

As you listened to our gospel reading for today, who did you relate to best? James and John, the other 10 disciples, or Jesus? James and John asked Jesus to let them sit at his right and left hand. And then the rest of the disciples who were angry at James and John. And then we have Jesus who tried to straighten them out.

As you think about that, let's look at each group. I understand where James and John are coming from. Teacher, give to us whatever we ask of you. That is a pretty bold statement to Jesus isn't it and we would never make a similar statement or would we?

“God, I promise I’ll do anything for you, if you’ll just get me an A on this test.”

“God, I know I haven’t been to church in a while, but please, I need a raise at work.”

“God, I’ve been sacrificing everything for you. I’ve been at church every week. I’m just asking for a girlfriend/boyfriend in return.”

When you get right down to it, these are no different than what James and John were asking. Just like them, we want to be rewarded for our faith in God.

All of the disciples followed Jesus and done everything that he had said. They truly believed that Jesus was their messiah, their great military leader who would free them from the Romans. And when that day came, James and John wanted to be present and on each side of Jesus. They wanted that status, that power that would come when people would look up to Jesus and see each of them at his side.

Now we also have the other 10 disciples who were upset because James and John had asked for the seats of honor. In all reality, I truly believe that they are so upset because James and John beat them to the question that they wanted to ask for their self. They too wanted the seats of honor, the status and power.

Some of you might have thought that James and John were too direct. They had no right to ask Jesus for the seats of power when there were 10 other men who were also disciples of Jesus. Do you relate to these other 10 disciples?

When they had heard what James and John had done, they were jealous. They were upset that they hadn’t had the good idea to ask Jesus about sitting in glory first. Maybe they were secretly thinking that if they worked hard and did whatever Jesus said, then they would be rewarded with whatever they asked.

So what about you? Are you the direct type, telling God straight up, “here’s what I want you to do for me. Oh and by the way, I wanted it done by yesterday so let's get it done.

Or do you go for more of the indirect route? Outdo others in your religious service. Make greater sacrifices. Act more obediently. Be more radical. And secretly, deep down, you're hoping like crazy that God is noticing and will make all your dreams come true.

Whatever your strategy, don't you think that it be great if God would do whatever you asked him to do? Just like the disciples, I find it amazing that we are so self-seeking which makes us pretty selfish people just like they were.

The disciples had their own idea of what the messiah would do, but Jesus knew his true mission. He alluded to his death when talking about the cup, but then went back to what caused one to be great. After all, isn't that what the disciples wanted? They wanted to be great, and if we are honest, the same is true for us today.

Jesus says in verse 43, "But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all."

We're called to be changed by God's love. And then, and only then, will our hearts be changed that we might imitate Jesus. That we might become joyful and happy to serve others.

Our world is ruled by people who lord their authority over others by people just like us. But imagine a world where people used their authority to serve as Jesus did. What if everyone at Immanuel was happy and eager to serve? And what if we didn't keep track of what we did or we didn't have a sense about how well we were serving others?

What if, at our church, outright selfishness was always met with sacrificial love? What if we brought this attitude into our jobs and our families and our neighborhoods? The dream of God's kingdom is simply amazing. A community where people are soaked in the love of God and are active in loving and serving others.

Today bring yourself to Jesus in all of your selfish wanting. Let his love overwhelm your life. And no longer seek to be served, but look to serve others.