

Meditation

Well...some things never change do they???

The 12 in our reading today reminds me of my own kids when they were little
...although I didn't have 12!

My own kids have, at different times, tried to corner me with a special request:

Mom...would you do me a favor?

usually, I have answered: well, that depends...

Jesus responds, not with a yes or no, but with another question:

“What is it you want me to do for you.”

Wise man...he would have been a great Dad....

Before Jesus commits to anything, he finds out what these two brothers have in mind....

The boys: James and John are not shy.

What they have in mind are positions of prestige and reward:

to sit on either side of Jesus when he comes into his glory...

in other words, they want greatness...

It kind of reminds me what happens after a lot of elections....

When the other 10 hear about this they're upset!

“Who do they think they are?”

Actually, the 10 are probably upset, because they didn't ask Jesus first...

The 12 sound more like bunch of kids in anyone's family,

than the inner circle of the Messiah....

But then Jesus warns them...

“you don't know what you are asking...”

And the brothers model typical male bravado...

“no problem! We can take it...”

Ok, ok...you think you can take it? Don't worry, you'll have your chance...

But, let me warn you, Jesus says....the greatness that I can offer you probably isn't what your thinking.

The power that you think you want is not the real power that I am offering..."

Can't you just imagine the look on their faces?

The confident, power seeking, status hungry 12 are probably now confused..

wondering what in the world is he talking about?

They could have never imagined what Jesus said next:

"whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant....

and whoever wishes to be first among you, must be slave of all."

Can't you just picture their jaws dropping???

Can't you just imagine what they are thinking: Is he kidding me?

what is he talking about????

Servants have no power, slaves don't have status...

We want glory, Jesus!

We want power, Jesus!

we are sooo tired of being nobodies...

we are soo tired of being worked to death, taxed to death, humiliated and abused...

It's our turn to live life large, Jesus...and you are just the guy to help us to do that!

We've got your back, so we can sit at your side! Ok, Jesus???

Actually Jesus, does have every intention of helping them live life large...

but of course, not in the way they think!

The path to greatness that Jesus is offering ...

is so countercultural,

so at odds with what they have been to taught to believe,

at first, it must have seemed that so not right....
to them, and probably even to us...

Throughout the millennia,
it has been assumed and presumed the great ones
are the most powerful,
the wealthiest,
the one with the greatest number of servants,
the largest stock portfolio,
the biggest boat,
the car with the most horsepower
the army with the greatest number of missiles...

Throughout all of human history,
there has been many leaders, be they political or corporate, who were/are bullies...
They make themselves look good by putting other people down,
they control by domination and fear...
who demand the limelight: look at me...look at me.....

Those leaders do not earn any respect or admiration....
their power is superficial and it all depends if they can keep others
pushed down and less than...
We all know that to demand, cajole, manipulate or coerce
others to recognize your greatness only reveals one's smallness...

But Jesus says:

“whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant....
and whoever wishes to be first among you, must be slave of all.”

In other words: the path of true greatness is the path of service.

The path of true strength is gentleness...

**In other words: one does not become great by oppression, by dominance,
by crushing your opponent or your competitor...**

One becomes great by building the other up...

by using ones gifts, talents and resources for the good of the other”

**And we deep down, know the truth of his path because
we all know people who indeed are true and great leaders
They give them our respect and admiration,
we willingly allow them to have power in our lives
because they have first given us their respect and admiration
They have used their gifts to build us up..**

True greatness does not depend upon outside circumstances...

authentic greatness is an inside job....

it is revealed, it can never be demanded or purchased...

and, perhaps to our dismay,

**True greatness is honed, polished and forged oftentimes in the heat of difficulties,
not in the sunshine of easy times...**

Everyone can be nice when the going is easy....

it is the great ones, who are kind when the going is tough....

**it is the great ones who rise to the occasion to share their last piece of bread
or the last drop of water in their cup...**

it is the great ones who refuse to do harm, even when they have been harmed...

This is the path Jesus is offering.

It is the path of Authentic Power and True greatness...

**So of course, the question remains:
are we willing to walk this Path?**

Amen.