

Pentecost 21, 18/10/2015, Holy Trinity

Mark 10:35-45

What is your God like?

How long have you been with Jesus?

What differences do you see in your life as a result of your answers to these two questions?

In to-day's first reading from Job and the Gospel reading from Mark we have some answers to my opening questions.

As we look at Job's encounter with God we find Job's friends debating why he has been inflicted with so much suffering.

Job has lost his family, his cattle and lands and has encountered poverty and illness.

Finally, the friends conclude that there is no answer except that God is "great in power and justice".

It is God who gives the answer to Job out of the whirlwind.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth....

"On what were its bases sunk or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?"

What a wonderful way to express God, the Creator.

We need to be reminded of this "side" of God where we see the grandeur and the enormity and the awesomeness of God's creation.

It is in the presence of the God of creation that Job comes to his own humbling submission.

Now if we turn to the Gospel reading for this morning we can see a number of things and it is two or three of these that I wish to draw your attention.

It is another case of the disciples behaving badly, of the disciples not getting it, of missing the point.

They have been with Jesus for a few years.

They have heard his teaching about the Kingdom of God.

They have heard him speaking of the journey on which they are travelling with him.

They have heard that this journey will lead to his betrayal, passion and death by crucifixion.

Yet, all they can come up with is a concern about the seating in the Kingdom of God.

What an ambitious lot they are?

Then we come to God the Son, Jesus Christ.

What is his reaction to the disciples behaving badly?

He does not reprimand them, nor does he say anything like, “Come on, James and John, get real, do you think the Kingdom of God is about who sits where around a throne, or at a banquet table and for the rest of you do you expect it to be ‘cushy’ existence?”

No! He tells them that if they want to follow their ambitions then they should do so by serving the rest – taking the least place, if they want to be considered great.

Now place yourself in this scene as one of the disciples, as indeed you are a disciple of Jesus in the twenty-first century.

This is the place where Jesus challenges each of us to reconsider what it means to be a Christian.

To follow after Jesus, to enter the Kingdom of God, means in some way giving up some of the things and values of the world, and taking on board the values that Jesus holds.

The way that many in the world look at greatness or of someone having power is to look down on those below as servants and for an ambitious person it does not matter how many others they knock off the ladder on the way up.

Many people look up to the so called self-made man or woman.

This, however, is not what Jesus teaches when he says, ‘but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’

Servanthood, then, is the key word as Jesus challenges us to follow him ‘who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many’.

The readings from Job and Mark help us to answer the questions with which I began: What is your God like?

How long have you been with Jesus?

What differences do you see in your life as a result of your answers to these questions?

We have a God who loves us and who challenges us to servanthood towards one another and especially the stranger, the poor and the needy.

We are to behave as the People of God with a mission of belief, love and servanthood in the service of the God whom we worship.