**Mark 10:35-45**

And 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.” **36** And he said to them, “What do 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** 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?” **39** 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, **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** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. **42**  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. **43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**“Great Expectations”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Our reading from Acts shows a distinction between to different modes of operation or “M.O’s” for life. The first dealt with the coming of a great famine to which the disciples responded by sending relief to churches in Judea. The second dealt with Herod Agrippa I who used violence against the church like killing James the brother of John to secure his kingship before the Jews. What we discover is that kingdoms of power abound in this world, but God only gives one kingdom of grace. No wonder Jesus said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

Of course, the disciples who tag along never think in terms of grace, but power. Only Jesus led the way of His kingdom for He was to be the sacrifice. Yet even after predicting His suffering, death, and resurrection a third time such grace from God, such truth bound to love was still foreign. They saw no good in the cross, no purpose in suffering, and no kingdom of grace. Instead of love for God and His plan of salvation, the disciples had other ideas. Their great expectations would put them at the center as noted with James and John. How quickly does a petition or prayer end up being a maneuver for power! Thankfully, Jesus takes our narrow requests and widens them by His redeeming love so that reigning with Him is glorious.

1. **James and John had desires not so different from us today.**
2. They were going after a kingdom of power.

* Their request was far from a plea of mercy, but purely strategic let alone just selfish.
* They said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”
* You give something up, it is only right you should get something back, right? (Gave up the family fishing business)
* Jesus entertains them only to show the kind of kingdom they seek is one of power, prestige, and position. “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

1. A kingdom of power still infects us in this life.

* The basic mode of operation we face daily is as Jesus said, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.”
* This greed among the kingdoms of men only turns to look for glory from God as if He owes us something.
* Rather than being born into a kingdom of grace by baptism into Christ, we end up being bossy wanting to call the shots.
* If we are not like James and John, then there is room to be like the ten disciples resenting our neighbor rather than repent of our own sin.

1. **Yet, Jesus widens desires by His redeeming love opening heaven for us.**
2. Enslaved to a kingdom of power meant the disciples had to be set free.

* Jesus told them, “…The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
* Only He could pay the price for His power as God’s Son was to grant access into His kingdom of grace.
* This power Christ poured out by His sacrifice once for all in a sinful world, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34)
* There were no positions, none better off than another, just redemption for those trapped by sin, death, and the power of the Devil.

1. Jesus widens our desires to see His love that has set us free.

* The meaning of the cross and God’s kingdom of grace is, “knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ…” (1 Peter 1:18-19)
* Kingdoms of power demand works to justify your place, but Christ has paid for your place by His death and resurrection.
* True prayer is possible only because Christ selflessly used His power, glory, and position to let any freely call God, “Our Father…”
* None can get ahead of another for by Word and sacraments our wants stand before a kingdom of grace that gives what we need and what God wills.

1. **Now to reign with Christ is a service of suffering that glorifies His kingdom.**
2. James and John were to drink a cup and receive a baptism in the way of their Lord.

* James faced this when Herod killed him in 44AD by the sword.
* He would be the first of the apostles to die as a martyr for the name of Jesus.
* Where James had an end that was swift and to the point, his brother, John would be a longer drawn out suffering to old age to die last of the apostles.
* These “Sons of Thunder,” nicknamed surely for their power in life were servants to another kingdom of grace by their death.

1. The cup and baptism of suffering goes hand-in-hand with those Jesus has served.

* The last thing we want is the first thing our Lord puts forward as a witness to His glorious love on the cross bound to the cross.
* God has plans for those redeemed by Christ, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son…”
* This image can come as persecution or simply the discomfort over exchanging our kingdoms of power for the only one that comes by grace.
* Luther says, “Now, when we enter Christ’s kingdom, this corruption must daily decrease so that the longer we live the more gentle, patient, and meek we become, and the more free from greed, hatred, envy, and pride”(Tappert 445:67).

As the youth learned from our trip about the tension between earthly and heavenly concerns, so there is one between \ kingdoms of power and the kingdom of grace. Man’s strength, works, and governance comes with abuses, neglect, and pride but God still rules over them all. Where power fades and fractures in this life among sinners under the law. The kingdom of grace, Christ’s Church, aims to suffer with love marked by service to the truth as the Psalmist says, “I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame…” (Psalms 119:46). What James and John asked returned to be a better promise than prestige, a greater hope than getting ahead, and more glorious than their deepest desires. Let us learn to pray in faith to the One who truly serves us with forgiveness, life, and salvation. Jesus takes our narrow requests and widens them by His redeeming love so that reigning with Him is glorious. Amen. Now the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.