

Reserved Seats

Intro. The other day I saw a truck with the slogan, “Never underestimate the power of being first.” The word, “first” is part of the company’s name so it is a play on that. A local attorney used the slogan, “Winning is everything.” These marketing statements may not truly reflect the values of the people who run the businesses. They are in a competitive business world. Disciples of the Lord are in the same world, but a different “business.”

I. If James and John thought the others would not find out about their attempt to get the best seats in the kingdom, they had a thinking problem. The word, “indignant” doesn’t really express what the other ten were feeling. They were *furious*. How dare James and John go behind their backs! One commentator wrote the ten were mad because *they* didn’t think of it first [M.McGlone, America, 10/5-18/18]. We can admire the ambition and initiative of

the two; it was just pointed in the wrong direction. The Lord probably wanted to slap his forehead and wondered if it was too late run an ad in the Jerusalem Times: “*Good* help wanted.” Instead he took a deep breath and called the group around him.

The leadership model the disciples were familiar was a king who ruled over his people until the next one overthrew him and took over, repeating the same oppression. It is somewhat natural to want to be in the upper ranks of power when you are in the lower ranks and have little control over your life. Despite the Lord’s best attempts, the disciples still did not understand the mission they were chosen for. They *knew* it was big and thought they would be in a good position to be close to the glory.

Concl. There are many leadership models. The appropriateness and success of them depends on the business. The model usually comes from the founder. The lesser known co-founder of Microsoft,

Paul Allen, announced a few years ago “he was giving the bulk of his fortune to charity.” [Phuong Le, A.P., T/U, 10/17/18] He said, “Those fortunate to achieve great wealth should put it to work for the good of humanity.” He said his pledge “reminds us all that our net worth is ultimately defined not by dollars but rather by how well we serve others.” [Ibid] Allen died this week; he was sixty-five. The billions of dollars for charity is wonderful, but his *leadership* is even more impressive. Christians are in the “business” of telling others about the Good News of Jesus Christ, who gave his “life as a ransom for many.” Our “founder” took human form and led from *within* the group, not *above* or *apart* from the group. He came *not to be* served, but to serve. A reminder for all who lead, religious or civil. For disciples of the Lord, I would re-phrase the slogan to say, “Never underestimate the power of a leader *who serves others.*” The scribes, Pharisees, Romans and

many others in the centuries since, severely underestimated the power of the Lord and his disciples. The world today still underestimates the power of servant leaders. Seven examples were added to our list of saints last Sunday in Rome. We say to God the same thing James and John asked: “I want you to give me whatever I ask.” And we don’t know what we are asking either. The “throne” disciples of the Lord are invited to is [what the writer to the Hebrews calls] the “throne of **grace.**”

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