



St. James

Feast Day: July 25th

Today, we celebrate St. James – an apostle. The son of Zebedee, also known as St. James the Greater to not confuse him with [St. James the Lesser](#) (also one of the Twelve). James and his brother [St. John](#) were among of the first four disciples of Jesus. Jesus called, and John and James followed. The brothers were passionate followers; Jesus referred to the two brothers as “sons of thunder.”

The apple didn't fall far from the tree. Their mother – Salome – in [today's Gospel](#) comes to Jesus with a bold request that agitates the other apostles: “Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your Kingdom.”

Jesus replies to her question saying, “you do not know what you are asking.” Still James and John affirm their commitment to discipleship, yet Jesus states: “My chalice you will indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left, this is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” Then, Jesus addresses the ten indignant apostles with this declaration:

Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant;
Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.
Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

(Mt 20:26 – 28)

This is still a very prevalent reminder for us today. All missionaries – lay, religious and ordained – must dedicate their lives to serve others as Jesus did. Repeatedly throughout Scripture does Jesus remind us that the greatest in his kingdom will be the least because Jesus calls his disciples to be humble and merciful. Today, take a few minutes to reflect upon the 8 Beatitudes to see how they guide us into a deeper sense of mission:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(From the Sermon on the Mount in Mt 5: 3 – 12)

St. James exemplified how zeal for the Lord brings us closer to God. James is among those closest to Christ. James was one of the three disciples Jesus allowed to be present when he revived the daughter of the synagogue official; James was also present during the Transfiguration and the Agony in the Garden. Consistently, it was Peter, James and John, who Jesus called to him out of the Twelve. While there are instances where James (and John) stood corrected by Jesus, his fiery zeal did not take away from his humility and dedication to serve others as Jesus did.

James was the first of the apostles to be martyred; St. Stephen was the first disciple to be martyred. During King Herod’s persecution of Christians, Herod “laid hands upon some members of the church to harm them. He had James, the brother of John, killed by the sword, and when he saw that this was pleasing to the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.” (Acts 12:1 – 3)

While James’ missionary work was limited to Jerusalem, he gave his life to proclaim the Gospel to everyone he met.

St. James, pray for us.