

Come, Lord Jesus – make these words to be for us Your word of life. Amen.

Have you ever been at a dinner table with little kids?

You're all sitting down, and suddenly someone bursts into tears.

"But I wanted to sit next to Mommy!" "You sat next to her last time."

Or Daddy. Or the guest. Kids are invested in sitting next to someone important.

Maybe James and John took it too seriously when Jesus said

you have to be like a child to enter the Kingdom!

Because Jesus has just told them again about what's going to happen to him

when they reach Jerusalem – and right away, they start to jockey for position –

"Jesus, let us be the ones to sit next to you in glory!"

Every time Jesus tells his disciples what's going to happen to him when they reach

Jerusalem, about his being arrested and tried and killed –

and rising on the third day – they start to argue about their status.

What do you do when someone is saying something you don't want to hear?

Change the subject? Turn away? Focus on something that gives you security?

That's what James and John are doing.

Jesus doesn't rebuke them – he takes them on. "Alright," he says,

"Can you drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with my baptism?"

"Sure!" they say, because they don't have a clue what he's talking about.

What is the cup that he must drink? What he's going to Jerusalem for.

What does he say when that moment is upon him, in that garden?

"Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass from me."

That is the cup he is talking about, the cup pouring out his own blood.

That is his baptism. Losing his life to gain ours. Pouring himself out.

"Sure!" they say. But he has more to tell them.

"You will drink this cup and undergo this baptism. But I'm not going to guarantee you window seats in heaven! No seats of honor. You don't get it:

When you've really become my disciples, you won't care where you sit!

You'll volunteer your good seat for someone poorer and needier than you,

because that's how much love you'll have. You'll want to serve."

Can we love like this, my friends? Can we share what matters most to us?

Ironically, this is often true in the way we operate as Christian communities.

We want our worship the way we like it, at the time we're accustomed to it,
In our beautiful buildings, singing our favorite hymns.
All good, when our focus is on keeping each other happy.
What happens when we shift our focus to the many who are hungry for
community, who are not finding their way into our buildings or our patterns?
Can we want all this for people we don't know?

Can we lay aside our preferences and prerogatives, our customs and convenience,
and do absolutely everything we can to not only invite
but truly welcome people into our community?

It may not start with church on Sunday.

It may start with engaging people in conversation, those who ask for our help.
It may require our asking our neighbors, "What would make it easier for you
to come to Christ Church Wayside/La Plata?" And truly listening.

They might say, "Sunday morning is our only morning not to rush out."

Then we might have to consider what time we worship.

They might say, "The music doesn't sound like anything I listen to."

Then we might have to have a diverse repertoire of music.

They might say, "I don't think I'm good enough..." – which really gives us an
opening to share our own struggles in faith, and where God has shown up for us.
I don't know what they might say; I only know that if we're not asking and
listening, then we can't be surprised when so few new folks come along.

And then we need to listen for God's voice – where is it loudest?

Where is the energy? Where are we sensing the movement of God?

We gather every Tuesday to pray for healing – we need to put a sign on the road
inviting others to stop in. We need to cultivate the heart of a servant.

What does a good servant do? We know this from Downton Abbey, right?

They're always on the lookout to see where they are needed.

They know their job and anticipate the boss's requests and the household's needs.
And they know who is boss and who is not.

That's what God is trying to convey to Job in our first reading today –

Job is a righteous person, just like us, but misfortune after misfortune befalls him.

After all of that, and after things are restored to balance and goodness,

he wants to talk to God – and God essentially, says,

"Who are you? Did you create the world?"

God is God, and we are not. That is the posture of a servant of God.
We are servants tending the guests in God's household, which is everybody.
Those who would be first must be last, and servant of all.

Servant of all sounds like a tall order – but God leads us.

My friend Carol was a missionary in Africa – that sure seems like being God's servant in the world. Once she came home, eager to share all the new things she was learning with her parents. But, as she writes, "*...the Lord so very, very clearly said to me, "Get on your knees and clean the kitchen floor." I'll never forget that. So, I did. I came home and served in that way - cleaning floors, cleaning the house, doing chores, helping Dad with learning WordPerfect (!), and so on..."*

After her father died, she took on fulltime care of her mother, putting aside her career as a missionary, a vocation in which she felt fulfilled and important. Talk about serving. Talk about laying aside your prerogatives.

But when we're serving in God's household, God is with us, leading us.

Carol wrote to me this week,

I may have told you that when I again took on the daytime minding of Mom's care last August, as I washed her feet, the Lord placed upon me the image of Christ washing the disciples' feet. And just serving her. But in January it changed to Mary pouring the ointment on Jesus' feet and I knew this next season was preparing her for her leaving this earth... It has been quite an experience and without the Holy Spirit's enabling, would not have been possible to this extent, I don't think! My new song is "Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning..." – I don't always win at being Christ-like in all my ways with other people for sure and trusting Him is at times very difficult, to be honest, but it is quite a walk!"

Where are you being called to serve God's household?

The needs of some of the poorest families in our county keep rolling up to our door – we need an outreach team that can respond. Will you serve?

What privileges or convenience might you lay aside because your Lord has need of you?

"The cup that I drink, you will drink," Jesus tells us.

But the cup we drink, my beloveds, is the cup He has filled for us.

As we serve the people whom God loves, whether family or neighbor, we will be filled. *Amen.*

READINGS:

Mark 10:35-45

James 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." And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But 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?" They 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; but 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." When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So 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. **But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.** For the Son of Man **came not to be served but to serve**, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Job 38

The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up your loins like a man, will question you, and you shall declare to me.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? ["Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together? Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?"]