

61B PENTECOST 21B

All in this together

Abstract

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
Mark 10:45 (NIV)

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GOSPEL

Mark 10:35–45

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷ They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

³⁸ “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

³⁹ “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”ⁱ

For the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

61B Pentecost 21B online liturgy

All in this together

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2021 | AFTER PENTECOST

PROPER 24

YEAR B

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Job 38:1–7 (34–41)

Psalm Psalm 104:1–9, 24, 35c

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Isaiah 53:4–12

Psalm Psalm 91:9–16

New Testament Hebrews 5:1–10

Gospel Mark 10:35–45ⁱⁱ

Two of Jesus' disciples ask for special positions and recognition. This causes resentment among the rest of the disciples. But this bold, audacious or perhaps foolish request from the disciples provides Jesus with an opportunity to teach about how greatness in God's kingdom is achieved. It is not about position, he says, but about serving others; it is not about being first, but being prepared to be last.

Ideas about 'greatness' do not seem to have changed very much since the time of Jesus. But if 'being prepared to be last' does not mean 'be a doormat', then what does it mean?

This week we explore working out our place in Jesus' community.

	Pre-Service
	Introit TIS # 256 – “From heaven you came, helpless babe”
	Greeting May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all
	We Gather Let us come together to be still, to be known, loved, and held by God our creator, to be thankful for all that God gives us, to be healed and restored, that in our worship today joy and gladness may refresh and renew us

	<p>Acknowledgements</p> <p>A gathering prayer God our creator, we are made in your image, create and reshape us anew for your purposes. God our sustainer, who sent your Son Jesus to be our servant, by your grace, forgive us where we have hurt your world. God our guide and inspiration, open our hearts to receive your wisdom, inspire and direct us – in Jesus’ name. Amen.</p>
	<p>Hymn/song TIS #245 – “Christ is the world’s light”</p>
	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display a pencil (or an image of one) and invite people to share when and how they used a pencil during the past week. Repeat with a coloured pencil or crayon. Suggest that pencils are useful; they exist to serve our needs (or not, if you haven’t used one!). • But is this always the case? Display a pencil with a blunt or broken tip. What is going on here? What does it tell us about the pencil? A well-used or broken pencil needs ‘pencil care’! What does that involve? If you have a sharpener handy, you could invite someone to demonstrate. • When we gather as we do today, we might be compared to a collection of assorted pencils! We have different life experiences: some of us may feel sharp and alert, others may feel a bit tired and blunted; some may feel broken and in need of care. But, whatever our situation, whatever our needs, together we can be a community of welcome and care. <p>A prayer of approach Lord God, we come humbly into your presence this morning, ready to explore our place in your community. James and John had very set ideas about where they wanted to sit in glory. Sometimes we have very fixed ideas about where we want to sit in this gathering. We like to know our place.</p> <p>Help us to understand that you don’t have favourites and we shouldn’t either, and that we are a community and we are all in this together. Amen.</p>
	<p>Readings</p> <p>Mark 10.35-45</p> <p><i>respond</i> For the word of the Lord Thanks be to God</p>

	<p>We say Sorry</p> <p>Lord, sometimes we have very set ideas about communities. The ones we belong to. The ones we aspire to. The ones we stay away from. Help us to see as you do: you love every member of every community. We are all one in you. Forgive us when we look down on others, or consider our way alone to be the right one. Help us to work together with you for good, putting ourselves aside and others always first. Amen.</p>
	<p>Words of Assurance</p> <p>God sees our hearts as we turn to him to seek forgiveness. He doesn't want us to fight for preference but to grow ever closer to him through pure and simple love. As we come to him, acknowledging that we don't always get it right, he freely and abundantly pardons us. Thank you, most gracious God. Amen.</p>
	<p>Hymn/Song TIS #650" – Servant Song"</p>
	<p>Sermon</p> <p>A well-dressed European woman was on safari in Africa. The group stopped briefly at a hospital for lepers. The heat was intense, the flies buzzing. She noticed a nurse bending down in the dirt, tending to the pus-filled sores of a leper.</p> <p>With disdain the woman remarked, "Why, I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world!" The nurse quietly replied, "Neither would I."</p> <p>'Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.' These are the words of Mother Teresa.</p> <p>When we are challenged to serve a needy world, the task can seem overwhelming. The world is a big place. We may feel useless, helpless, but we can do one thing with great love. And we can start by thinking about the needs of the part of the world where God has placed us. We are all in this together – we need not feel or be on our own in doing so.</p> <p>During the pandemic lockdowns, many people found new purpose in spending more time outside, finding or creating space for reflection or recreation.</p>

Others assisted in delivering food and supplies
to those in isolation and financial need,
whether directly or through food banks.

