

October 17, 2021

Is 53:10-11; Heb 4:14-16; Mk 10:35-45

Any one of us might have tried it. Maybe you would have. James and John try to get all they can, they try to go for the gold, they try to have it all. They were reaching for something that we all are tempted to reach for - I'll call it "the dream that doesn't deliver." In this dream, I become important, powerful, have all kinds of money and stuff, and am always happy. Now there **is** a way to get to a place where you are always happy - but it's not the way James, John - or you or I often try.

So what do you have to do to get this dream that they were reaching for? Well you have to basically get in line in front of everyone else. We see this happen all the time. People step on a coworker (or even lie about them) to get a promotion, people cheat or steal to get more stuff before others can get it, politicians twist the facts about an opponent to gain their power position, people even gossip or talk bad about others just to get the attention that would go to that person. So - the reasoning is - if I can step in front of the line I'll get the bigger share. We see James and John trying to do this in the Gospel. They come to Jesus to be given the highest places in his "administration" before the others. Since Jesus has just finished his third prediction of His own passion and death - it's like saying to a dying parent: "hey when you go can I have your car"? before a brother or sister has the chance - it is a really selfish move. On top of this, such move only paints a target on your back for others to try to take you down so they can take what you got away from you (as the other Apostles almost did to James and John before Jesus intervened).

But some may say: well ... if you have to be a little selfish - and if you have to risk some people trying to take you down to get to this dream - then so be it - maybe it's ok to break a few eggs to make that omelet. However, the real problem here is not what you have to do, but the false expectation of what you will get. This dream of a perfect (or at least nearly perfect) life is really a dream that doesn't deliver. The thought that if I get there first and get it all, then I will be able to hold on to it, and I will have control over the bad things from happening - this is a myth. Some of you here know how hard it is to get their first, how tough it is to hold on to it, and how difficult it is to maintain control of people and events. When Jesus says today in response to James and John's request for power: *You do not know what you are asking. Can you*

drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? He is reminding us all of an important truth. All of life, no matter what path you take, has its struggles. There is no success without suffering ... and there is no place of absolute safety from problems.

Jesus calls us to shoot for things beyond the dream that doesn't deliver, to face our lives looking at reality, not a fantasy. The fact is that there aren't enough top seats for all of us, the higher positions are often more stressful, eventually positions and fortunes change, and one day we will all die. Jesus sets for us a form of leadership that is based on service, not on power - not a fight to maintain power but a struggle through obstacles to lovingly serve others - surrendering the control to God. He says today: *You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you.* He directs us in a better way. Not chasing a dream that will never be fully realized, not in beginning a lifelong struggle to maintain the front place in the line, but rather, satisfaction through service, comfort in allowing God to bring things that are difficult to resolution, trusting that God will give us what we truly need.

Jesus lived this Himself. Although the most powerful being in the universe, His path of service and self-sacrifice led not to power as the world defines it, but good things for others and then, after His death, an unending satisfaction that could not be taken away. This is not a grasp for the "dream that doesn't deliver" here on earth, but a race to a future hope that does deliver. Basically, we can use our human freedom to chase a false dream, or to follow Jesus. There is an amazing relief in freeing ourselves from the pursuit of the false dream and following Jesus in hope to where He has gone. People following the false dream know that they have to suffer problems and setbacks in the pursuit of that elusive dream, so we shouldn't be surprised when we experience problems or setbacks in following Jesus. Either path has these problems, but only one leads to something that can't be taken away from us. *So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.* Confidently approaching Jesus is the solution to the stresses and losses of life, and relying on God's Grace is the path to true power - not in chasing the "dream that doesn't deliver."