

Dear Friends, many of you know that my favourite books of the New Testament are around St John. James and John were brothers and they once asked Jesus if they could call down fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village that rejected them and so their journey from fiery "Sons of Thunder" to humble, loving leaders offers a powerful lesson on speech! Rather than seeking to destroy or criticise those who opposed them they learned to replace vengeance with grace and focus on building others up. It is so easy to disguise our personal pride or anger as "righteous indignation." Jesus rebuked them, reminding them that His mission was to save lives, not destroy them. Perhaps, when we feel critical, we should evaluate our motives to ensure we are acting out of love rather than wounded ego. In Matthew 20, James and John (along with their mother) asked for the highest seats of power in Jesus' kingdom. This immediately caused tension and arguments with the other disciples. Criticism often stems from a desire to exalt ourselves at the expense of others. By teaching them that the greatest must be the servant of all, Jesus reframed how we view people—moving us away from judging peers and toward lifting them up. Ultimately, the harsh, critical edges of these disciples were smoothed. John, famously known for wanting to destroy his enemies, transformed into the "Apostle of Love". He earned this title due to his extensive writings emphasising Christ's love and the commandment to "love one another". In his later writings, he emphasises that if we claim to love God, we must also love our brothers and sisters rather than tearing them down. There is a lot to ponder here that should keep us reflecting throughout the summer. Keep cool! Prayers and blessings! Revd Chrissie 07803 134301 – rev.chrissiesmart@gmail.com