In many places church communities,
often in partnership with others,
have been at the heart of this service.

Maybe it is too soon to know what things have changed for ever –
doors permanently opened;
new and lasting ventures begun –
but certainly the question has been posed.

Evolving needs

may require us to change the way we think about our church buildings.

After all, church did not stop when the buildings were closed!

But now that we have them back,

should we be looking at new ways to use these buildings?

Can we make more use of them –

open them up – as a place for worship, prayer and reflection, of course,
but also as centres of care and hospitality in our community.

New habitats for young and old and everyone in between!

Many of our experimental projects during lockdown have been successful,
Others have not,
and many are still beavering away.

May our endeavours as God's community continue
once lockdown is but a memory.

May our lives be surrendered into God's loving purposes,
and may God's love be revealed more and more.

Amen

Hymn/song

10,000 Reasons – Matt Redman

Prayers for all people

When we seek power and glory for ourselves
and overlook the needs of the humble and weak,
Christ, the servant king:
Help us to follow your example of service

Where there are those who rely on food banks and on benefits,
Christ, the servant king:
Help us to follow your example of service

Where stronger nations ignore the plight of the poor;
where food and medical supplies are stockpiled while others cry out in need.
Christ, the servant king:
Help us to follow your example of service

Where churches focus on their own desires
and fail to see the needy at their gates.

	<p>Christ, the servant king: Help us to follow your example of service</p> <p>When our neighbours are sick, imprisoned by addiction, cold through lack of shelter, lonely through isolation or tearful because of bereavement, Christ, the servant king: Help us to follow your example of service</p> <p>When our personal ease and comfort leads us to ignore the threats to the future of our planet, Christ, the servant king: Help us to follow your example of service</p> <p>Loving God, we pray that our society may become characterised by our desire to serve one another; to help the weak and seek the common good. Help each one of us to work out our place in the community of those who follow Jesus.</p> <p>In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.</p>
	<p>Lord's Prayer</p>
	<p>Hymn/song TIS #531 – "Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing</p>
	<p>We are sent out Lord, take our thoughts (touch head) and turn them into prayer. (hands together) Take our prayer and turn it into love. (hands over heart) Take our love and turn it into life. In Jesus Christ (right index finger touches left wrist; then left index finger touches right wrist) today and every day. (palms face up in offering) 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>
	<p>Benediction</p>
	<p>Thank you</p>



Mark 10.35-45

For Jesus, being the greatest means putting the needs of others before our own.



Jesus' disciples wanted to be powerful, he wanted them to serve others.



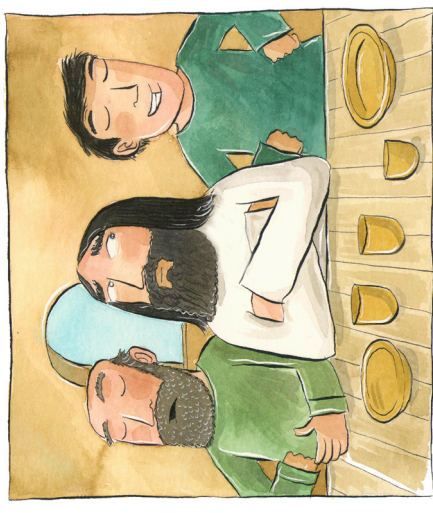
A serving chart: draw something you can do each day to serve others.

Monday	Friday
Tuesday	Saturday
Wednesday	Sunday
Thursday	

Write answer: 1. important 2. bitter 3. angry 4. servant 5. slave 6. serve

Puzzle

Find the six differences between these two pictures.



Write

Work out the answers and fit them in the grid. Some letters have been included to help you.

