

Chaplain's Bulletin September 22, 2024



Dear Folks,

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all relate Jesus giving three predictions of His passion. Today we read in Mark Jesus giving the second prediction of the passion, and the apostles are clueless.

After the first prediction and Peter's push back, Jesus says "You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do (Mark 8:33c)."

After the second prediction, the next concern of the Twelve is which one of them is the greatest. Jesus says, "whoever wishes to be first must be the last of all and the servant of all." Jesus puts His arms around a child and says, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me receives not me but the one who sent me (see Mark 10:35-37)."

After the third prediction, James and John start lobbying for the best spots in the kingdom. Jesus teaches that "whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you must be the servant of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:43b-45).

We notice that all the apostles are seen not to understand, but Peter, James, and John are especially highlighted. They were in inner circle, the ones who got to witness the extra special things. They witness the little girl getting raised (Mark 5:47), the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2), and the agony in the garden (Mark 14:33). St. Paul said they were considered "pillars" of the faith community (Galatian 2:9). It appears the closer one gets to Jesus and the higher one gets in the Church the more one gets humbled.

Consider the contrast between God's way of thinking and human ways of thinking. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways—oracle of the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9)."

I would connect this to living according to the Spirit and living according to the flesh. "It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life (John 6:63)." See Romans 8 and Galatians 5 for some expanded treatment.

We see that the way of the world is seeking one's own advantage and centering one's life on power, pleasure wealth and honor. The way of God is focused on giving oneself in love. A leader is a servant leader. The one's who should get our greatest concern are the powerless and most helpless. Those trapped in poverty, the disabled, those incapacitated by age and infirmity, children, especially unborn children (whose rights and dignity are currently under attack), and others like them must never be forgotten.

But what we are talking about is not just a collection of activities, but a completely different way of thinking. As we reflect on these teachings, how do they challenge how we approach life?

Blessings

Fr Jim