

Living Lent | March 8

## The Badge of Service

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*While Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised."*

*Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."*

*When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

**Matthew 20: 17-28 (NRSV)**

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### Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

We hear a lot about power these days. We wear power suits with power colors, drink power drinks, eat power bars. We even take power naps. We hear and read about those who will do and say just about anything to gain power. And what is power? It's the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the

course of events.

Then there's ambition. Most of the time we praise those who are ambitious. In fact, we are often critical of teenagers and young adults who don't seem to be ambitious enough. And what is ambition? It's the desire and determination to achieve success.

Of course, this is nothing new. In our Gospel lesson from Matthew, we read about the mother of the disciples James and John, who approaches Jesus with the request that her sons be awarded the highest places of honor in His kingdom and allowed to sit on His left hand and right hand. Talk about a helicopter parent! Now we don't really know if James and John were as ambitious and seeking power as their mother is on their behalf.

No matter what, Jesus basically says, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you really prepared to drink the cup I'm about to drink?" And James and John answers, "Sure, why not?" I can imagine Jesus just shaking his head. Meanwhile, the other disciples heard about this request from the mother and they got angry.

The passage tells us a lot about the disciples' ambition. They were thinking of personal reward and personal distinction; and they were thinking of personal success without personal sacrifice. They thought sitting on the left and right hand of Jesus would give them power and honor.

It's at this point that Jesus takes advantage of a "teaching moment." He tells the disciples that to drink the cup simply means to follow Christ wherever He may lead, and to be like Him in any situation life may bring.

What's important to note is that Jesus is not asking His followers – or us - to do anything that He Himself was not willing to do. Jesus makes it very clear: He came not to be served, but to serve. He came to occupy not a throne, but a cross.

As Christians, as followers of Christ, our badge of greatness is to be service alone. Jesus reminds us that greatness or power or ambition does not consist in commanding others to do things for us or controlling others to do what we want. True greatness consists in doing things for others, and the greater the service, the greater the honor.

Jesus says, "If you wish to be great, be a servant; if you wish to be first of all, be a servant." The message strongly presented by Jesus is that He came to serve – not to be served.

And what does that mean for us as followers of Jesus Christ? Every day all around us God presents us with so many opportunities for service. Maybe it's to do a gesture of kindness for a neighbor or help out in one of the many mission agencies in our communities. Maybe it's just to sit and be a listening friend or drive someone to a doctor's appointment or help them out with some groceries.

*With a rich history that dates to the middle of the 1950's and after Jekyll Island had been purchased by the State of Georgia and opened to the public, people began to move onto the Island and held services at Faith Chapel. The Rev. Marcia Cochran is the current pastor of the Jekyll Island United Methodist Church, which is located on the western side of the Island. Service for the parishioners of JIUMC is nothing new, but their commitment to the Children of Morningstar has exhibited their belief in carrying the "Badge of Service" in their Community at large. Thank you for your support of the Children through service.*

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Perry Counseling Center  
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Perry, GA 31069

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1 Youth Estate Drive  
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