

**Sermon:**

**Text:** Mark 10:35-45

**Date:** October 18, 2009 AM

**Place:** Jesup First UMC

There's an old game show that's making a comeback; it's called: *Let's Make a Deal*. You remember this show, right? Monty Hall walks through the audience making deals: "*You can keep the money inside this envelope or you can trade it for what's behind curtain number one.*" Curtain number one! Now that's always tempting, isn't it? There's something about the possibility of moving up that appeals to us. We're always looking for a better deal. But you better be careful what you pray for 'cause you might just get it.

A wealthy white woman boarded a flight from New York to London on her way home to South Africa and found herself seated next to a black man. So, she called the flight attendant over and, right in front of God and everybody she said: "*Ma'am, there seems to be a problem here. I cannot be seen sitting next to this creature. Isn't there another seat somewhere on this plane?*" The flight attendant was embarrassed by the lady's rudeness, but she said: "*Well, ma'am, I think the flight is full, but I'll check with the pilot.*" And as she walked away, everybody heard the lady snort and watched as she tried to move away from her neighbor. Well, the attendant was gone for a few minutes and then, she came back and before she could say anything, the lady said: "*Well?*" The attendant said: "*I have good news. Like I said, the flight is full, but there is one seat left in First Class. And you're right, ma'am, we wouldn't want any of our passengers to have to sit next to such creatures ... so ... sir, if you'll*

*gather your things and follow me; you're moving up to First Class."*

In our text this morning, we find James and John, the sons of Zebedee, up to their old tricks again. Remember a few weeks ago, these two brothers were arguing among themselves about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of God as they traveled down the road to Capernaum. And Jesus tried to correct them, but today it gets even worse. They came to Jesus with a special request: "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask." And Jesus said: "Okay, what is it?" They said: "Well, when you come into your glory, we want to sit next to you, one on the right and one on the left." Now, Jesus tried to tell them they didn't know what they were asking, but they insisted and Jesus finally said: "Yes, you will be baptized with the same baptism I am and you will drink from the same cup I drink, but I can't give you the seats of honor you are asking for. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many."

Now, there are several things that grab my attention in this passage.

**First, it's important for us to see the demands of discipleship.** Many times our attention is drawn to the benefits of being a follower of Jesus. There are blessings and joys that we experience because of Jesus that we just don't receive anywhere else, but discipleship has its responsibilities too.

When I was 15 years old, I couldn't wait to get my driver's license. I just knew it was going to be a life-changing experience. Oh if only I had my driver's license I wouldn't have to take the bus to school anymore and mama and daddy wouldn't have to drop me off so that I could hang out with my girlfriend and ... I had this long list of advantages and privileges that came with having my driver's license. And then, reality set in. Did you know that it takes money to put gas in a car? And did you know that you aren't supposed to drive a car without insurance? And did you know that cars break down every now and then or have flat tires? Well, I didn't! Daddy tried to tell me, but I was look forward to all the privileges right up until the reality smacked me right in the face.

One day, Jesus passed by the Sea of Galilee and found James and John mending their nets and He said to them: "*Come and follow me*" and they followed. They left their home, their family, their jobs, ... everything to follow Jesus all around Galilee. And who knows what they were expecting? Certainly they were expecting something for their sacrifice ... maybe at first they were just expecting an education, to be taught God's Word by this itinerant preacher who taught "*as one having authority.*" But as time went by their expectations grew and they began to see Him as more than a teacher; He was the Messiah, the chosen one of God and as their eyes were opened, their expectations began to rise. They began to think, "*Well, since Jesus is the Messiah, then that makes us important, that means we're special. And when He takes*

*over and throws the Romans out, then we'll have important positions in His administration."*

And while James and John concentrated on the privileges of discipleship, Jesus reminded them of the responsibilities. Jesus doesn't talk about honor and He wasn't concerned about position or privilege or power. Jesus talked about responsibility and purpose; He talked about serving and sacrificing; He said: "*If you want to be great and if you want to be first, serve.*"

Those same responsibilities are now ours. Greatness in the Kingdom, greatness in the church is not a matter of prestige or power or position. Greatness comes through service.

***The second thing that gets my attention is this idea of suffering.*** Jesus' disciples were not only called to sacrifice and serve; they were called to suffer too. Jesus told them: "*You will drink from the same cup I drink from and you will be baptized with the same baptism I am.*"

And they were. Church tradition tells us that James was beheaded. Peter was crucified upside down. Paul was stoned and dragged out of town and left for dead on the garbage pile and finally, beheaded in Rome. In fact, the only disciple to die of old age was John, but even John knew his fair share of suffering. Yet, in spite of the suffering, they remained faithful. And so, we read in Hebrews 11: "*By faith ... others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in*

*prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated ...*

One day a security guard at a bank in Switzerland was making a routine check of the basement when he came across a room filled with documents from the 1940s. and when he looked closer, he realized that he was looking at documents that revealed the role of the Swiss banks in hiding the assets of German Nazis. Well, he didn't know what to do, but he knew he had to do something. So he hid some of the documents under his shirt and took them to the Jewish community in Zurich and soon, an investigation was launched.

But the young security guard, Christoph Meili, didn't fare so well. Within a few weeks, he was fired from his job. His family disowned him and there were many threats on his life. Yet, someone asked him one day about his decision to come forward and he said: *"I could not close my eyes and say, 'This is none of my business,' because I am a Christian, even if I lost everything."*

Christoph learned what we must learn: sometimes Christians suffer when they stand for God and when they stand for what's right.

And so, my friends, there are two models of leadership placed before us this morning. Jesus said, the way of the Gentiles is to "Lord it over" others. That means leadership through power and authority and privilege. But then He says: "*But the Son of Man*

***came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.***

In the spring of 1981, President Reagan was coming out of a speaking engagement when he was shot by John Hinckley, Jr.! What a tragedy that was. Everybody was stunned; the vice-president was not in Washington at the time and nobody was sure what to do next.

Then, a man at the White House made a tragic mistake. His name was Alexander Haig. That day, he stepped to the microphone and said to the nation: "I'm in charge here!" Now, in his mind, he was being a leader at a time when the country needed a leader, but what most people saw was a man hungry for power.

Brothers and sisters, in the church, we sometimes make that same mistake. I know I have. And what we earnestly desire is to serve God by serving other people. And what others see is something totally different. Let us therefore follow the pattern of Jesus more closely and serve Him with glad and generous hearts.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**