

COMPETING FOR GLORY

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, November 12, 2006



Mark 10:35-45 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." and he said to them, "What is it 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." 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?" 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; 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." When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. 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. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant.

In a recent counseling session, the Minister was trying to identify a woman's marriage problems by asking some direct questions. "Do you have any grounds?" She replied, "Why? Yes we do, we have about ten acres north of town." "No, ma'am," the Minister said, "that's not what I meant. What I mean is do you have a grudge?" "Oh no," she responded, "but we do have a nice little carport." "No" said the Minister, "What I mean is, does your husband beat you up?" "Beat me up? Oh no, I get up before he does just about every morning." In complete exasperation, the Minister said, "Lady, you're not listening to me. Why are you having trouble with your husband?" "Well," she said, "the man just doesn't know how to **communicate!**"

Also in Jesus' time, there were many miscommunications. Obviously, there were even lapses in communication between Jesus and his disciples. Just listen to the unusual request coming from James & John, "**Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.**" What? How is this possible? They have heard Jesus' teaching on the importance of being humble like servants – that the last should be the first. They have heard his parables of compassion, of not needing to be the greatest. Nevertheless, they still did not understand. While Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and the shadow of the cross was already falling over him, the disciples were competing **to get the best** and to share in God's glory and power. They were competing for glory!

Before we judge them too harshly - let us remember that we are often very much like them. Sadly, there are still many James & Johns amongst the followers of Jesus of Christ. They do not want to follow, **they insist on being followed**. They will serve only if they can be in charge or if they can have the say. **They want everyone to be reasonable and do it their way**. They will smile if you smile first. They will only serve if they can give the instructions. They will tell you that it is all a rat race and that the rats are winning – **so they do not mind being the rats**. They want the glory of what God can offer – but not the challenge nor the demands. They want the glory offered by God -- and not the risk of taking their cross and following him! If they could only lay their eyes on Jesus, they would tell him: "**Grant us to sit,**

one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."

Amazingly, Jesus did respond to their request. Here is the surprise! He actually does encourage his followers to compete for glory! However, the answer is NOT what James and John had hoped! Jesus is different and he wants his followers to be different. O yes, it is OK to compete for Glory, but Jesus' rules are different. The way of Jesus is directly opposite from the ways of the world! The rules for the competition are different, exactly the opposite of what they thought. Jesus said, "But whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all."

Thus, the secret to win the competition to become the greatest is a secret no longer. If you want to be great, be willing and ready to serve others, as Jesus did. He was already underway to Jerusalem, where he would suffer greatly! James and John were competing for glory without even noticing that the greatest of them all was already in their midst. He was standing right beside them! James, John if you want to be truly great – just follow me. The competition to be the greatest is in reality a competition to be the least of all.

Not often enough can I tell the story about a certain monk who once found a precious stone and kept it. One day he met a traveler. The traveler was tired, hungry and thirsty. Therefore, the monk opened his bag to share his provisions with the traveler. It was then that the traveler first saw the jewel. He could not resist, so he asked the monk to give it to him. To his surprise and utter joy, the monk did so immediately. He took the jewel and placed it in the traveler's hand. The traveler departed, overjoyed with the unexpected gift of the precious stone. A few days later, though, he came back in search of the monk. He found him, gave him back the stone, and said. "I discovered that there is something I need that is far more precious than the jewel you gave me. Please give me something much more precious than this stone," The monk asked, "what do you need, my friend?"

"Please give me that which enabled you to give the stone to me."

God became visible in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the perfect example of how God wants us to be -- how to live -- how to conduct our lives! The Bible introduces us to a Christ who was indeed one of us. Through his life, passion and crucifixion he understands our feelings, our thoughts, our temptations and us.

That is what we received in Jesus Christ! The New Testament describes Jesus as follows. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. [Hebrews 4:15-16]

"When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Christ of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour con-tempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine ~ that were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

AMEN