

## ***Holy Interruptions – What is Your Request?©***

**Mark 10:35-45**

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As we have heard before, Jesus is continuing on with his journey to Jerusalem and ultimately his journey to suffering, crucifixion and death.

But, on the way, he keeps having these holy interruptions. They are holy because people are asking important questions. They are holy because people are having very important dialog with the Son of God. They are important, holy happenings so we might learn.

Last week, had I been able to preach, we would have been talking about a rich man who sincerely wanted to know what he needed to do to inherit the Kingdom of God.

Jesus reminded him of the 10 Commandments – God’s laws. And the man, feeling proud, said he had kept those laws since he was a young boy.

So Jesus, looking lovingly at the man said, “There is one more thing you need to do. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor. Then you will inherit treasure in heaven.”

Sadly, the man valued what he had too much to be able to do that. He walked away in grief.

Jesus said to his disciples, “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into heaven.” His point being, not that a wealthy person could not be saved, but that the more a person has, the harder it is to put following Jesus as a priority.

And because having wealth was considered being right with God, being blessed by God, the disciples were dismayed, asking, “who then can be saved?” And Jesus answered, with mortals it is impossible. But with God, all things are possible.”

Without the saving power of God, no one would be saved.

But this week, Jesus is still on his way to Jerusalem. He is on the road with just his disciples and he has fallen back a little from them. James and John take advantage of this separation. They go to Jesus, saying, “we want you to grant whatever we ask.”

Another Holy Interruption. Jesus asked them, “and what is your request?”

Their request reminds me of growing up in a family of eight – six children and two adults. You can imagine how crowded the car was when we all piled in on Sunday morning. It was just a regular sized car with bench type seats in the front and the back.

When dad was along, he drove. Mom sat by the other door in the front and one child was in the middle between them (usually, one of the favorites!). The other five of us were crowded into the back seat.

I usually had a little one on my lap, as did my brother who was just two years younger than me.

Seatbelts were not yet an issue so we weren't breaking any laws, except our own created laws – like someone moving over the invisible line we drew that was supposedly our own personal space. Going over the invisible line was a very big offense!

When dad wasn't in the car and mom was driving we would have shouting matches as we headed out the door. "I get the window in the front!" "I get the window behind mom!" And so on.

When dad was driving and mom was at the other side in the front, what was really important was to NOT get the window behind dad as he had a habit of spitting. Gross!

Such childish behavior, right? But, doesn't James and John sound just like that? Are they paying attention at all?

Jesus had announced for the third time that he would suffer and die. And they are trying to edge out the other disciples so they can have the best seats in glory. What glory? How can they miss such sober news?

"I get the seat to Jesus right!" "I get to sit by him on the left!"  
And so it went. And of course, the other ten heard, and then they were indignant that James and John would try to boot them out.

Were none of them paying attention to what Jesus had said? It looks that way, at first glance, doesn't it? But, on the other hand, maybe they did hear, but are trying to push that fear far away, the fear that pokes it's ugly head up with the news of Jesus' death.

David Lose asks these questions: "And are we any different? When we feel under attack, or afraid, or anxious, isn't the temptation always to move toward self-preservation, give into our fears about scarcity, and see our companions as rivals rather than friends? And of course it doesn't work; it never does. But what's the alternative?"

That's what Jesus articulates. As in the two previous scenes around these issues, Jesus invites them not just to re-imagine but actually to redefine their understanding of

power, prestige, status, and leadership. In this case he defines leadership as serving the needs of another. Which means that glory comes not from individual accomplishment but from service.

If we think for a moment about the difference in a disciples' leadership and what the world says leadership should be, we will most surely find a world of difference.

We know that our culture lifts up those that are wealthy, those that show strength and power (it's often described as self confidence and the ability to get people to follow and do what you say). It's often portrayed as someone who's made it with wealth and prestige.

In our world, leaders have lots of people under them, serving them, often times afraid of them. The leaders are the powerful; the people under them are the servants.

But, in Jesus' description of a leader, we see it turned upside down, don't we? Jesus says to be great, you must be a servant of all. A leader serves others. But what does that mean?

We know that Jesus did finally reach his destination – Jerusalem and the cross. And we Christians believe that he gave himself completely for us – for the world – as he died on that cross, taking on the sins of the world. We know that he was fully human, but without sin, and he died so we might have our sins forgiven.

That has been the traditional Christian belief throughout the ages.

And Jesus said to James and John that they – and he includes us – we must be able to drink that cup that he drinks – meaning that we must be able and willing to give ourselves completely for others as well, if we would be his disciples.

Remember Jesus, in the garden, the night that he was arrested. Remember him crying out to God, "Take this cup from me. But your will be done!"

When Jesus asks if we can drink from his cup - that's a pretty huge thing, don't you think? Can you do that? Can I?

You know, I am on Facebook quite a bit. And I have to say that I am so sick and tired of seeing so much hatred posted by people who claim to be Christians. They are usually the ones who claim to be the most devout Christians.

They are hateful, threatening posts towards other races, other ethnic and religious groups, other people who have different political views. And I can't help but wonder – do they read these Scriptures? Do they hear what Jesus challenges us to do and to be? Do they hear them different than I do?

There is no self-righteous green light by Jesus saying it's okay to judge other people. All I hear from our Lord is the command to love others, to care for the poor, even to give ourselves in service to others.

But, maybe, like James and John, those who speak out are doing so in fear. Maybe there is uncertainty and confusion about where we are going and what it means for them ... what it means for all of us.

What are we losing? On the other hand, when we listen to Jesus, the bigger and better question is – what are we gaining?

We may lose our wealth, our prestige, our good standing in the community; we may lose more than that – we could lose our family, our homes, even our lives.

But if we lose for the sake of Jesus, we ultimately gain. We gain our place with Christ in the eternal home – in the place where there will be no more tears or pain or suffering.

Jesus calls us to serve. To be slaves. How can we do that and criticize our fellow brothers and sisters? How can we be slaves and it be okay to be judges too?

Jesus is our perfect example. When we want to be lifted up, we look to him and see that being lifted up means being on a cross; taking on the burdens of others for the sake of Jesus and all those he loves.

I can't tell you what your cross is, nor do I know for sure what mine is. But I am convinced that Jesus means what he says about serving others, loving others, not judging but giving to others.

May we pray that God will strengthen us on this journey, that we will be the kind of disciples he is asking us to be – giving and serving to those who are hurting and are being put down every day by this world.

And when we fail, let us admit it, asking for forgiveness and then begin again, always remembering what Jesus said – “With God, all things are possible!”

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