

## **Proper 24**

*(Sunday between 16 and 22 October inclusive)*

### **Ordinary Time, week 29**

#### **Principal Service readings**

Isaiah 53.4-12	Fourth 'Song of the Servant'
Psalms 91.9-16	The protection of God
Hebrews 5.1-10	Jesus the priest is compassionate and eternal
Mark 10.35-45	James and John ask a favour; leadership with service

#### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

#### **Gospel Reading**

##### **The sons of Zebedee make their request**

<sup>35</sup>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.'

<sup>36</sup>And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' <sup>37</sup>And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' <sup>38</sup>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?' <sup>39</sup>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; <sup>40</sup>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.'

##### **Leadership with service**

<sup>41</sup>When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. <sup>42</sup>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. <sup>43</sup>But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever wishes to be first among you must be

slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’

Mark 10.35-45 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

## Comments and Questions

The request of James and John, asking Jesus to do for them what they want, is the opposite of what Jesus wants them to pray: ‘Your will be done.’

James and John want to be more important than the other disciples. Is it wrong to have ambition?

The request of James and John for importance is placed just after the third prophecy in Mark’s account of Jesus’ forthcoming death (vv.33-34). Are they paying attention to his teaching?

The cup (v.38) is like a bitter potion (cf Isaiah 51.17; John 18.11); entering water, as in baptism, was seen to involve danger. Perhaps Jesus is inviting his disciples to be like him in his suffering, rather than seeking reward.

The disciples say they are prepared for the risk (v.39), but do they really believe it will come to the point of suffering?

The emphasis of Jesus is on obedience rather than status (vv.39-40). Jesus subordinates himself to the Father, though he is equal.

The other ten disciples were jealous when they found out about James and John (v.41). Are they also making a mistake?

A leader being a servant is part of our national culture – ‘prime minister’, for example, or the foot-washing feet on Maundy Thursday – but it still seems to go against the grain. Those with power expect honour, and expect to be served. How can Christians set an example in leadership with service? Is this happening?

The delusions of grandeur – people with worldly authority think they have the reins of power, but in the reign of God, all things are under God’s dominion.

The word ‘ransom’ (v.45) refers by origin to a commercial transaction – the price paid to redeem a pawned item, or to free a slave. By offering his life Jesus fulfils the saying of the servant in Isaiah 53.10-11, and pays the universal debt. Jesus was not killed by accident. In what ways was his death intentional?

## Quotations

**1**

God whispers in our pleasures but shouts in our pains.

C. S. Lewis 1898–1963

**2**

Nothing great was ever done without much enduring.

St Catherine of Siena 1347–80

**3**

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.

Max DePree

**4**

If you wish to be a leader you will be frustrated, for very few people wish to be led. If you aim to be a servant you will never be frustrated.

Frank F. Warren 1899–1963

**5**

There are two freedoms – the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought.

Charles Kingsley 1819–75

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Church Hierarchy; Ministry of the Faithful; Servant Leadership; Humanity of Christ

## Closing Prayer

Most glorious God,  
in Jesus you show us  
that your will is to save.  
Grant to us your people  
the boldness to desire a place in your kingdom,  
the courage to drink the cup of suffering,  
and the grace to find in service  
the glory you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

Collect for 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

<sup>2</sup> *Opening Prayers : Scripture-related Collects for years A, B and C from The Sacramentary /*