1. What did James and John want to be?

2. What cup did Jesus say the disciples would have to drink?

3. How did the other disciples feel when they heard about what James and John had asked?

4. What did Jesus say anyone had to become if they wanted to be great?

5. What do you have to be prepared to be if you want to come first?

6. What did Jesus say the Son of Man came to do?

All in this together

Mark 10.35-45

Two of his disciples, James and John, ask Jesus to put them in a place of higher authority than the others, in his heavenly kingdom. Jesus points out that to be with him in glory they must share in his suffering on earth. He then reprimands them for wanting preferential treatment: instead, they should live sacrificially for others, as he does.

Now read **Mark 10.35-45** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

There are some basic problems with the request the brothers make. Why do they think they are more important? Don't they know that with authority comes responsibility and, in this case, suffering? Jesus isn't able to directly fulfil their request – he tells them they can achieve greatness by serving others. This is counter-cultural and can be difficult to hear: How does it make you feel?

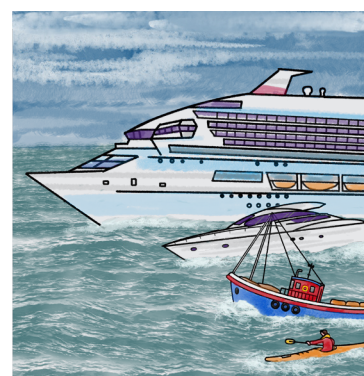


START YOUR DAY

Think through what your day will hold, and who you may speak to, or hear or see in any way. Think about who they are, not just their role as newsreader, postman, neighbour, but as individuals with value in God's eyes. As your day unfolds, offer each person who you hear and see to God, being thankful for their part in your life.

Learn

October is Black History Month. Read one or two featured articles from the Black History Month website each day and learn how attitudes have changed over the decades. <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/section/history-of-slavery/> There may be parts of the story which are new to you, some shocking, others encouraging. How do you feel about the progress your community has made to recognise the equal importance of all its citizens?



Ask yourself: How do our circumstances affect challenges we may face together?



BAKE

Bake some biscuits. But before you start, get all the ingredients together and think about what part they each play. Are all the ingredients equally important? Could you leave anything out and still get biscuits worth sharing? Even if you only need a small amount of one item, would it be missed if you didn't add it? Appreciate that many things have to come together to make recipe work. Enjoy your biscuits!



Jesus' teaching speaks first of being a servant and then of being a slave of all. In Jesus' time and in ours, being forced into slavery is not the same as choosing to serve. We don't have the same culture of servants today, thankfully, but we might go to a restaurant where we are served, or go to church for a service: in both cases, others are providing something to 'feed' us. Being a servant to others might involve a small act of thoughtfulness, or be on the scale of the efforts made by so many during the pandemic. What act of serving can you offer to someone today?



On your own or with others, imagine an organisation in which all involved in it are counted as equal, and how this would work. The official UK guidance on equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace refers to employees being able to raise issues with their managers. Any group, large or small, relies on someone taking responsibility, and others being willing to offer their services. From what you read of Jesus in the Bible, what was his role among the disciples with whom he had this conversation about serving others?

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.



One day, the disciples James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said, 'Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask.'

Jesus said, 'What do you want me to do?'

'When your reign comes,' they replied, 'will you make us the two most important people in your kingdom, one to sit at your right hand, and the other to sit at your left hand?'

Jesus shook his head. 'You have no idea what you are asking,' he said. 'Will you be able to drink the cup of suffering that I have to drink?'

'Yes, of course!' the brothers replied.

'Well then,' Jesus said, 'you will drink the same bitter cup as me, and suffer like me; but as for having the most important jobs, that's for God to decide.'

The other disciples heard about this conversation and were angry with James and John for daring to ask such a thing. Jesus called them together and said, 'Sometimes, when people have power, it goes to their head. But I want you to be different. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first must be prepared to be everyone else's slave. For even the Son of Man came to serve, not to be served, and to give up his life for many people.'

Mark 10.35-45

Did you know?

- To sit at the right or left hand of an important person made you important and recognised too.
- The Son of Man is a title from the Old Testament Book of Daniel, used by Jesus to describe himself as fully human as well as being the Son of God.

Mark 10.35-45 (NRSV)

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine

to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.'

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'