

Mark 10:35-45

Called to Serve

A famous Chinese proverb states that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Our Gospel passage this morning points to the first step towards the heart of God. It is the step of service.

Both Helen and Emily have taken steps major today on that journey. For Helen she confirmed her baptism. As a baby, like Emily, she wouldn't have known much about it but in God's providence she is able to stand up here today, and profess her own faith and also bring her baby to God to be baptised.

So this is a special day for their family.

It's a day to rejoice in new life, and we give thanks today for Emily's life and the joy she will bring to you all.

One of those joys that you will experience is returning to your younger days by watching children's films and videos.

One of those may be The Jungle Book and in this film Baloo the Bear sang..."The Bare Necessities of life" to young Mowgli.

Look for the bare necessities

The simple bare necessities

Forget about your worries and your strife

I mean the bare necessities

Old Mother Nature's recipes

That bring the bare necessities of life

This is a great song, for there is something in it that gets to the basics of life, bare necessities of life. I think Jesus would have been comfortable with this song, remember he said, "Do not worry about tomorrow" - he was encouraging his disciples to take a day at a time and trust in the bare necessities, trusting that God will provide for each day.

He was encouraging the disciples to get life into perspective. Jesus' ministry was all about giving people a perspective to life, setting them on the right course of action.

So it is with that in mind that we turn to our Gospel reading today, which is the Church's Lectionary reading, and we discover Jesus pointing out what are the basic necessities of Christian life.

It focuses on James and John, two of Jesus' closest disciples, two who were in his inner circle, who made a big request to him. They wanted seats of power. Their perspective of life or of eternal life was to rule with Jesus. They were expecting the coming of the Kingdom of God to be imminent and Jesus would bring this in and they wanted to be part of this!

Is their question, just a little bit cheeky, *"We want you to do for us whatever we ask Jesus?"* In other words, *"Jesus, you'll do what we tell you."*

I can see Jesus with a loving smile on his face, *"Well then, what do you want me to do for you?"* He probably already knew what they were going to ask.

What we want Jesus, is a place of position, a place of glory, a place of recognition, a place where we will be honoured.

And Jesus, I'm sure still with a smile again, *"Sorry guys, you just don't know what you are asking for. You've not grasped it yet! You haven't understood my mission. You need a bigger perspective than human power and glory."*

He said, *"Can you drink the cup of my baptism?"*

In other words, are you willing to go to the cross and die?

To give your life in my service? Are you willing to die to your selfish ways?"

Our thoughts and prayers turn this week to Sir David Amess MP who literally gave his life in public service last week.

Jesus, said to them, *are you willing to drink the cup of my baptism?* Jesus is challenging them to what extent are they prepared to sacrifice for him.

They said, *"Yes, we are"* – but again, I would appear that they didn't really know what they were saying.

Jesus has to spell it out to them, the fact that they will lay down their lives and even then, it's God who will decide on the seating arrangements in His Kingdom.

This issue caused great frustration, anxiety, even anger amongst the disciples. James and John rocked the boat big time that day. James and John were not the most popular disciples that evening and Jesus had to intervene.

He pointed out to them, that to Lord it over people, is the way of the world.

But His way was to be different, far different.

The way of Christ was to be first and foremost of service. If they wanted to be great in the Kingdom, then this would depend on how willing they were to get on their knees and serve.

For, he told them, *this is why I have come, to be a servant, and to give my life for many.*

Jesus was taking them back to the bare necessities of being a disciple, a follower of Christ.

It is something that each generation of Christians needs to remember and hear, that in following Jesus, we are following one who came to serve and not to be served.

On another occasion, he gathered them all to speak about what his tomorrow would bring – his death on a cross. This was the cup of baptism that he had spoken about.

The bread and the wine on the evening of the Last Supper were symbols of that suffering and death. This was the ultimate service to his people. But he did something else that I'm sure that would have moved their hearts and taken them back to this incident with James and John, and that was to get on his knees and wash their feet.

He didn't need to do this, this was the task of the servant of the house, but he did do it! Was it because of this unresolved moment when James and John wanted seats of power? Was he again highlighting that service was a necessity in the Kingdom – a bare necessity – a stripping back of all the pride and the false assumptions of worldly power?

He was telling them that in heaven, it's not going to be like earth, in heaven it will be a place where everyone will serve each other in humility and love. But it begins here on earth.

Jesus said that he came to be a ransom for many. In the law of his day, the one who was ransomed becomes the property of the one who frees him. The

Apostle Paul picked up on this theme, when he wrote, "You are not your own, you were bought at a price." 1 Cor 6:19

As Christians we are not our own, we were bought at a price and that price was the blood of Christ. So we are indebted to him, and we are his servants, and as servants we do what he says and we practice what he teaches us. From him we learn the bare necessities of life and of discipleship.

It takes great courage to follow Jesus today. His invitation is simple, and we have a choice to make, whether to follow or not. Following and serving Jesus, is a life calling and at times we will follow closely and at other times slip back but He will not let his hold on us go.

The Christian path is not promised to be easy, far from it, it is one of service but on the path, we are promised many blessings.

Helen, we are delighted that you are joining us here at Cadder Church, as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus. You have been coming here for a number of years now and you've had Lucy baptised here and you now have Emily. God has blessed you and your family with those two beautiful little lives and he will further bless you and David and your family as you faithfully walk the Christian path and bring your family up to trust in Jesus and to encourage them to trust in the bare necessities of life,

In the words of the song...

And don't spend your time lookin' around

For something you want that can't be found

When you find out you can live without it

And go along not thinkin' about it

I'll tell you something true

The bare necessities of life will come to you

Let us all go forward walking on Christ's path of service for it is the way that brings lasting peace and hope to our lives. The Christian faith begins with that first step of trusting Christ.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Amen