**First Reading Isaiah 53:4-12**

*This reading is from the last of four passages in Isaiah that are often called “servant songs.” Christians are probably most familiar with this servant song. In light of Christian faith, the servant’s healing ministry and redemptive suffering are understood to be fulfilled in the life and death of Christ.*

4 Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. 5But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. 6All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 8By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. 9They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the Lord shall prosper. 11Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

**Psalm 91:9-16**

9Because you have made the Lord your refuge, and the Most High your habitation, 10no evil will befall you, nor shall affliction come near your dwelling. 11For God will give the angels charge over you, to guard you in all your ways. 12Upon their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. 13You will tread upon the lion cub and viper; you will trample down the lion | and the serpent. 14I will deliver those who cling to me; I will uphold them, because they know my name. 15They will call me, and I will answer them; I will be with

them in trouble; I will rescue and honor them. 16With long life will I satisfy them, and show them my salvation.

**Second Reading Hebrews 5:1-10**

*Using imagery from scripture and from Jewish worship practices, Jesus is presented as the great high priest who was obedient to God’s saving plan. Through his suffering and death he has become the source of eternal salvation.*

1Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; 3 and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. 4And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; 6 as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, 10having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek

**Gospel Mark 10:35-45**

*On the way to Jerusalem the disciples ask Jesus to grant them seats of honor. Jesus responds by announcing that he and his followers will “rule” through self-giving service.*

35James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” 36And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” 37And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” 38But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” 39They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 40but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

41When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. 42So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

**Sermon**

In your glory…what did James and John have in mind when they asked to be given these special seats in Jesus’ glory? In any human kingdom, the seats at the right and left hand of the king would be seats of honor, seats occupied by those most trusted by the one in power. That’s probably where the phrase “right-hand man” came from; when someone is someone’s “right-hand man” that is the person they rely upon most to carry out whatever the person in-charge needs to have done. But in a kingdom, these are also seats of honor, seats that elevate those occupying those seats above everyone except the one in power.

If James and John were requesting these seats, it means that they wanted to be closest to Jesus and elevated above everyone else. No wonder the other disciples grumbled when they heard of James’ and John’s request. Yet it seems to be a very human request, the desire to be elevated above others. After all, it seems like the opportunities to be elevated above others has grown over the years.

We are in the midst of the American League and Major League Baseball play-offs, waiting to see who will face off in the World Series and be elevated above all the other teams in baseball. But that’s not the only contest out there. There are plenty of TV shows that are competitions for people to gain some glory. While we started with American Idol, now we have The Voice and America’s Got Talent. We still have Dancing With the Stars, The Amazing Race and Survivor. Then there is American Ninja Warrior and Big Brother, the latter of which does not seem to require any talent or special ability. If you watch The Food Network, there is a lot of vying for glory in shows like Guy’s Grocery Games, Beat Bobby Flay, Chopped and Alex Vs America. And from what I see on YouTube when my daughter is scrolling for her favorite shows, there are people who have started their own channels and put all kinds of videos on doing crafts, opening and playing with kid’s toys or reading books.

We live in a society that is quite preoccupied with glory, with coming out on top, with drawing attention, with having power. It makes me wonder what our kids are learning. And it makes me wonder how it influences our thinking. We may not necessarily be seeking glory for ourselves. But we are often drawn to glory-seekers, those who come out on top, those who get a lot of attention. They are those we hear from most, whether they are business people, politicians, TV journalists and reporters, entertainers, professional athletes and even those who identify with a Christian label but have a lot of money behind them. In our society, we tend to listen to those whose voices are clearest even though, in our society, those whose voices are amplified are those with the most wealth and influence. And all they want, most of the time, is to maintain or increase that influence, that glory. Meanwhile, we put our trust in them.

Usually, when we hear a story in the Scriptures in which the disciples don’t get it, we take some comfort in that. After all, if those who spent time with Jesus didn’t get it all the time, we shouldn’t feel so bad. But this little episode with James and John should also give us pause. James and John have spent a lot of time with Jesus up until this point. They have witnessed his ministry, they have heard his teaching, they have even heard Jesus predict his death 3 times now…the third time was just preceding this passage. So this time, I invite you to consider how easy it is for a person of faith to misunderstand what Jesus is all about. I invite you to take this seriously…to take this as a warning about how important it is to be as connected to Jesus and his teachings as we are to the messages about life and the world that we hear elsewhere every day.

Jesus is very clear in what he says in this passage. Jesus and his followers are not meant to use power to gain more power over others or to build themselves up while others suffer. Greatness does not equal the amount of power or influence one has over others. Greatness, in the kingdom of God, has to do with the way in which we serve one another. The one who wishes to be great must tend to the needs of others. The mindset of the kingdom of God is a mindset that puts serving the needs of others above building oneself up to look great in the eyes of others. If we have trouble picturing this ourselves, we only need to look to Jesus.

“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Three times before this passage, Jesus predicts his death and resurrection. That is

because the one who is Creator of all saw how the human creation struggled in relationship with our Creator. So, the Creator of all took on the form of a created one, lived our limited life and died our death all to give us a new life in relationship with our Creator. Our Creator God is great and powerful, more powerful than anything in this world. But our Creator God also cares so much for us that God will do anything, even die, to save us from our sinful selfishness. In this way, God through Christ, became weak to serve us so that God’s relationship with us is restored. Through his life, Jesus served many through healing and blessing and teaching. Through his death, Jesus served all of God’s human creation by conquering the power of sin and death so that we can be raised with him to new life. Through his resurrection, Christ is in our midst to connect us to God’s kingdom of servanthood, to the gifts we receive through Christ’s death and resurrection and to the work to which we are called to serve one another, especially those in need.

We are more likely to see the work of this servant kingdom through the lives of others than we are to hear it discussed out of the mouths of the most prominent voices we hear today. Christ calls all of God’s beloved human creation, of which you are a part, to serve one another because there are so many who are in need among us today. There is much hurt to reconcile…there is much need to fill…there is much suffering to address and support. We can use the last 2 verses of our hymn “Lord Whose Love In Humble Service” as our guiding prayer when we are invited at the end of worship to go in peace and follow Jesus. Our guiding prayer is this:

*As we worship, grant us vision, till your love’s revealing light, in its height and depth and greatness dawns upon our quickened sight, making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids us bear, stirring us to ardent service, your abundant life to share.*

*Called by worship to your service, forth in your dear name we go, to the child, the youth, the aged, love in living deeds to show; hope and health, goodwill and comfort, counsel, aid, and peace we give, that your servants, Lord, in freedom may your mercy know and live.*