

Servant Leadership

Intro. Whenever a good friend or family member asks me to do a favor, I want to immediately say, “Yes, of course I will.” But because I can be suspicious, I want to know what it is I am committing myself to before agreeing. Some things, no matter how much I want to say yes to, realistically I can’t or won’t do, not even for my best friends. James and John wanted the Lord to agree to do whatever they ask. He didn’t automatically agree.

I. James and John, with Peter were two of the three closest friends of the Lord and had been with him the longest. They were invited to witness his transfiguration on the mountain. For some reason Peter was not involved in this. Either he didn’t know

what they were up to or maybe it was a brother thing. The Lord had just made the last of three announcements about his plans to suffer, die and rise. Like Peter who previously tried to divert the Lord from his plan, James and John had a different plan to propose: gain, not pain. One part of me wants to admire their initiative to ask the favor; another part marvels at their stubbornness in not giving up on the idea of leadership as glory and power. And did they really think the other ten wouldn’t find out about this? Some translations of this scripture say they were “indignant.” Another that I think is more accurate says they were “furious!” Maybe because the others didn’t think of it first.

As in most cultures competition for the best, the most and highest position tends to become the goal.

It had infected the disciples too. The two men started out as fishermen who probably hadn't been far from the lake where they earned their living. They have traveled with the Lord beyond Galilee and are going to Jerusalem, the most glorious city in the country. They heard his powerful preaching and had seen his mighty miracles. They began to think about the possibility of power they never could have imagined when they stood on the shores of Galilee with the smell of fish still on their hands.

Concl. We could easily scoff, shake our heads at the disciples' focus on the glory of eternal life, preferring to skip over the suffering that is part of the journey with the Lord. They are not different from us. We do many good things, but must also admit to occasional lapses, our own "oops" moments. And there are many. We often ask our family and friends

to do things for us. How often do we ask them what we can do for them? Let's not forget the disciples had many good moments. After experiencing the risen Lord and receiving the Holy Spirit, they had the final pieces enabling them to evangelize with confidence; no looking back. We may not – and probably don't - have all the pieces of the understanding that reveal God's plan for us. **As disciples of the Lord, we might reverse James and John's request and ask instead what we can do for him.** [*Living Liturgy, 2021, 229, Liturgical Press*]
This defines Christian leadership as a desire to serve, not be served.

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