

10/18/2015 – Pentecost 21

Isaiah 53:4-12; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45

“Saintly Living: Leading”

❖ **Leading and Upward Mobility**

- Worldly Leading and what it looks like
 - Success
 - Larger and more
 - Increasing publicity and status
 - Example = Pastors/me
- Worldly Leading looks like what John and James want
 - Mark 10:35-37
 - Is this not something we all want?
 - ◆ We always want just a little bit more
 - ◆ If we are working, we seek to climb the ladder
 - ◆ If we are lower class, we want to move up to the higher classes
 - ◆ If we are upper class, we want more to protect us from falling into a lower position
 - John and James may be blunt and direct in their request, but we are like them in how we live our lives – *as Americans*.
 - ◆ Is not John and James question the American Dream question?
 - ◆ Is not their question a question of Upward Mobility?
 - Make me manager.
 - Give me a raise and let me have a corner office.
 - Title and recognition.
- Temptations of Worldly Leading
 - Temptation to be Powerful
 - Temptation to be Spectacular
 - Temptation to be Relevant
 - From Henri Nouwen

❖ **Henri Nouwen**

- Was a Catholic priest and moved up through the ranks
 - Academic recognition at Yale Divinity School
 - Wrote many books
 - Then he went to work with the poor in Peru

- He asked the Vatican to transfer him out to something *less*
- Became pastor at L'Arche in Toronto, which is a home for severely mentally handicapped people.
 - A downward move.
- After this move, many of HN's books took on the theme of *Downward Mobility*

❖ **Downward Mobility**

- Jesus answers the disciples' desire with
 - Mark 10: 42-45
 - Worldly Leading often leads to "lording it over others".
 - ◆ How many have had jobs or seen leaders in the community or nationally "lord it over others"?
 - ◆ We all know what this looks like.
 - Leadership by force of doctrine, procedure, personality.
 - He uses himself as an example of downward mobility
 - ◆ Powerlessness instead of power, quiet and invisible work rather than spectacular presence, words and actions that are only relevant to God rather than others.
 - ◆ Nouwen quote (The Selfless Way of Christ – Downward Mobility and The Spiritual Life):
 - *"It seems impossible for us to believe that any good can come from powerlessness. In this country of pioneers and self-made people, in which ambition is praised from the first moment we enter school until we enter the competitive world of free enterprise, we cannot imagine that any good can come from giving up power or not even desiring it. The all-pervasive conviction in our society is that power is a good and that those possessing it can only desire more of it."*
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- Consider Jesus' ministry
 - Would you consider Jesus' ministry an example of Upward Mobility?
 - That is what the people want. That is what James and John want.
 - ◆ A ministry of glory
 - Jesus gives us a ministry of the Cross, though.
 - He undermines every attempt to give him power throughout the Gospels
 - ◆ Especially the Gospel of Mark.
 - He chooses a life of unity and living with the poor

- ◆ Last week – riches are to be given away
- He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey – the symbol of peace and humility
 - ◆ Not a war-horse – the symbol of victory and lordship
- At the end of his earthly ministry, in the Gospel of Mark, his church goes from 12 disciples and many followers to 3 women and a centurion when he dies on the Cross.
 - ◆ The Cross is the ultimate symbol of Downward Mobility.
 - Failure
 - Shame
 - Despair
 - Loss
- Nouwen quote:
 - *“The story of our salvation stands radically over and against the philosophy of upward mobility. The great paradox which Scripture reveals to us is that real and total freedom is only found through downward mobility...the divine way is indeed the downward way.”*
- Downward mobility
 - Most often put into category of the present economy
 - We need to be careful to
 - ◆ Not romanticize poverty
 - ◆ Not turn downward mobility into another technique for spiritual growth
 - ◆ Not condemn those who have achieved status and wealth in our society
 - We have chosen the story of Christ as our story
 - We have chosen his life as the model of our life
 - ◆ Philippians 2:5-11
 - “Have the same mind as Christ who...”
 - ◆ We, many of us, share with the poor (Shaun Groves)
 - But Jesus *became poor*
 - *How can you and I simply be in relationship with the poor?*
 - ◆ We, many of us in positions of leadership, will often do things for our employees and those who ‘follow’ us. We often serve them.
 - But Jesus *became a servant*
 - *What does it mean to approach others who look to us for leadership with the mindset of a servant – one who ‘ministers’ (KJV)?*
 - ◆ We, many of us, make sacrifices for others in various ways

➤ But Jesus *became sacrifice for our sakes.*

- *Can you imagine your life as a sacrifice?*
- *What changes when you know yourself from the perspective of being a sacrifice?*

- Downward mobility is a Kingdom move in relation to a worldly move and desire for power, fame and relevance.

❖ **Greatness in the Kingdom of God is not like greatness in the world.**

➤ Isaiah 53

➤ Hebrews 5:8-10

- As Mother Mary does when confronted with the suffering of her Son, Jesus
 - She held these things close to her heart and pondered them
 - ◆ Let us do the same as we seek to learn how to live downwardly with Christ.