



Sunday Worship at Home: July 25th. James the Apostle

Opening Prayers:

The Lord our God Almighty reigns!

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory.

Lord God, today we thank you for the holy men and women who are your Saints in heaven, especially your Apostle James; may we try to follow his example of loving and serving you. **Amen**

Invitation to confession:

Jesus says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand".

So let us turn from sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Lord, we are sorry for the things we do wrong:

Lord have mercy

Lord, we are sorry for not listening when you call:

Christ have mercy.

Lord, may we speak always of the glory of your kingdom:

Lord have mercy

May almighty God have mercy upon you,

forgive your sins and bring you to everlasting light. Amen

The Collect (Special Prayer for the day)

Merciful God, whose holy apostle James, leaving his father and all that he had, was obedient to the calling of your Son Jesus Christ and followed him even to death: help us, forsaking the false attractions of this world, to be ready at all times to answer your call without delay; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 20:20-28

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favour of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles LORD it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you O Christ.**

Reflection on the Gospel.

Today we remember James who was the first Apostle martyred for his faith in the year 44. Galilean fishermen James and John, were the first apostles called by Jesus to "Come, follow him." Our Explore the Book bible studies on Zoom, bring the bible stories alive in ways that just don't happen from hearing the readings once a week in church and I invite anyone with access to a computer to join us. At present our focus is on the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke.

James, John, and Peter formed the inner circle of disciples who enjoyed preferential treatment from Jesus enabling them to witness his transfiguration on the mountain, the raising of Jairus' daughter and the agony in the garden, they were ordinary human beings doing extraordinary things. They held positions of privilege within the group of disciples and as we know, people who receive preferential treatment can sometimes let that privilege go to their heads. This appears to be the case with the mother of James and John, she loved her sons and was proud of them, fair enough, yet despite their success, she wanted more. So she approached Jesus with a request that they sit with him in a position of authority in his Kingdom, one on the left and one on the right. Jesus and the disciples were approaching Jerusalem, time was running out for Jesus, who was about to be crucified. His disciples know this and they are anxious to sort out the hierarchy of their group, James, John and thought they'd get their request in first by claiming the best seats next to Jesus in his new Kingdom; it's a power struggle in the making. Even at this late stage in Jesus' ministry, the disciples had still not fully grasped that his kingdom was not an earthly one ruled with power, it was a kingdom where people cared for each other equally. That's not to say Jesus didn't want leaders, but that he wanted leaders who were not seeking prominence for themselves.

Leadership is a funny old thing. There are too many organisations, churches included, where authority is seen as power. Where people think they have made it to the top and can run rough-shod over others and follow their own agenda. In all areas of life, good leadership should not equate to self-glory, power, or position. Rather it requires hard work, humility and the willingness to serve others, putting their needs before your own. It means following Jesus and living as Jesus did. Jesus tells the brothers that their request is not his to give, that authority belongs to his Father in heaven. He also asks them if they can drink of the cup he will drink, a cup that speaks of sacrifice and suffering that may lead to death, for the love of God. James and John went on to serve Jesus faithfully and willingly for many years at great cost to themselves. James has the distinction of being the first apostle to die, according to the scriptures as we heard in our reading from Acts. He was killed by the sword by Herod Agrippa, who thought that by ridding the world of Christian leaders, he could stem the flow of those hearing the good news and becoming followers of Jesus themselves. The manner of his execution indicates that James was accused of leading the people to follow false gods, nothing could have been further from the truth. John was the last apostle to die after living in exile on Patmos. These two brothers, who desired seats of prominence on either side of Jesus in his kingdom, are remembered, not just for their ambition or want of power, or even the pushiness of their mother. They are remembered for their love of Jesus, their work in continually spreading the Gospel, and their bravery and faithfulness to God to the end of their lives. The manner of their deaths as the first and last apostles to be martyred for their faith, shows they were indeed willing to drink from the cup that Jesus drank. Amen

The Creed

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Be still and Pray: Include the needs of the world and your family and community. Our four churches, the Queen and her family, the work of the Government, NHS workers, carers and supermarket workers and all trying to re-build the economy. Pray for comfort for those who are ill or awaiting hospital appointments and in quiet reflection pray for the Saints gone before us and the souls of those who have died.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father, which art in heaven.....

Blessing:

The Lord bless you and watch over you,

the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you,

the Lord look kindly on you and give you his peace, today and always. **Amen.**

Reverend Irene