

Sunday, October 20, 2024 – Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

Today's gospel starts with disciples obsessing over who will be closest to Jesus, leading to Jesus teaching his followers about God's take on importance and power. Here Jesus makes it explicit that the reversal of values in God's community is a direct challenge to the values of the dominant culture, where wielding power over others is what makes you great. When we pray "your kingdom come" we are praying for an end to tyranny and oppression. We pray this gathered around the cross, a sign of great shame transformed to be the sign of great honor and service.

Prayer of the Day

Sovereign God, you turn your greatness into goodness for all the peoples on earth. Shape us into willing servants of your kingdom, and make us desire always and only your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Job 38:1-7 [34-41]

¹The LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:

²"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

³Gird up your loins like a man,

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

⁴"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone

⁷when the morning stars sang together

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

³⁴"Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,

so that a flood of waters may cover you?

³⁵Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go

and say to you, 'Here we are'?

³⁶Who has put wisdom in the inward parts,

or given understanding to the mind?

³⁷Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?

Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,

³⁸when the dust runs into a mass
and the clods cling together?

³⁹“Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,

⁴⁰when they crouch in their dens,
or lie in wait in their covert?

⁴¹Who provides for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about for lack of food?”

Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35b

¹Bless the LORD, O my soul; O LORD my God, you are very great!
You are clothed with majesty and splendor.

²**You wrap yourself with light as with a cloak
and stretch out the heavens like a tent.**

³You lay the beams of your chambers in the waters above;
you make the clouds your chariot; you ride on the wings of the wind.

⁴**You make the winds your messengers
and flames of fire your servants.**

⁵You set the earth upon its foundations,
so that from now until forever it shall never be moved.

⁶**You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.**

⁷At your rebuke the waters fled,
scattered by your voice of thunder.

⁸**They went up into the mountains and descended down to the valleys,
to the place where you assigned them.**

⁹You set the limits that they should not pass;
never shall they return to cover the earth again.

²⁴**How manifold are your works, O LORD!
In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.**

^{35b}Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Hebrews 5:1-10

¹Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; ³and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

³⁵James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” ³⁷And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” ³⁹They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴²So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Prayers of Intercession

Challenged by God's Word in Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

Holy One, we give thanks for all servant leaders of the church. Bless bishops, pastors, and deacons with humble wisdom and ground them in your love. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Creative One, we give thanks for the delicate balance of the natural world. Kindle in us a spirit of caring strength in the preservation of habitats, food availability, and centers of refuge, that all wildlife may thrive. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Empowering One, fill the leaders of governments with a spirit of service that prioritizes those on the margins due to job loss, underemployment, unsafe working conditions, and immigration status. May economic equity be achieved for all people. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Restoring One, send your angels to watch over, rescue, and protect those who are injured or ill. Nurse those who suffer hardship, disease, injury, or difficulty with your comfort and peace. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Abiding One, you call pastors to shepherd the congregation toward faithful living as servants and followers of Jesus. Inspire all ordained ministers and seminarians to ministry that challenges, engages, and comforts those in their care. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Saving One, we give thanks for the disciples James and John and all saints who have faithfully served you. We rejoice in a promised place at the feast of victory that we receive by your grace alone. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the saving grace you freely give, both now and forever.

Amen.

A reflection for this twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

Sharing in Your Glory: Success or Service?

“Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Like James and John, we too are quick to assume that following Christ leads to success, power, and glory. Like James and John we ask for what we know and think we want—and we know that this world rewards success, power, and glory with even more of the same, and we want it! Yet Jesus turns our lust for success, power, and glory on its head: “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” This servant leadership that finds power in self-giving is to be a hallmark of Christian community. For this servant-leadership is both modeled on and empowered by the living Jesus himself. His greatness is exactly in his humility, his strength is in his weakness, and his whole life is given a ransom for our sake. Indeed, Isaiah reminds us that “The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous.” Those who end up sitting at his right and left hand in his glory will not be the privileged and powerful, or even the disciples, who shrink back from sharing in his cup of suffering. Those at his right and left hand will be condemned criminals, crucified alongside him as he offers himself as a ransom for many. Likewise, those who will be great among us will be servants, finding Christ’s strength in their weakness and giving of themselves fully, following their Lord through failure, weakness, and shame into true and eternal glory.



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