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St. Mark 10:35-44:

Our Meeting at the Cross

- I. The Love of Me.
- II. The "Are You, Am I" Part.
- III. The "You Also Will Live" Part.

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St. Mark 10:35-44

Dear Friends in Christ,

Recall Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, specifically these words of the Pharisee: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men...(Lk.18:11)." He was confessing that he was not sinful. Maybe, sometimes, we tend to comfort ourselves thinking, "At least I'm not like so and so!" What a strange measuring stick to determine self-worth.

You might remember the story about the little boy who ran to his mother and said, "Mom, guess what? I'm eight feet, four inches tall!" His mother discovered that he was using a six-inch ruler to measure his height. You know, sometimes it's quite revealing how people measure themselves. Barry L. Callen wrote, "A careful study of Christian church history provides endless illustrations of how easy it is to robe Jesus in our supposed righteousness and then proceed to follow ourselves in His name."

Sometimes we do strange things to impress ourselves and others. Someone put it this way: "God did not save you to be a sensation, he saved you to be a servant." That might sting until . . .

OUR MEETING AT THE CROSS

I. The Love of Me.

Prior to our text, Jesus had informed the disciples, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise (Mk.10:33,34)."

This was the third time he informed the disciples of His impending death and resurrection. Three times, and here's what happened . . .

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What do 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 (vv.35-37).'"

Have you ever had a conversation like that? You're telling someone something that is important to your heart and the person responds with an absurdity? The person hears but doesn't listen. And this setting with Jesus is incredible! Jesus tells of His impending suffering, death, and resurrection and John and James could only think about being "somebodies" in His Kingdom.

In reference to our text, James Hewett wrote: "Patricia Goldman, (a former) vice chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board (from years ago) tells a story about a stewardess who, frustrated by passenger inattentiveness during her what-to-do-in-an-emergency talk at the beginning of each flight, changed the wording and said, 'When the mask drops down in front of you, place it over your navel and continue to breathe normally.' Not a single passenger noticed." They were not listening.

I'm calling this part of the sermon "The Love of Me." That's the way it works, doesn't it? It's about "me"; what I want and what I want to hear. I don't know who said it, but I can't dismiss it: "The attention span of a typical human is ten praises, six promises, or one preachy statement." We hear but don't listen, or don't want to.

II. The "Are You, Am I" Part.

Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And 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 (vv.38-40)."

And so, the reality stares at them. The request to be seated at Jesus' right and left in His glory means they have to be willing to die to this world. But listen carefully, this speaks to us. It's what Scriptures say: "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory (Col.3:2-4)." This isn't speaking only to the Apostles, or Christians of the past, or Christians in other parts of the world. It's talking to the Christians sitting in the pews and standing in the pulpit of this congregation. Commentator Harold Wicke wrote:

They did not understand that the way to the throne is one of suffering and death, his suffering and death that he had just spoken about. This suffering and death only one person could endure. Jesus would lay down his life for the sins of the world. He then asked them, "Can you drink the cup and be baptized with that baptism?" They did not understand. Rashly they replied, "We can." Jesus told them that they would indeed share in that suffering... (Harold E. Wicke, *Mark, The People's Bible*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, 1977, pl. 148).

Do you really think they had it straight? Do we? Oh, friends, it's the stuff we don't like to think about. Jesus looking at us and saying, "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple (Lk.14:27)." And He would ask us, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" This is the...*are you able?...am I able?...part*.

A fellow by the name of George E. Failing wrote:

Why do we set our hearts on health and honor? The Calvary thread is often missing from the Christian (walk) of life. We do not see God at work in (the hardness of life), sickness, poverty, and death. We believe, superficially, that God purposes for each of us only health, wealth, honor, and happiness. (What more could a sinner wish?) But the true measure of life's worth is the willingness to suffer worthily and to die for Christ, if need be. Good health and good pay are not salvation . . .

Well, listen to what our text goes on to say:

III. The "You Also Will Live" Part.

And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (vv.41-45)."

The ten are no improvement over James and John. They're not so much in agreement with Jesus as much as they, too, want to be seated at the right and left of Jesus. Jesus' words need no commentary.

However, His closing words require serious consideration from each of us. "For the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

And that he did and does for us: served and serves! Served us through His suffering and death to obliterate our debt of sin. Serves us the Word and Sacraments. Comforts us in our struggle with the sin that's still there. Remember the paralytic? We're told, "And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart...your sins are forgiven (Mt.9:2)." What He said to the paralytic He says to us in Word and Sacraments: **Your sins are forgiven**. It's what is promised in His resurrection: "Because I live, you also will live (Jn.14:19)."

With everything we've considered, He gives us these most wonderful and comforting words: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand (Jn.10:11,27,28)." The guilt of our sin is no longer charged against us. The slate is wiped clean. We will never perish.

This world is quickly passing away. God's love in Christ for us and eternal life will never pass away. We have nothing here. Not really. Everything of this world will go away. We have everything in Heaven with Christ. As has been observed:

An earthly ruler gathers taxes from the people. The heavenly Ruler gives his Son to the people. An earthly ruler demands; the heavenly ruler offers. God spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for all... An earthly Caesar fills his coffers with the coins of the people, but the heavenly ruler sends his Son that people might have treasure in heaven.

This is, of course, the "you also will live part." We will, forever be in the face to face presence of the love of God. And so, this ends *Our Meeting At The Cross*. But only for this morning.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott