



57B PENTECOST 17B – ONLINE LITURGY

Jostling for position

Abstract

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Mark 9:35

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NEW TESTAMENT

James 3:13–4:3, 4:7–8a

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁱ

GOSPEL

Mark 9:30–37

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” ³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

³⁶ He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” ⁱⁱ

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

57B Pentecost 17B – Online Liturgy Jostling for position

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2021 | PENTECOST 17B | PROPER 20 | YEAR B

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Proverbs 31:10–31

Psalm Psalm 1

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Wisdom of Solomon 1:16–2:1, 2:12–22 or Jeremiah 11:18–20

Psalm Psalm 54

New Testament James 3:13–4:3, 4:7–8a

Gospel Mark 9:30–37ⁱⁱⁱ

In the passage, there is both literal and metaphorical movement: the physical journey towards Jerusalem and the dawning understanding by Jesus' followers. Jesus disturbs his disciples by predicting his suffering and death. However, the disciples – whether through misunderstanding, or to avoid thinking about it – argue and jostle for position: which of them is the greatest? Calling them to order, Jesus explains that to be the greatest is to serve others.

After Jesus again predicted his death and resurrection, the disciples – not understanding – argued about who was the greatest. Jesus responded with talk about the first being last and the last, first. He drew a little child into the middle of the group, saying that welcoming a child was an example of welcoming him. How might this relate to us?

This week we explore what it means to be the greatest.^{iv}

	Pre-Service
	Introit TIS #477 – “Jesus calls us here to meet him”
	Greeting May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all and also with us

We Gather

At this time, in this place, let us worship God –
with open ears ready to listen
and hearts ready to receive,
minds willing to be challenged
and attitudes given to God.
Come, we worship God as one.

Acknowledgements

Loving, gracious God,
who does not put us in order – greatest to least,
best to worst, loved most to loved least,
or any other order:
be with us as we spend time
with one another and with you.
Help us to listen to you as you speak to us
and challenge us, love us and encourage us.
Amen.

Hymn/song

TIS # 693 - "Come as you are"

Welcome

A prayer of a approach

Lord God, you call us to live our best lives
– for you, with you, in you.
We may sometimes pause to smell the coffee or the roses,
but we are often too busy to take time to be aware of you
– that you are with us, in us, and in those around us.
Quieten our hearts now to recognise you in this place today.
Help us to reach out to one another with love,
care and compassion,
so that we can all live our best life for you.
Amen.

Reflection/Discussion

Today's Scripture readings
invite us to consider again how we live out our faith,
and how our inner attitudes and values shape our lives.
We are called to live with humility and grace,
showing love and welcome to all.

Discussion around greatness and humility.

Who would you say are the greatest people of our time?
for example...

Who's the greatest cricketer?

Who's the greatest footballer?

Who's the greatest singer?

Who's the greatest actor?

	<p>Who are the people you personally admire as being great? What is it that makes you think they are great is it who they are (their qualities) or what they have done (their actions)? Are the people who we see as great those who have the greatest influence over others? (eg prime ministers, presidents and politicians) Many of us are by nature a little competitive. As children, we might compete to be the greatest speller, or the fastest runner. As adults, we often take pride in being good at what we do. In doing so, we compare ourselves with others.</p> <p><i>Annie, get your gun (48 sec)</i> Jesus challenges us on our views of greatness. Jesus told his disciples that to be great, we need to look out for others. We need to welcome and care for all, even those who might seem less important. Greatness does not come from being the best at everything, but from showing love and care for others, with humility and grace.</p>
	<p>We say Sorry Gracious God, we wish so much to follow your ways, and to live as you would have us. But too often we find ourselves acting out of jealousy or selfish ambition.</p> <p>We think more of ourselves than others, and we try to build ourselves up by boasting about what we do. We want to be the best, the greatest, or the most important. We are sorry for these attitudes and actions.</p> <p>Restore us to you, loving God, and restore us to each other. Teach us to look out for each other, to put others first, and to share what we have. Help us to live wisely, with humility and grace, seeking to serve and love others. We pray in Christ's name. Amen</p>
	<p>Words of Assurance When we come before God with humility and honesty, God draws near to us with grace and love. Our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God!</p>
	<p>Readings James 3:13–4:3, 4:7–8a</p>
	<p>Hymn/song/video TIS #407 – “Breathe on me, breath of God”</p>

Reflection

Display the keyring, with various keys for different purposes.

Look at all my keys!

They come in different shapes and sizes.

See, there are big ones and small ones.

Which key do you think would be the most important?

Do you think it would be this big car key?

