

October 17, 2021- Deacon Jim (Luke 10 35-45)

Have you ever wondered what your place in heaven will be? Not what it looks like but will you have a function, will there be something that will occupy your time. Is there such a thing as time in heaven? The church teaches that God does not exist in time so what's up with that? I think about this from time to time and it's all so confusing so I stop thinking about and I just accept the fact that God has a plan and he knows what's best for me.

James and John, the sons of thunder, presumed that they had earned their place in heaven already. They had no idea what that place was or what it could possibly mean but they knew that staying by Jesus' side was the place to be. That's because of what they had done already as disciples of Jesus, they had established themselves like soldiers of Jesus and they were determined to make sure that Jesus was on the same page and that they assumed they were the best men for the job. We all know what happens when we assume. The other ten disciples were having no part of their plans or their assumptions so the bickering began.

Jesus immediately put a stop to it but not by taking control of the situation but by reminding them that they were acting exactly like the people of power that were abusing their authority over others.

I can't imagine anyone today who understands even the basic precepts of our faith thinking or assuming that they have a guaranteed place in heaven, and I think that's because we understand that we are all works in progress when it comes to our faith.

This is not to say that all Christians think this way. This is more of a Catholic way of thinking. There are some protestants that believe in sola scriptura, in other words they believe completely in the Bible and anything that is not written in the Bible is of no consequence so just commit your life to Jesus then once saved always saved. If this were true then how would you account for all future sinfulness. Their response may be that I'm already saved then why do I have to concern myself with such things.

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We should never assume we have a guaranteed ticket to heaven under any circumstances. What we need is to live out our faith as close as humanly possible to the teachings of Christ, confess our sins at least once a year, work for the good of others, and pray, pray, pray.

James and John didn't understand who they were trying to negotiate with. They didn't understand the price they would have to pay to fulfill their request. Jesus laid it out for them in no uncertain terms. You will drink this cup and you will be baptized in the blood of the Lamb but what you're asking for is not mine to give.

God the Father, the creator of all things, desires that we all come to him through his son Jesus and Jesus asks us to take up our cross and follow him so why would we assume that taking up our cross has anything to do with negotiating things on our own terms. Jesus surrendered to the will of the Father and he expects no less from us.

So many souls that are lost is because their desires are for things of this world and they can't see or don't care to see what lies beyond this life.

The problem with living your life for things is there is no end to your desires. At no time will you ever be satisfied with things. Things wear out things get old, things don't bring you joy, things bring you temporary happiness but things don't bring you joy, things are not eternal. Even my cat gets bored with things.

Our souls are eternal, our souls can experience joy, but only when we understand that our eternal soul was the greatest gift that God has given each of us and we should be grateful for that gift.

I think we need to ask ourselves each day what in this life is worth the price of our immortal soul. Jesus tells us that the greatest gift that we can give is to give our life for someone else, but he's talking about dying in the flesh.

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Those of us who have children are willing to die for our children or die for our spouse. We would die for our mother or father, sister or brother. Would you also risk eternal damnation for them? This is not what God wants for us. Our souls belong to our Father.

Jesus came to save our souls. He suffered greatly for us. Why would anyone forsake their souls for earthly rewards, and yet many do?

I'd like to read a little reflection that comes right to that point;

“We can often identify with both James and John in today’s gospel when we directly ask God for what we want. Or perhaps we do it indirectly? We attend Mass regularly, act more obediently, and secretly hope God is noticing.

I think of how often I have treated Jesus like that one friend whom people call only when they need something. Imagine if your phone rang only when people needed something from you. It would become pretty tiresome. However, Jesus does not scold his disciples, or us, for these requests.

Jesus makes reference to his ultimate sacrifice. He tries to tell them that he has to die on the cross, to pay for the sins of the world, so that we may have a loving relationship with God.

God hears all our requests. God knows exactly what we need when we need it. I myself, have made some pretty steep requests, and while God does not always answer when I want, God answers when I need it.

God gives me so much more than what I asked for: God gave the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus.” End quote.

Almighty Father you are the source of everything that is good. Make us worthy to receive the abundance of love that continuously pours forth from your being. We ask this through Christ our lord who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen!