

March 16,2022
Matthew 20:7-28
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On the Road to Jerusalem:

I have fixed my eyes on your hills, Jerusalem my Destiny. Though I cannot see the end for me, I cannot turn away. We have set out hearts for the way, this journey is our destiny. Let no one walk alone. This journey makes us one....

The walk to Jerusalem is heavy with foreboding. Jesus tries to explain to His disciples about the approaching pain and distress that is about to unfold for Him: He will be betrayed by friends; delivered to his enemies; He will hear the death sentence read over Him; He will suffer injustice, mockery, humiliation; insults; He will undergo the torture of scourging and finally face a horrendous death on a beam of wood. Jesus was trying to help His disciples comprehend that what He is going to undergo, they too will be asked to do. After describing all He was going to go through, it's important to pay attention to Matthew's words of hope...**and He will be raised on the third day (repeat)**
The passion and death of Jesus is not the end, He will rise.

Immediately after this conversation Jesus had with His disciples, the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, brought them to Jesus and asked for a favor. "What is your request?" He asked. She said, "In Your Kingdom, will you let my two sons sit on two thrones next to yours – one at your right hand, one at your left." Jesus told her that she didn't know what she was asking. Then Jesus sidestepped her and turned directly to James and John and asked them "Are you able to drink from the cup I am about to drink from?" "Yes, they said, we are able." The disciples had no idea of the weight of what Jesus was talking about. Jesus is very patient and compassionate here. He doesn't correct them and say "You are being selfish and foolish"; instead, He points out that to be a true disciple they will suffer and go through what He will go through *to some extent*. Then Jesus says plainly that it's not up to Him to determine the place of honor for them; rather, it's God's role. God will reward as He sees fit.

This is not the end of the story. The other disciples became indignant with the two brothers. They too wanted special places in Heaven. Jesus summoned them over and spoke to them of the earthly rulers who sought to show their greatness by acting as tyrants and exercising power over others. They wanted *more prestige, more power, more influence, more bragging* and the like. Jesus said these powerful words to His disciples "*It must not be like that among you.*" **Do we hear those words applying to us *It must not* be like that among you...*in simple terms do you seek power, prestige and influence?* Jesus' words "it must not be like that among you"**

As I was preparing this homily, with each revision, I became more aware of my own use of power. I had titles that gave me power – Principal, Vice president, Chair of the Board – to use Harry Truman's quote: "The buck stops here." What I need to remember is that

Jesus' actions revealed that *when the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace.* (Words Attributed to Jim Hendrix) The other thing I need to be watchful of is prestige. This demands deep-down-inside-of-my-heart-honesty. I ask myself do I receive accolades and praise humbly or am I disappointed if I'm not commended for what I said or did? Only I know my motivation.

Back to the Gospel text...Jesus tells His disciples that He, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give up His life as a ransom for many." Matthew uses the word ransom to indicate that Jesus' death is more than just an inspiring example. The word indicates that His death does something; it brings release. Jesus came to give us new life so we could live the way He created us to live - life to the full.

We will soon celebrate Palm Sunday – a most ironic day. The people greeted Jesus, waving branches shouting "Hosanna. Hosanna to the King." The very crowds who shouted in exultation and adulation will soon be shouting "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" His great victory ostensibly turns into dreadful disgrace.

The Psalm for today prompts us to remember Jesus surrendered to the will of God. The Suscipe prayer comes to my mind: *Take Lord my liberty... You have given all to me, to You I return it... Everything is yours do with it what YOU will...give me only Your love and Your grace, that is enough for me."*

Before I suggest two things you may wish to ponder, I want to use Fr. Lumpkin's words from his March 10 homily. "In the end, Jesus let go. All He had left was the trust and love of His Abba Father AND His compassion for people."

There are two compelling challenges in today's gospel about which you may wish to pray:

1. Can you drink the chalice/cup I am about to drink?
2. I did not come to be served but to serve. What do the life and words of Jesus tell us about discipleship? What does it mean for you to be a disciple today, right here, right now?

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