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Proper 24B - Ordinary 29B - Pentecost +20
Sunday, October 18, 2009
Mark 10:35-45

Being a Helper

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."³⁶ And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?"³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."³⁸ 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?"³⁹ 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;⁴⁰ 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.⁴² 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.⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

How many of you like to help your teachers at school? Sometimes being the special helper to someone important can make us feel important too.

When I was in 5th grade I had a teacher that I liked a lot. And one of the things I loved to do was doing special jobs for her in the classroom. I was always asking if I could help her hand out papers, or take messages to the school office. I think I must have asked her an awful lot – but it made me feel special to be her helper.

Then one day something happened that I still remember all these years later. Our class was doing some math problems and I finished doing mine much faster than most of the other kids. So as I often did I got up from my desk to go ask her if she had any special jobs I could help her with.

Unfortunately, I picked a bad time to ask - because at the time she was actually crouched down next to the desk of another student helping him out. When I interrupted to ask if I could do a job for her she told me she was in the middle of helping my friend and that I needed to go sit down. But then as I was walking back to my chair she called my name and she told me that if I really wanted to help her that I should go and help another one of my classmates who was having trouble with his work.

And I learned something that day that changed the way I saw her. She was telling me that she didn't NEED a helper – she WAS a helper. That was her job, to make sure that we each had what we needed. After that I understood that the best way to be her helper was to do the same thing she was: look for ways that I could be helpful to others.

I tell you this story because something very similar happens in today's Gospel story. James and John come to Jesus and they tell him they want to be his special helpers. Jesus tells them that he doesn't need helpers for himself – and that he was here to be a helper to others. And he tells them to do the same.

That's an important lesson. See if you can find some chances to be a helper to others this week.

Let's pray.

Dear God,

Your son Jesus set a good example for us all. Help us to find ways to help others this week.

Amen

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