

**PENTECOST:
A TIME TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT ALIVE AND ACTIVE**

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 24

October 18, 2009

Isaiah 53:4-12

Psalm 91:9-16

Hebrews 5:1-10

Mark 10:35-45

To Be the Servant of the Rest

Immediately before the events in our Gospel reading for today, Jesus was telling all his disciples, for the third time, how he must go up to Jerusalem where he would be put to death. As today's lesson opens, we see that somehow James and John do not seem to grasp the enormity of what Jesus was saying. Their minds were focused on "What's in this for me?" They wanted to ascertain what position of honor and authority they might occupy when Jesus would establish his Kingdom. So fixated were they on earthly accomplishments, that they completely missed Jesus' message of salvation and deliverance.

Understandably, the other ten disciples were "angry." Unfortunately their anger was not necessarily "righteous anger" motivated by the incredulous request of James and John in light of Jesus' prediction of his death. Their anger was more likely a result of jealousy over the audacity of these two already favored disciples (along with Peter) who were now jockeying for even greater privilege. None of the twelve seems to have understood Jesus' teachings about his imminent death or recalled their Lord's admonitions about being childlike and humble. Can you imagine how Jesus must have felt? What he must have thought? But we hear no rebukes, only an explanation of what true leadership is all about.

Unlike earthly rulers who amass wealth and power for their own pleasure, spiritual leaders must have a different motivation and purpose. Those who desire to sit in places of authority, those who would be rulers in God's kingdom, must be prepared to be servants. After all, Jesus himself did not come to be served, but *to serve and to give his life...* (Mark 10:45b, *GNT*).

Are we ready to be at Jesus' side when he is in Jerusalem suffering? Do we see ourselves on his right hand or his left hand as he hangs from the cross, or only after he has paid our debt and has come into his glory? We may not be called to a martyr's death as were the disciples, but we are very definitely called to a life of service. Salvation is free, but the

Christian life is not free of responsibility toward God and our neighbors. *If one of you wants to be great, you must be the servant of the rest.* (Mark 10:43b, GNT)

True leadership involves service, and service requires sacrifice. Are we truly ready to become servant leaders?

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. Thomas R. May, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as a Director in the Global Scripture Ministries area.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Bangladesh –

With thanks to God for blessing two high-profile youth events last year which attracted thousands of young people and hundreds of church leaders, and with prayers that they remember and apply the teaching they received, and with prayers for follow-up programs that are being run this year; **Sri Lanka** – With thanks to God for the new Centre for Biblical Studies in the south, and with prayers for God's blessing on work with hearing and visually impaired children and for the production of Braille and Sign Language resources, and with prayers for the year 2009 as the Year of Lay Leaders; **Myanmar** – With thanks to God for the miraculous ways that enabled all the Bibles sent from South Korea and China to be received and for the ability to serve the victims of Cyclone Nargis and provide them with humanitarian aid and Scriptures, and with prayers for democratic reform in the country and for new openings for Bible ministry; **Maldives** – With prayers for Bible work in this country.

Activity Corner: "Servant Cards"

Supplies needed: Bible; 3" x 5" index cards (or slips of paper); pens or pencils.

Read together Mark 10:35-45. Discuss what Jesus means to be "the servant of the rest" (verse 43). Distribute seven index cards, or slips of paper (one for each day of the week), to each member of your household. Ask them write the letters for the word SERVANT on each of the cards (one letter per card) so that the letter fills the card. On the reverse side of each card, ask everyone to think of ways they can live out being a "servant of the rest," using the letter on each card. For example:

Set the table

Encourage someone with a kind word

Read a story to a child

Volunteer for a project in your church or community

Ask a neighbor if you can do an errand for them

Notice something special about a person and tell them

Take out the trash

Encourage everyone to use these cards as reminders to be a "servant of the rest" each day of the week. Conclude with a prayer by inviting each member of your household to offer a petition for God's help and guidance to follow Jesus and live as servants.