Or the fancy old one?

If I wanted to get into my house, this key would be the most important key.

(Show house key)

If I wanted to drive my car, this key would be the most important key.

(Show car key)

The house key would be of no use at all.

If I wanted to open my suitcase, this tiny key would be the most important key.

(Show small key)

It is a bit silly to argue about which key is the most important, isn't it!

They are all important.

One day Jesus heard his disciples arguing about who was more important.

He stopped them and reminded them that everyone is important.

No one should think themselves any more important than anyone else.

Young people and old people,
people of all different cultures and backgrounds
are all important, and all are welcome in God's kingdom.

Let us pray

God, we thank you for your love for us.

We thank you that we are each important to you.

Help us to welcome and love others just as you welcome and love us.

Amen

Reading

Gospel Mark 9:30–37

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

In Mark's account this story comes just after Peter, James and John have witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus, pointing to Jesus as Messiah. Jesus instructed them not to tell anyone, and instead took them away from the crowds and talked of his betrayal and death. They did not really understand what he was saying. If he really was God's son, why didn't he show his greatness to the world?

We all like a little recognition, praise for what we do, and acknowledgement of our achievements. When have you vied for who has the best car, the biggest house, the most prestigious position? Who has the most influential friends? Who has the most talented grand-children? In our society, it is so easy to get caught up in pride and

competition. We are taught to stand tall, to be assertive, and not let others put us down.

Jesus challenges us to look at life differently, with humility and grace.

“Stop bragging about who you know, how much you have, what you can do, and get on with showing my love,” Jesus might say to us.

So often we gain our sense of importance and our self-worth, by what we have and what we achieve. When we follow God’s ways, our self-worth comes from who we are, and from our relationships with others. There is an inner strength that comes from choosing to serve others, to place their needs first, and to care more about what they have than what we have. This life of service is not implying we should live under the rule of others and bow weakly to their demands, but rather bring strength as we are empowered by the Spirit of God to live with humility and grace.

In Jesus’ time, children were not given the same importance that they have today. They were cared for and loved, but were often the first victims of famine, disease or war. They were not given iPods and mobile phones and driven to dance lessons and sport. They had no rights and no social status, on the edges of society.

In the gospel of Mark, we hear of Jesus giving particular consideration to children, wel-coming them on his knee, healing and blessing them, raising them from death. By taking that child in his arms, Jesus was making a radical statement not only about the place of children in society, but about other marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Who are the marginalised or vulnerable in your society?
(examples might include Indigenous people, asylum seekers, the elderly, people of different colours, or cultures, people with disabilities or mental health problems, homeless people and the unemployed.)

Jesus was making a statement about how we value those who are not always valued by our society, and asking us to welcome those who are powerless and vulnerable.

Our society places a lot of emphasis on status, success and knowledge. Traditionally we have attributed value to those who have prestige and power. Jesus’ words challenge us to relinquish power and position, and to place the needs of others ahead of our own. They challenge us to value those who are seen as least, those on the edges.

When we live wisely, we live with humility and grace, seeking to serve and love others.

Hymn/song

TIS #256 – “The Servant King (From heaven you came)”

Offering

God of love and grace, you call us to serve others with the offerings of our lives.

Take and use this money for those in need.

Take and use us to show your love and compassion, as we walk your ways in humility and grace.

Amen.

	Notices
	<p>Prayers for all people Gracious and loving God, you call us to welcome and serve others, to show your love and compassion, even when that puts us out. We pray for those who are most vulnerable in our community. We pray for children... Indigenous people... asylum seekers... the elderly... people of different colours or cultures... people with disabilities or mental health problems... homeless people... the unemployed... those who are unwell. (you might add your own prayer points here) May we show each other welcome as we learn to put aside any biases and assumptions to value and accept each other. May we be open to giving and receiving, as we value which each of us has to offer, in love and community. May we work with others toward justice and peace for all. We commit ourselves again to following your way of gentleness and peace. Amen.</p>
	Lord's Prayer
	<p>Hymn/song TIS #547 – “Be thou my vision”</p>
	<p>We are sent out Lord, Jesus, may we go out into the world to shine with your love, listen with your ears and speak words of kindness and hope to everyone we meet – in your name. Amen.</p> <p>May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace</p>
	Benediction
	Thank you

ⁱ The New International Version. (2011). (James 3:13–4:3, 4:7–8a). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

ⁱⁱ The New International Version. (2011). (Mk 9:30–37). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

ⁱⁱⁱ Revised Common Lectionary. (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

^{iv} <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2021/115-september-october-2021-b/proper-20>