



Sunday Reflection

Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 17 October 2021

Pentecost 21

Jesus tells his disciples that if they want to be with him in his glory they must follow him in a life of service and self-sacrifice. Let us praise the Lord our servant God who, in his glory, is clothed with majesty and splendour.

Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"Whoever wishes to be first among you
must be slave of all."** Mark 10:44

An Illustration to set the scene

The Reverend Margaret sits back in her chair, closes her eyes and listens to the bickering that is happening yet again in the church Vestry meeting.

Voices are raised, emotions are stirred up and the judgement of all is being clouded by old rivalry and enmities.

She has tried to calm things down and peace had broken out for a while, but suddenly an item of "Any Other Competent Business" throws everyone back into conflict.

Margaret quietly leaves the room and goes to the vestry, from where she takes the crucifix which hangs on the wall facing the door.

She returns to the table, puts the crucifix down in the middle of it and asks for a period of silence while they reflect on Christ crucified and his call to his disciples to love one another as he loves them.

Five minutes sitting in silence can seem like a very long time.

It's certainly long enough for people to calm down, to be reminded of who it is Christians follow and to reflect on the part they have played in what just happened.

Margaret ends the silence with a plea that everyone should continue to reflect on the meeting and gives a blessing on their reflection and prayer and future Vestry meetings.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

Ever since that day in Galilee when he called Simon Peter, James and John to follow him, Jesus has been the very centre of their lives.

Along with all the other disciples they've seen him teaching crowds of people, feeding them with miracle bread and delivering those held captive by their demons.

Sometimes the three of them have witnessed remarkable things.

They saw Jesus heal Peter's mother-in-law and they were there when he healed the daughter of Jairus, the leader of a synagogue.

Then there was that amazing day on the mountain when they saw Jesus in glory along with Moses and Elijah.

Perhaps it's this event which leads James and John to ask Jesus to allow them privileged places beside him when he enters his glorious kingdom. And that in turn leads to another squabble among the disciples about which of them is the greatest.

They've also had to listen to some difficult warnings about what will happen to Jesus when he goes to Jerusalem – betrayal, an unjust trial and execution, before rising to new life.

But they don't seem to have any understanding of a Messiah who is also a "suffering servant", giving his life for others.

So Jesus once again calls them all together and spells out the difference between leaders of this world, who throw their weight around and become tyrants over those they rule, and leaders of God's kingdom, who love and serve their people.

The disciples of Jesus must follow his example so that when he leaves them they can form a strong community built on humility and self-giving love.

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

Disagreements and bad feeling can arise in any community of people.

Christians are not perfect and as flawed individuals they do sometimes, or often, fail to treat others with loving respect and understanding.

But followers of Jesus need to find ways of reaching across barriers created by our unloving, misunderstanding or thoughtless behaviour towards each other.

If we put ourselves in the position of Peter, James or John, or one of the other nine disciples who perhaps often felt left out and inferior, we may take to heart the words of Jesus, ***"whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all"***.

Becoming great or first among others is not necessarily about holding a position of power and authority.

If we always want things done the way we want them done, if we always insist that we "should" be the ones to fill certain roles, or if we are critical of what others say or do, then we are not allowing others to speak, to act or to find their place in our community.

Jesus came to serve, not to be served, and we are called to look for the way of love and service before our own preferences.

“Whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” Mark 10:44

Please share your response to this reflection to Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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