

You don't know what you are asking for

Mark 10:32-45

October 18, 2015

Trust in the promise ...

When you don't, you need security fences, safety nets, back-up plans, reinforcements.

When you don't, you need to build walls. high and thick, and you need to keep a close eye on your enemies and carefully screen your friends.

When you don't, you need to minimize risk, make investments with guaranteed returns, take out insurance policies, set aside untouchable savings.

When you don't, you need to plan ahead, prepare for every contingency, have everything in place ahead of time. You live for the future. You live in the future.

That's all they were doing, James and John -- thinking ahead. The disciples were filled with alarm, all of them, James and John, too. They were on the road to Jerusalem, Jesus leading the way, the disciples dragging along behind, apprehensive, alarmed, afraid. They knew the risks. They knew the religious establishment had it in for Jesus. They knew anything might happen if he showed up in the city. So this seemed a good time, they figured, to get their affairs in order.

When you sit on your throne in your glorious Kingdom -- when all this is finished and you have claimed the power and honor and glory that properly belong to you -- we want to have a place next to you. We want to be there beside you.

Can you fault them for asking? Can you fault them for planning ahead? It makes good sense to settle things now, ahead of time ... if you don't trust in the promise, if you believe your future is in your hands.

If your future is in your hands. That's the way most of us live, isn't it? Whatever we say we believe, we choose and act and plan and be as if the future is in our hands, as if what becomes of us depends upon what we do or don't do. Because it does, doesn't it? Of course, it makes sense to be wise, to be careful, to be frugal, to plan ahead, to protect ourselves, to do all we can to safeguard our future.

But, then, what about Jesus? Is Jesus just one more thread in your safety net? Is Jesus just your security blanket? Is Jesus just a means of securing your future, an investment in the hereafter?

But Jesus is going to Jerusalem! He doesn't care about safety or security or the hereafter. Jesus cares about here and now, about a way of being -- a different way of being, a very different way of being -- here and now.

They asked to have a place next to him, to be on his right and his left, but when Jesus was glorified, it was not James and John, but two criminals who were given that privilege! "You don't know what you are asking for."

They did know Jesus was taking a risk by going to Jerusalem. Whether they thought him brave or foolish, whether they admired him for it or doubted him for it, they did know this was a dangerous way to go. What they didn't understand was that this was the only way for Jesus to go, because this was his way, because this is the way.

Jesus did not go to Jerusalem risking opposition, risking arrest, risking death. Jesus went to Jerusalem to die. He already told them that! The chief priests and teachers of the Law will hand him over to the Gentiles, but who will hand him over to the chief priests and teachers of the Law? They didn't take him. He gave himself up to them. Jesus' death was not martyrdom, but sacrifice.

This is his way. This is the way. The way of this king, the way of this kingdom, is not to be served, but to serve, not to conserve and protect, but to give away everything.

Now do you know what you are asking for? Now do you know what it means to follow Jesus? It makes sense to be wise, to be careful, to be frugal, to plan ahead, to protect ourselves, to do all we can to safeguard our future. But there is a different way, Jesus' way, a way that may seem foolish or foolhardy, but is in fact the way of God's wisdom, the way of God's power.

What does this way look like? How is it different?

Two people have savings accounts. One will not touch it for anything. Another dips into it to help a friend in need.

Two churches are struggling to survive. One guards its investments and shores up its infrastructure. Another pours its heart out in mission.

Two nations have security fences along the borders. One opens the gate to let in the refugees. The other leaves the gate locked shut.

Two people say they trust in the promise. One lets go. The other holds on tight.

Trust in the promise ...

When you don't, you need security fences, safety nets, back-up plans, reinforcements. When you don't, you need to prepare for every contingency. You live for the future.

When do you, when you do trust in the promise, you live in the moment -- generous, attentive, welcoming ... unafraid, uninhibited, unrestrained ... loving, giving, sacrificing, celebrating ... and planting seeds of hope all over the place!