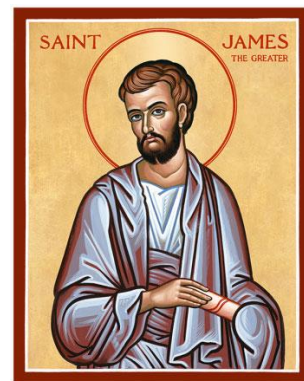


Worship at Home – St James

Sunday 25th July 2021

Prepared by Rev Adam Pawley, Rector



Prayer to start

Merciful God, whose holy apostle Saint James, leaving his father and all that he had, was obedient to the calling of your Son Jesus Christ and followed him even to death: help us, forsaking the false attractions of the world, to be ready at all times to answer your call without delay; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Bible Reading – Matthew 20:20-28

A mother's request

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favour of him.

²¹ 'What is it you want?' he asked.

She said, 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.'

²² 'You don't know what you are asking,' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?'

'We can,' they answered.

²³ Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.'

²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Thought

Today is St James' Day. There are two James' listed amongst the twelve disciples. James son of Zebedee and James son of Alphaeus. The latter is understood by church tradition to be the first bishop of Jerusalem and author of the New Testament Letter of James and is referred to as James the Lesser. Today, in the church calendar, we focus on James the Greater – called the greater because he was the older of the two James'. This James, was one of the 'inner three' of the twelve disciples – one of Jesus' three closest followers – the other two being Peter and James' brother John.

Today we have a request from James and John's mother. Not the best request! More an instruction to Jesus than a question too! She effectively says, "Jesus, give my sons the best places of honour in heaven" (see v21).

In one sense, she's asking the same question that *all* the disciples had asked Jesus earlier in Matthew 18:1, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" A question that Jesus answered, "become like little children" (18:3). Who is the greatest and will you give them the highest places of honour are not questions that are ours to ask, and it's no surprise that the other disciples (20:24) become indignant with James and John and their mother.

And so, Jesus has some more explaining to do! Some further correcting to do! James and John's mother has missed the point. To sit at Jesus' right and left isn't like sitting alongside a king of power and dominion from this world, it's not a life a luxury bestowed on you because of status, power and wealth or having the right connections to the right people. To sit at the right and left of Jesus is to be a generous servant, the first among many. It will entail sacrifice, a willingness to give up oneself. Just as Jesus ultimately did when he gave up his life as a ransom (a price for our sin) for many – for us (our salvation from sin) (vv26-28).

Jesus answers James and John's mother with a yes and a no. No, they can't sit at his right or left hand in his kingdom – that's not his to give he says. But yes, in his kingdom they will still be considered great because they will drink the same cup that he Jesus will drink from – the cup of suffering. As we continue to read the New Testament in Acts 12:2 we learn that James did indeed drink the same cup as Jesus – he is persecuted and martyred by Herod for his faith. John too would be later exiled.

In short, James and John are commended in church history, because they chose service to Jesus above personal gain.

I wonder, what kind of 'greatness' do you desire most in your life?
Greatness given to you for self-importance, self-ambition or self-respect?
Or greatness given to you for useful service to God and his kingdom?

Closing Prayers

Lord God, the source of truth and love, keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, united in prayer and the breaking of bread, and one in joy and simplicity of heart. Following the example of James the Greater, may we choose service to you above all things, in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

We hope you are safe and well. Please get in touch if we can help (Adam 01978 760439, Gareth 07731 827988). This Sunday (25 July) we have Morning Worship at 9:30am in Penyffordd and 11am in both Hope and St John's. You are very welcome to join us. Our next midweek communion is 12 August.