

Sermon Sunday 17th October 2021

Mark 10: 35-45, Hebrews 5: 1-10

We live in a society which is dominated by hierarchy; where do we fit in the pecking order at meetings or at work or even in society due, to rank, position or even training. The Church of England is awash with hierarchies – ordained ministers, lay ministers, laity and the discussions which are generated about their respective status and who has dominance. Status whether we like it or not exists in the Church of England and in society.

In the Gospel reading we have a prime example of people seeking status. James and John were chosen by Jesus and are given the name 'Sons of Thunder' by Jesus in Chapter 3 verse 17, where he names them 'Boanerges' which means Sons of Thunder. These two along with Peter and Andrew are a small group with whom Jesus shared many private moments. Naturally as the first called they considered themselves leaders of the group which Peter became the spokesman for. The two brothers may have felt that in their perceived idea of the hierarchy they were being placed second so they decided to assert

themselves; in fact, we are told in Matthew that their mother also made this request, a mum who wanted to do well for her boys, which is an issue I have encountered with mums in today's society. Mother and sons were seeking an honoured place in God's kingdom or sitting at the top seats. Jesus put them well and truly in their place, if you'll excuse the pun. He asks in verse 38 {READ VERSE 38} In the preceding verses Jesus has outlined his death and resurrection which He must endure, which is something they have not grasped or understood. Jesus tells them in verse 39 {READ VERSE 39} that they will suffer, John in exile and James one of the first Christian martyrs. However, allocation of where they sit is not for Jesus but God.

Jesus tells all the disciples, who naturally were a bit put out by the brothers request, in verses 42, 43 and 44 {READ VERSES 42, 43 and 44}. We are now at the crux of this reading; whoever wants to be great among you must be a servant and whoever wants to be first must be a slave. Jesus often uses these two words in His teachings or parables. These are two distinct types of service. The word servant translated into English should in fact be

slave, in Greek a Doulos is slave, someone without rights whereas a servant from the Greek diakonos is person who can refuse or just walk away.

This made me think what am I? In the things I choose to do in my life I can walk away or choose what to do so does that make me a servant? In my overriding faith life must I follow Jesus' example who we are told in verse 45 came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many, in other words as a slave who gave His life for you and me?

Obviously, the answer is both. I must serve others in all I do, say and think – love my neighbour -and be ready to be a slave to love God and love the Lord my God with my whole heart. This I have to do as servant or slave no matter where that may lead me.

Not easy is it when we turn to God and the there is no place in my opinion for hierarchy amongst us Christians here on earth, we are or should be true followers of God and the teachings of His Son Jesus Christ. Why, because Gods hierarchy is not like ours; we are told time and time again in the Bible it will be the little ones who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of God.

In Hebrews we are told 'every high priest is selected from among men and must be called by God.' Jesus did not become a great high priest but God called him. Perhaps the disciples were thinking that Jesus would establish a new Church and be its first high priest on earth? Well, we know that was not to be; He is the Messiah who will return and then create a new world of faith or a new Church.

Jesus is servant and slave who obeyed His Father and that is what each one of us must be here on earth until we join God in heaven or the Messiah returns whichever comes first and therefore there is no place for any of us to claim a place in a hierarchy; we are all created equal in Gods eyes and we have to follow Him and Jesus' teachings. Amen.