

LENT 2021 - Who Do You Say That I Am? "A Different Kind of Greatness"

March 21, 2021

Overarching theme: John 20:21, Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' In 2021, as DISCIPLES, we are SENT with the peace of Christ to share with others!

Instructions: When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Passage: Mark 10:32-45 NRSV ³² *They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him,* ³³ *saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles;* ³⁴ *they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again."* ³⁵ *James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."* ³⁶ *And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?"* ³⁷ *And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."* ³⁸ *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?"* ³⁹ *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;* ⁴⁰ *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."* ⁴¹ *When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John.* ⁴² *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.* ⁴³ *But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,* ⁴⁴ *and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.* ⁴⁵ *For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

Commentary:

Jesus' disciples continue to resist his teaching about the passion and about suffering service. This episode suggests why this teaching is so difficult: It requires surrendering ingrained ideas of honor and dishonor, power and weakness. Although readers may think the disciples foolish to demand positions of honor with Jesus, a serious attempt to put the ethic of self-denying service into practice quickly shows how much we demand honor from others. We all know how quickly jealousy breaks out when a small group seems to have acquired a privilege that others could not share or did not know about.

This passage insists upon the death of Jesus as a pattern in which his followers participate. Since the first meaning of participating in the death of Jesus is the renunciation of ordinary greatness to be a slave in extraordinary service of others, all Christians have an obligation to service.

- adapted from the New Interpreter's Bible, Vol VIII p. 654-655

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

1. After all that Jesus said about how he would soon suffer in Jerusalem (v.33-34), why do you think James and John still followed up with a request for the best positions in Jesus' kingdom? Is this an example of admirable moxie or crass, blind ambition (or something in between)?
2. Consider the reaction of the remaining 10 disciples. Can you relate to their resentment? What does this say about the humanness of the first followers of Jesus? Does this encourage or discourage you?
3. What is Jesus' response to this conflict among the Twelve? What do you think about his countercultural definition of greatness? What would the world be like if more 'rulers' led by Jesus' definition?
4. On a scale 1-10, (1- GREAT! 10 – not so much), how great are you currently? Think of some practical ways that a person might choose greatness through servant leadership today.
5. Jesus anchored his teaching with his own personal example and mission – “...*the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.*” How does Jesus' gift empower us to choose his *'different kind of greatness'*?

Activity for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional and spend time pondering and meditating on the challenge.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Mark 10:43-44
⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."
3. From the brainstorming exercise above (question 4), be intentional about practicing one of the practical ways of serving this week.