

Lent Day 32
Thursday March 17, 2016
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Reading: Mark 10.32-45

Reflection

Years ago my brother organized a surprise birthday party for my Mom. He arranged a cake from the grocery store and had me take it home to put in our fridge. On the day of the party I greeted my Aunt and Uncle as they came in and made small talk until the party got going. When it was time to sing happy birthday I sung with gusto. Everyone was laughing at my expression as I read the cake for the first time, "Happy Birthday Mom and Dave".

My Mom's birthday is at the end of April and mine is at the beginning of May, so my brother had actually planned a dual surprise party. I had carried a cake home (in a bag) with my name on it without knowing. And, I had totally missed when my Aunt had begun to say happy birthday on entry and my Uncle hushing her. Finally, I had been singing Happy Birthday with such gusto that I didn't hear my name sung. Until the last minute I had missed it all.

Something similar is happening in this passage. Jesus predicts his death for the third time (a significant biblical number) and, now, James and John are having a discussion around power positions.

This is consistent with Mark's narrative. We aren't going to have the right insiders and outsiders; kids are in and rich are out. So then let's figure out who has the most power and authority in the group. And it's not just these two, the other ten become indignant that the two are trying to get one over on them. Mark is aware of the irony he's producing in his story telling — he's doing it on purpose. The disciples are missing the point.

Well that could be our t-shirt couldn't it? "Disciples: Missing the Point Since 30 AD!" Let's just think about the weightiness of our belief. God himself has come in human flesh with the intention of dying on the cross and by doing that defeating the powers of sin and death for the purpose of liberating his good creation, humans and all. Now we have come to live in this new world recreated just for us and we have been commissioned to live in it fully and invite others into it too. What have we reduced it to? Believing in God, being nice and going to church every once and awhile.

There is a fullness to the Christian life which goes untapped by us because we stay on the surface. Like these disciples, like me, we don't dig into what is really going on or what it's all about. Our selfish concerns keep us from the fullness of life which God has in store for us. The good news is that despite our ignorance the son of man has come to give his life as a ransom of many. Thanks be to God.

Prayer

Our God and Lord who has resolutely set his face to the cross, forgive us for missing the point and staying on the surface of discipleship. Help us dig deeply into your word and the new life that you have gifted us with. Amen.