

“JOURNEY TO HOPE”
Finding Hope in the Workplace
Mark 10:35-44

Let me ask you a question: Have you ever paid attention to your prayers? IE, what you ask God for; the focus of your prayers? Are they all about your concerns, your issues, your needs?

Today's scripture from Mark's gospel tells us about two of Jesus' disciples who ask for a special blessing from Jesus—to be seated with Jesus in places of honor when he came into his kingdom. Remember, they'd given up everything in order to follow Jesus, so, they were looking for their reward. You see, James and John began focusing on their own personal desires and promotion, rather than what was best for the group.

When the other disciples heard about it, they became furious. So Jesus had to call them in and have a little chat with them. He told them that this is NOT the way things worked in the Kingdom. They were thinking like the world thinks--to lord positions of authority over others. But his way, the kingdom way, was just the opposite. In other words, Jesus said, *“Look at me: I came to serve and not to be served. Follow my example.”*

So let's go back to my opening question: Who and what do you pray for? Are your prayers all about getting blessings for yourself from Jesus? Do we ask him to give you this, or give you that; to help you with this thing or the other thing; to make your way clear or to give you strength for something? Are your prayers so focused on yourself that you sometimes forget to pray for others and others needs?

Remember--we're on a journey—“A Journey to Hope.” But we're not on this journey alone. There are others

with us right here, and many many more out there! When we journey with others, we've got to be careful not to think just about ourselves, but the group, those on the journey with us. Don't get me wrong, God knows you have needs and wants to bless you, but many times our requests get a little lopsided and we forget about the needs of others.

James and John were overly concerned about themselves and not the others. Remember, these disciples were on a journey with Jesus too. They'd been with him for 3 years, watching and learning from him first hand. When the two of them started getting just a little bit "big for their britches," it caused problems with the others. I'll never forget that scene in one of the Star Trek movies. Spock is contaminated by radiation exposure. "*The needs of the many, outweigh the needs of the few.*" In other words, Spock was more concerned about saving the people on the Enterprise than himself.

And I think that's what Jesus is saying to his disciples, and us, that too much individualism can be disruptive on our journey. It can cause problems in the body of Christ. So how can we keep a healthy balance between the needs of the one, and the needs of the many?

Today we've reached the third mile marker on our Lenten "Journey to Hope." One of the ways we can keep this balance between personal fulfillment and the good of the many is to consider, oddly enough, our work. But why our work? Well, think about it. Where do we spend a large portion of our time during the day? At work. And most of us work with other people, don't we? We develop relationships with those people. Not only that, if it weren't for our jobs, we wouldn't be able to provide for ourselves and our families, NOR would we be able to

share our resources with others to help make this world a better place.

Now, I know that many of you are retired and aren't gainfully employed right now.....

Here's an example to help us grab this concept. Let's say a group travels together on a journey...say the space shuttle astronauts. Each astronaut on their journey to the ISS has their respective jobs. One's the captain, one's the mission commander, one's the navigator, another is payload bay officer, as well as scientists and mission specialists. Each astronaut brings special skills and training that contribute to the success of the mission. Each one contributes to the overall journey. Our destination isn't the ISS, but a place called HOPE. So how might our workplaces come into play here? How do you find HOPE in your workplace? And how can you take hope to work with you?

Well, I asked these question of you earlier in the week by email, and sure enough, I got twice as many responses as I did last week. Listen to some of the great responses I received:

"I shared God's love by showing patience, respect, and compassion towards doctors, physical therapists, and others...a group of us met for prayer at the start of every day."

"God has given me the very best job in the world...I have worked at Bethel Christian school from its inception in 1997...What a blessing to teach these children the love of Jesus."

“We try to spread hope by Christian example...offer hope when things seem darkest...it's what football coaches do at half time...or what the boss does in a sales meeting.”

“In work situations, we can make decisions that are morally right, treat one another respectfully, practice patience, and strive for the common good.”

“I was a customer service rep in communications...a voice on the end of a phone...a lot of people opened up to me and told me their troubles...I did a lot of listening and learned a lot.”

“My work is an extension of my mission...One of the most important things I do is listen...Sometimes that's all I can do and sometimes I can point them in the right direction...some have even asked me to pray with them as they face challenges in their lives.”

Let me remind you that God created us with a purpose—to care for one another and care for the Earth. And you could say that our life purpose, or mission, has evolved into the work we do.

The message I believe God wants us to come away with today is this: **That when we journey with others (and we're all in this together) we've got to think about others and not just about ourselves; to think collectively and just individually.** Sure, the journey can be challenging at times because we all have our different interests and ideas. But let's never forget that our destination is HOPE. And along the way we need to seek unity, to build relationships, and have genuine concern for the others on the journey with us.

Jesus said, *“Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve and not be served—and then to give his life in exchange for many who are held hostage.”*