



WEEKLY STUDY April 22-28, 2024

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

Our sermon series is: The Disciples: Leading Like Jesus. In this ten-week series, we will get to know the Disciples Jesus appointed to follow him, lead like him, and then take over his mission after his resurrection and ascension. We will learn together what Thomas, John, Peter, Judas, Matthias, Thaddeus, Matthew, Andrew, and James have to teach us about ourselves and what it means to lead like Jesus.

Our Scripture this week is: Mark 10:33-45 (The Voice)

"Jesus, taking the twelve aside, said: 'Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and there the Son of Man is going to be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes. They shall seek his death and deliver Him to the outsiders to carry out that sentence. Then people will mock Him, whip Him, and kill Him. But on the third day He will rise again.'

Two of the twelve – the sons of Zebedee as they were known – approached Jesus and pulled him aside. James and John said, 'Teacher, will You do something for us if we ask it of you?' Jesus said to them, 'What is it that you want?' they said, 'Master, grant that we might sit on either side of You, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, when you come into the glory of your kingdom.' But Jesus said to them, 'You don't know what it is you're asking. Can you drink from the cup I have to drink from or be ritually washed in baptism with the baptism that awaits me?' James and John replied, 'We can.' Then Jesus said, 'You will indeed drink from the cup I drink from and be baptized with the baptism that awaits me. But to sit at my right or my left is an honor I cannot grant. That will be given to those for whom it has been prepared.'

When the other ten heard about this request, they were angry with James and John; but Jesus stopped them, 'You know that among the nations of the world the great ones lord it over the little people and act like tyrants. But that is not the way it will be among you. Whoever would be great among you must serve and minister. Whoever wants to be great among you must be slave of all. Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to be a servant – to offer his life as a ransom for others.'"

- 1) In this season of Easter, we move to our second week on the Disciples. With each of these studies, Pastor Sam is inviting us to see ourselves in these disciples – to recognize**

our strengths as leaders, and to move forward in carrying out Jesus' mission. This Sunday we discussed John and also his brother James. Pastor Sam reminded us that Jesus called James and John, sons of Zebedee, together. Jesus named them Sons of Thunder because of their zeal seen in Luke 9:51-56 where, in response to a Samaritan village rejecting Jesus, James and John say, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" It's statements like this that help us realize that the disciples are much like we are - talking before thinking; considering revenge instead of forgiveness. It's an occasion when we can say, "If the disciples can make such mistakes and yet become leaders, then we have the grace to lead as well!"

Question: What name might Jesus give to you based on your personal traits?

- 2) Next we come to this Sunday's scripture. Again we see James and John in what is definitely not one of their finer moments. Read through the scripture again. Sometimes we read scripture that is confusing in its message. This is not one of those passages. We know as soon as we read James and John's request that it is just wrong. And Jesus states it plainly, "You know that among the nations of the world the great ones lord it over the little people and act like tyrants. But that is not the way it will be among you. Whoever would be great among you must serve and minister."

Question: Where in our world today do you see leaders who (in Jesus words) 'lord it over the little people and act like tyrants.' Where in our world do you see leaders who serve and minister to others rather than seek fame for themselves?

- 3) Peter, James and John are seen through the gospel stories as the disciples closest to Jesus. Pastor Sam told us those three alone with Jesus when he heals Jarius's daughter and those three were the ones who were with Jesus at his transfiguration. And those three were the ones he took with him to the Garden Of Gethsemane. This helps us see and understand more about Jesus. Sam reminded us that those who Jesus called were a close community. And within that community perhaps Peter, James, and John were the ones on whom Jesus most depended. Jesus teaches us through these friendships how important it is to let others into our lives and depend on them for friendship, love, and support.

Question: Reflect on the people in your life who are closest to you? Who have you let in to your "inner circle" and how do you allow them to walk closely with you?

- 4) Pastor Sam led us in reflecting on the vision found in the Book of Revelation. Christian tradition holds that the John who received the visions recorded there is the disciple, John. John – banished to an island – receives visions of the "new heaven and the new earth." He sees hope in the midst of despair. And to understand this, she told us about "prophetic imagination" through the words of the theologian, Walter Brueggeman. She said "prophetic imagination is the use of poetics, of a language that transcends, to paint a picture of God's preferred world. It's seeing with the eyes of hope rather than being blinded by every weakness of current reality that might surround us. The visions propel us to the question, "How then shall we live?" And we go back to what Jesus told the disciples, "Whoever would be great among you must serve and minister."

Question: What visions help you see God's kingdom present with us? What actions will you take to serve others?

Prayer: Gracious God. Week by week we come together as a community, seeking how best to follow the teachings of Jesus. Week by week we wonder if we have what it takes to embrace your love and share it as you wish. Week by week, through word, through scripture, through song, through prayer we grab glimpses of how you intend us to serve others, to love others, to care for your creation. We give you thanks for a community of faith that pushes us to pick up the servant role. We give you thanks for those closest to us that hold us when we hurt, push us when we want to stop, cry with us and laugh with us, and inspire us to be our better selves. And we give you thanks for the hope that carries us through darkness to see the sunlight around us. Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Amen

Weekly Challenge: This week and next representatives from United Methodist churches all over the world are gathered in Charlotte, NC for the General Conference of the United Methodist Church. Pray daily for this gathering of leaders that they may be led by hope and not by fame. Pray in particular for those from our faith community who will be working on behalf of all of us: Pastor Sam as a delegate from our annual conference; Brian Sigmon heading the editorial team for the 2024 Book of Discipline, and Rachel Hagewood serving as a reserve delegate from our annual conference, as well as working on behalf of Discipleship Ministries/The Upper Room. Include also in your prayers these words of hope for the Easter season: **“Christ is Risen. Christ is Risen Indeed.”**

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)