

Proper 20B 9/20/15

Today's Gospel lesson (Mark 9:30-37) presents us with a very intimate moment with Jesus and his disciples. After predicting his eventual death, he happens upon the disciples discussing, amongst themselves, who would be the greatest in the eventual Kingdom of God.

While it would be easy to condemn the disciples for such self-serving ambition, Jesus responds with tremendous compassion. He takes time out and calls his disciples to gather around him. In his teaching, he uses the language of the soul, the language of image and metaphor.

Placing before them a child, he redirects the focus of their ambition to that of love, vulnerability, and service. Did Jesus do this because it would not be long before the disciples would witness the sight of their Lord on a cross?

Yet in time, following the Resurrection, they would come to understand the teaching. And most profoundly, they themselves would come to embody the teaching. "For as the master must the servants be!"

When Jesus saw his disciples trying to jockey themselves into a hierarchy of partiality or preference, he knew that that would bring all sorts of worldly ways which would frustrate God's Mission to save all people. The world wants us to pursue security through wealth and power.

The world preaches a gospel of scarcity. It says there isn't enough to go around, so you better grab all you can for yourself. And so it is that conflicts and disputes arise whenever anyone covets something and cannot obtain it, just as St James said in his letter we heard this morning. Distrust and Contention with others is a manifestation of the disorder in our own thoughts and aspirations.

But patience and compassionate wisdom, the kind that Jesus shows serves us well. When disharmony and selfishness enter into a community, it is motivated by jealousy and prideful cravings within us. However, when we are peaceful, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits we strengthen and build the faith of others and ourselves.

So Jesus does a marvelous thing here. He doesn't abolish the disciples' ambition, he redeems it! And when we think about it, every time we come together at the Eucharist here at Trinity, Jesus does for us what he did for his disciples in the 9th chapter of Mark. He calls us together and redeems our motives, ambitions, and spirits, and he redirects our attention "Godwardly."

Like the disciples, it might not always "sink in" immediately, but in time, we come to understand. Day by Day, more and more, as we follow the path of loving service and devotion, we make a difference in the world around us. We actually can help and guide

others through all the changes and chances that life throws at everyone, sometime or another.

But even more amazing, there is a change in you, yourself as you live into the life of the Spirit. Bit by bit, little by little, we are transformed. We grow into the person God has always wanted us to be.

And in time, there is that peace which passes all understand that comes to us. It wraps its arms around u and we find ourselves turned around until we come to the place that is just right. Amen.