.

And what of our efforts at following Jesus, obeying God's word? Are these the dues we must pay for one day being admitted into that heavenly country club?

It is easy to hear Jesus words to us today in this way: Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave. Be a servant today, get a great crown in the kingdom, act as a slave of others today, be asked to sit in the place of highest honor at the heavenly banquet.

Now isn't that exactly how the mother of James and John saw things? Sacrifice and humility today, glory tomorrow. Servants, slaves today, lords tomorrow, one at the right hand and one at the left of Jesus.

Whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be your slave even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

For Jesus there was absolutely no further glory that could be gained by giving his life. As God's Son, all the glory was his from the very beginning, before any beginning. Yet he allowed the Father to paint a self portrait as Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many. In that act of love we see the heart of God. The Lord and creator of all choses to become the servant and slave of all. Your slave, my slave as he gave his life for us. He gave his own life into the hands of death, that your life might be freed. ^{for those hands} ~~He gave up~~ ~~his own glory,~~ ~~that you might live forever in God's glory.~~ In ~~that~~ giving ^{his} ~~his~~ ^{himself} ~~of himself for us,~~ ^{we see the true glory of the almighty God, his love.} ~~the Almighty God.~~ ^{as it is with you,}

In Jesus everything is yours already, eternal life, dwelling in the glory of God. There is simply nothing more than you that you could achieve for yourself than has already been given. You won't buy a thing with your offerings to the church. You won't buy a thing with your obedience, not a thing with being a servant of others, a slave of others. Jesus has already won every blessing for you as he has given his life as a ransom for many.

Yet the almighty God would ~~find joy~~ rejoice to take your life and brush
it into his self portrait. Giving yourself just as Jesus did, serving, slaving
for those who in no way can pay you back, your life becomes pigment ^{with which the} ~~the~~
Father ^{paints} ~~brush~~h. And your friends and your neighbors will see him whom no
human being has ever seen, the Lord, the Almighty.

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Humanity cries out, "No one knows what God looks like.

And the Lord ^{says of his work in Jesus and in you,} ~~is answering~~, when I get done, they will.