

## **SITTING IN GLORY**

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**Mark 10: 35 – 45**

**October 18, 2009**

The Zebedee brothers, James and John, had sensed something special in Jesus from the first day. He had this charisma, electricity about him. They just knew he was headed to the top – to glory.

And they just wanted to remind Jesus that they'd been there with him all along. And so when it came time for the final award banquet, they'd just like their faithfulness to be remembered.

“Jesus, grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at you left in your glory.”

Well, Jesus had tried to tell them that real glory – living the sacredness and Godliness of life – was to be found in giving of yourself, which for Jesus would mean the ultimate self-giving of a cross. But the Zebedee boys and the other disciples didn't get it yet.

For Jesus was becoming a celebrity, and they wanted to be seen at his right and left hands. Who knows, maybe someday they'd even be with Jesus on the cover of People magazine. Talk about glory....

But we can't be too hard on the Zebedee boys – can we? Who doesn't want to be close to celebrity and power? Being asked to sit at the head table appeals to something deep within us all, truth be told. Call it narcissism, vanity, ambition...this text is like holding up a mirror.

“Jesus, grant us to sit up front at the head table with you, where everyone can see us in your glory....”

No, we can't really blame James and John. For we all learn early in life that it matters where you sit.

It was the third grade, I think. If you did perfect in spelling, you got to sit at the head of the class in the desk of honor closest to the teacher. I never sat in that desk, but I was beginning to learn how the world defines glory.

Ah, but in middle school, then junior high, I got to sit for a while with the in group – the “cool kids” – at their table in the cafeteria. Talk about feeling glorified. It didn't last long though. My seat at the glory table was occupied by someone else. The world's glory is fickle – isn't it?

And there were also children of migrant workers in that cafeteria. They were never welcomed to the cool table or anyone else's table for that matter. They ate off to the side by themselves. If you couldn't sit at the cool table, at least you could look down on the migrant kids.

For human beings, the “who sits with whom” thing has never been insignificant.

“Jesus, grant us to sit with you...in your glory....”

So as I'm thinking about this sitting-with business in my own life, I remember later in high school being assigned to sit with Steven Gretz in chemistry lab. I would not have chosen to sit with Steven, because he stuttered badly and was laughed at a lot. So he rarely spoke and my friends teased me about sitting with “stuttering Steve.”

I wonder now what that was like for him – the quiet courage it took everyday to face the world's ridicule. And as it turned out, Steve had a gift for chemistry. His love of the subject was contagious and we got all A's on our labs that year.

Looking back on your life, has it ever been that way for you too - that you sit with somebody and discover they have a surprising gift? And it was as if you stumbled upon real life glory where you least expected it....

“Jesus, grant us to sit at the right hand of your glory....”

Or looking back, were you ever disappointed when what you thought was real life glory...wasn't?

Once, because of an airline overbooking, I was moved to first class. And next to me was a man who played linebacker for the Minnesota Vikings. He had been one of my heroes. I watched him every Sunday afternoon on television and dreamed of playing like he did. And there I now was, right next to him in first class. Talk about feeling glorified!

But on that flight, my hero drank until he became loud and crude and stupid, then he slept the rest of the flight, snoring.

Sometimes it turns out that way too – doesn't it? You sit with somebody and are reminded again that real life glory has nothing to do with fame and fortune.

Which leads me to recall another flight, this time in coach in the back of the plane. I sat with a couple who were bringing home the child they had just adopted. And they were so happy, so proud, like any new parents.

Only the child they had chosen to adopt, the one they picked to love, the child they would now live and die for, was a Down's syndrome child.

And sometimes it also turns out that way. You sit with somebody and are reminded again that real glory – life as God intends – is not about how much you can control but how much you can love.

“Grant us, Jesus, to sit at your right hand...in your glory....”

A few weeks ago I was sitting at a coffee place early with the morning paper. A street person came in and put his bedroll and plastic garbage bag of possessions on the floor. From his dirty jeans pocket he pulled enough quarters, dimes and nickels for a cup of coffee, which he brought back to the little table next to where I was sitting.

He looked over and saw I was reading the sports section. “Do you go to the Ducks' football games?” he asked.

“Haven't had a chance this year,” I answered.

“I come here and read about em' when someone leaves a paper,” he said, eyeing the one in front of me.

“Sure, you can have this one,” I said.

“I pick up cans and bottles around the stadium though,” he added. “It's worth a few bucks and I can't stand to see cans and bottles trashing God's beautiful earth. I do what I can.”

I looked at him and there was this sincerity in his whiskered face and watery eyes. He really believes he has a part to play in the stewardship of the earth, I thought.

So we talked for a while about earth care and the beauty of the sunrise that morning. Then I handed him the paper and left. But I couldn't get him out of my mind.

Because sometimes it turns out that way – doesn't it? You sit with somebody and there's this surprising connection, a common humanity shared across all the economic and social barriers that divide. And for a moment at least, it feels like something sacred that could be called real glory....

“Grant us Jesus, to sit near your glory...”

She sits in a wheelchair by the nursing home entrance and you heard someone call her Mattie. So this day she smiles at you and for a reason you cannot explain, you stop and pull up a chair next to her.

“How are you today, Mattie?” you ask.

“Oh, I'm tired,” she answers. “Been baking pies all day. Gonna have a house full of company,” Mattie says.

“Where was that house, Mattie?” you ask.

“Oh dear, I don't live there anymore, do I? I forget,” she says.

“We all forget sometimes,” you say.

“Hank will be home soon, you know,” Mattie then says. “He'll want coffee.”

“Is Hank your husband, Mattie?”

“Oh, goodness, Hank died – didn't he? I miss him,” she says.

“My what a pretty day,” Mattie then says. “Maybe Hank will be here the next time you come and we can have coffee.”

“I would love to have coffee with you and Hank,” you say.

Then she reaches out and takes your hand. “Thank you for sitting with me,” she says. “God bless you now.”

“God bless you too, Mattie,” you say as you get up to go. And you feel blessed and pretty close to something like real glory.

“Grant us, Jesus, to sit in your glory.”

And sometimes it does turn out that way, you know....