

SERMON FOR OCTOBER 21, 2012

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i (UCC)

7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: **Mark 10:35-45 (Focus)**

Message: **"If You Want to be 1st in Line, Go & Stand in the Back!"**

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Gathering in the Word

Today's focus scripture offer's to us Jesus' distinctive wisdom regarding **greatness** and **power** in the Christian Community. In contrast to what was and continues to happen in society around is—even in Jesus' day—**Jesus defines greatness as service!** Greatness in services democratizes community—giving control to the people/members free and equal decision-making powers.

- ❖ Greatness belongs to all who serve humanity.
- ❖ Greatness is not about hierarchy—
 - Class structure or
 - Social structure or
 - Whether you speak Cantonese or Mandarin or English or
 - Whether someone is a billionaire or whether you're in the 99% of regular folks!

Greatness is about the possibility and opportunity to work for the good God seeks for us and for all! So what does it mean: ***“If You Want to be 1st in Line, Go & Stand in the Back!”***? That's what today's message is about!

Hearing the Word

Reader's Theatre – Mark 10:35-45 By Ralph Milton

Reader 1: Have you ever been at a political party nominating convention?

Reader 2: No. But I've seen them on TV and read about them in the papers. They can turn into a real dog fight.

1: Have you ever stood up in church and made some promises?

2: Well, yeah. When I joined the church, I made some promises.

- 1: What did you promise?
- 2: Hmm. I can't really remember.
- 1: So there's not much point asking if you kept those promises.
- 2: So why are you grilling me like this?
- 1: Sorry. I really didn't mean to put you on the hot seat. But this whole business of jockeying for position, and making promises you aren't going to keep – that's what this passage is all about.
- 2: I was looking at that passage. And you're right, it does sound a lot like some of the political conventions where everyone is jockeying for top spot and making all kinds of promises they either can't keep, or have no intention of keeping.
- 1: So let's look at the passage. It's from the 10th chapter of Mark. (SLIGHT PAUSE)**
- 1: James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus.
- 2: "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."
- 1: "What is it you want me to do for you?"
- 2: "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."
- 1: "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?"
- 2: "We are able."
- 1: "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."
- 2: When the ten disciples heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them all together.
- 1: "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. 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."

This is the third sermon from Mark 10. Again Jesus' disciples fail to understand what Jesus is saying and teaching them!

Today Jesus tells the disciples what going to happen to him (he's heading to the CROSS to die for the Kingdom of God) and the Zebedee brothers, James and John, are angling for a "cabinet post" in Jesus' Kingdom Administration. **This is the 3rd time in a row that the disciples don't get it!**

- ❖ Jesus asks the brothers—"can you drink from my cup?" Another way to say this is, "There's going to be a lot of pain and struggle before we get there—are you up for it?" The brothers say Yes! They are!
- ❖ This upsets the other disciples and the 10 other disciples give the brothers the "**stink eye!**" Actually they wanted the same thing too—they wanted the same honors!

So Jesus huddles them together and says, (verse 42) "You just don't get it, do you? Do you think that my ministry is about nothing more than merely retreading the business-as-usual power plays of the world? Have I ever seemed interested in Roman-like power and privilege? I am all about servanthood. I came to serve not to be served, and so if it's greatness you're looking for in the kingdom that is coming—you'd all best start grasping for the bottom-rung-of-the-ladder!"

Jesus' way is different—sisters and brothers!

Doing the Word

So what is the Word of God for us from John 10?

1. ONE: Jesus says, “Do as I do!”

- ✓ **We are to know whose we are!**
- ✓ **We are to be observant in the church and in the neighborhoods**
- ✓ **We are to serve and “scratch people where they itch”**
- ✓ **We all have 3 types of needs—spiritual, material, and physical**
- ✓ **We are to be a listening people and church**
- ✓ **We are to also let others service us too**

2. TWO: In the Body of Christ we embrace everyone!

We are to be interdependent in the church is defined as:

- ✓ Relying on mutual assistance, support, cooperation; as well as interaction among constituent parts and members!
- ✓ Unable to exist or survive without each other!
- ✓ We support one another and also those God bring across our ways; and to the “utter most part of the world in our mission to others!”
- ✓ Who is everyone?

3. THREE: There are Republicans who are faithful Christians and there are Democrats who are also faithful Christians and there are Independents who are also faithful Christians as well!

God is not a Democrat or a Republican or an Independent! Praise be the name of the Lord!

Sent in the Word

STORY: PARABLE OF THE SPOONS

A holy man was having a conversation with the Lord one day and said, 'Lord, I would like to know what Heaven and Hell are like.'

The Lord led the holy man to two doors.

He opened one of the doors and the holy man looked in. In the middle of the room was a large round table. In the middle of the table was a large pot of stew, which smelled delicious and made the holy man's mouth water.

The people sitting around the table were thin and sickly. They appeared to be famished. They were holding spoons with very long handles that were strapped to their arms and each found it possible to reach into the pot of stew and take a spoonful. But because the handle was longer than their arms, they could not get the spoons back into their mouths.

The holy man shuddered at the sight of their misery and suffering. The Lord said, 'You have seen Hell.'

They went to the next room and opened the door. It was exactly the same as the first one. There was the large round table with the large pot of stew which made the holy man's mouth water.

The people were equipped with the same long-handled spoons, but here the people were well nourished and plump, laughing and talking. The holy man said, 'I don't understand.'

It is simple,' said the Lord. 'It requires but one skill. You see they have learned to feed each other, while the greedy think only of themselves.'

Remember that we are called as Christians to always share our spoons with our neighbors, even strangers!

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