

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Are you being served?

Matthew 20:20-28

Mrs Zebedee sometimes gets a bad press. She's not helped by the NIV heading for this Sunday's gospel reading which is 'A mother's request'; this might give the impression that she's the archetypal 'pushy parent'.

The truth is, it's not just Mrs Zebedee but also her two sons, James and John, who are kneeling at the feet of Jesus.

They bow before Jesus, but their devotion is defective. They have come to understand that Jesus is the King, but they have not yet understood what kind of king he is and what it will mean to follow him.

They are aware that the Kingdom of heaven is coming, but their view of that kingdom is essentially 'this-worldly': a kingdom where there is glory without selfless service.

The antidote to their defective devotion is to reflect on who Jesus is and what he is about to do. He is on his way to Jerusalem to be condemned to death.

James and John want glory, but the irony is that the moment of supreme glory for Jesus is the shame of the cross.

When Jesus is at the moment of greatest glory, there will be somebody on his right and on his left, but they will be criminals being crucified, not the kind of thing that Zebedee's boys had in mind.

No wonder Jesus says to them: "You have no idea what you're asking."

Jesus overturns any notion of a this-world kind of glory, the glory that appeals to our pride and sense of entitlement: 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' (v.28)

The Son of Man is the one who is given all authority and yet he comes to serve and specifically to serve by giving his life as a ransom for many.

Here is the staggering grace of the God who comes into our world to serve us – and to die in our place.

And one application of v28 is simply to ask the question: 'Are you being served?' Have you seen the amazing grace of God being offered in the death of his Son?

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But secondly, the Lord Jesus models what life in his kingdom looks like – not just in the world to come but in the ministries to which he calls his disciples in twenty-first century Lancashire.

A status-seeking servant is a contradiction in terms. 'Not so with you!'

**Rev Canon Andrew Raynes,
Vicar of Blackburn Christ Church with St Matthew**