

## **Pentecost 21 Year B**

### **The Epistle Hebrews 5:1-10**

Every 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. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

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;”

as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”

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. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

### **The Gospel Mark 10:35-45**

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus 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.”

## Homily

James and John were very ambitious people.

Amongst Jesus' disciples, Jesus seems to have chosen

James, John and Peter, for special attention.

So it isn't surprising that James and John

would ask Jesus to share his authority with them.

It looks like they were reaching a little bit too far,

when they told Jesus they'd do whatever they needed to do.

We've all known folks like that.

There will always be over-confident social climbers!

What matters here is that Jesus never said, "Yes."

He never offered them a share in his authority.

But he did say they'd share in his pain. <sup>i</sup>

"The cup that I drink, you will drink" he said,

"the baptism, with which I am baptized,

you will also be baptized" ....<sup>ii</sup>

Jesus promised them all the trouble and all the work,

but none of the goodies. *At least not here, on Planet Earth.*

The goodies have to wait until later.

So, Jesus really was never into “selling” people on his plan.

Back then people had to take Jesus’ deal as it was.

Warts and all. *We still do.*

James and John weren’t given a choice. James was martyred.<sup>iii</sup>

We’d all like options. But Jesus didn’t lay out a lot of choices.

“Follow me,” Jesus said. Drink from my cup.

That was then. This is now, but does Jesus give us other options?

It doesn’t seem like he does.

He expects us to step into his shoes,

In our time and in our place, *whoever we are.*

We’d all like to simplify our Christian walk, but Life is complicated.

When it comes to living out our faith, walking the walk,

It’s usually best to keep things simple.

*But our fascination with all our stuff gets in the way.*

Most of us learn important lessons as we roll through life...

Some, lie me, are a bit hard-headed. *Mea culpa.*

Lots of times, some important life lesson is forgotten.

*And we stub our toes... again and again and again.*

Some people say that memory is the first thing to go...

I don't know. *For me, the first thing to go was my hair!*

And I can't even remember when that started!

*Memory is such a wonderful thing.*

Two old friends were sitting together on a park bench.

One said to the other,

“You know, I can't remember things like I used to...

I've known you all my life, but I can't for the life of me,  
I can't remember your name.

What *is* your name?”

The other thought for a moment and said,

***“Can I get back to you on that?”***

It's easy to let things slip by, but some stuff is worth hanging on to.

Jesus said to James and John... just as he says to us:

“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink ...?”

We've all heard this question, but we tend to forget the answer.

Jesus told James and John, just as he still tells us,

that our work as a Christian family, is to stand in his shoes,  
to join in his sacrifices, and to love as he loved.

*Jesus's path is not an easy one to follow. We all know that.*

*The work begins on Sunday, but it doesn't end there.*

And because Jesus' path isn't easy,

He gives the chance to renew ourselves *and* our souls through  
the Eucharist, and through our church community.

We know that we can live with Jesus,

because we know he's always with us. *Right here. Right now.*

Through Jesus, we can heal old wounds.

We can see new light and we can do all things.

*"Are you able to drink the cup that I drink...?"* Jesus asked.

Maybe. Maybe not.

But, as faithful Christians we have to say, *"I'll try."*

*"Help me to live for others, Lord.*

*Help me set aside my ambitions and my stuff."*

James and John tried Jesus' patience.

The world has always pushed us to get it while we can.

But in that pursuit, there is no peace,

except the peace of an early grave.

I once read a story about a man in Bihar, India.

Every day he saw his friends and neighbors get more and more worn out, as they walked four miles to get to their fields, just on the other side of a tall hill.

So, for *fourteen years* he chipped away on a 33-foot-long tunnel, through that hill. When it was finally done, he smiled as his friends walk through his tunnel, every day, straight to their fields.

A small reward for fourteen years of back breaking labor.

But that's the Godly endurance Jesus calls us to.

That's the life we've agreed to live when we say,

“Yes, Lord, I will drink the cup that you drink.”

“If we die with him, we will also live with him;

If we endure, we will also reign with him.”<sup>iv</sup>

“Yes, Lord, I will drink the cup that you drink.”

Christ's Kingdom is here. Right here. Right now.

We are called to join Jesus, to live with him and to die with him.

We are called to endure.

“Yes, Lord, I will drink from that cup....”

**AMEN**

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<sup>i</sup> That is, the Cross.

<sup>ii</sup> James and John approached Jesus, based on their culture, their time and their place. We all do that. We are who we are. Does anybody ever have any other option?

<sup>iii</sup> St. James was killed by the sword. (Acts 12:1-2). St. John's fate is less clear. It is said that he was plunged in boiling oil but emerged unscathed. He appeared to have passed a natural death. See, *inter alia*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-John-the-Apostle> .

<sup>iv</sup> See, 2 Timothy 2:11-13