

Sunday 24th August 2025

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity / The Feast of St Bartholomew

Gospel Reading

Luke 22.24-30

The Dispute about Greatness

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

²⁸ 'You are those who have stood by me in my trials; ²⁹ and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Other Readings: Isaiah 43.8-13 Psalm 145.1-7 Acts 5.12-16

Homily

For many Christians this is a jarring moment. Jesus has just broken bread, shared the cup of wine, has spoken of betrayal, and here we find the disciples arguing – not about his words or what is to come, but about who is the greatest among them.

It feels dissonant, even absurd. But it speaks to two things: firstly, that the disciples are not immune to the human desire for recognition, status, importance, and secondly, that they recognise they will soon be leaderless, and believe that whoever is the greatest disciple will surely be the one to take on the responsibility, the mantle of leadership.

If we are honest, we too are not immune to the same desire the disciples had to feel important, to feel needed. How often do we fall into the same trap in our communities, our churches, in our daily lives, measuring ourselves against one another, seeking roles, not for the service they offer, but for the status they give, hoping to be seen, to be known, to be praised?

As to leadership for the missional cause, Jesus has told them that he is going away to prepare a place for them in the kingdom. They need a new leader so why wouldn't this be the greatest disciple amongst them? Is the greatest disciple Jesus' favourite? The most charismatic? The most organised? It is interesting that Jesus doesn't respond with rejection in this moment; he responds by reframing what it means to be a good leader, to be the greatest:

"Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves."

In God's kingdom, greatness is not about titles or authority, but humility and vulnerability. Whoever leads is the one who must stoop to serve, just as Jesus did. He has just shown them how to be a leader by kneeling to wash their feet before the meal they shared. The truly great are not those who are first in line, but those who wash feet, those who feed the hungry, those who love without condition or reward.

Yet Jesus will go still further in service to His people. He will go from this upper room to the garden of Gethsemane, where his disciples won't be able to keep awake. From Gethsemane, he will be put on trial and eventually go to Calvary. Jesus leads through the complete surrendering of himself to his Father's will for His life. He reigns in the Kingdom through sacrifice.

Jesus' words to his squabbling disciples are words of hope. "You are those who have stood by me in my trials." Despite their pride, their misunderstanding, and their coming failure, Jesus affirms their place in his kingdom.

Just as the disciples misunderstood Jesus, so we too sometimes misunderstand him, or we allow thoughts, and doubts, to permeate our minds that do not help us grow towards the kingdom of God. However, the wonderful truth we must remember is that, just as the disciples were assured of their place at God's table, we are similarly assured – we too have a place at the table. Jesus' love for his disciples allowed for God's grace to abound on the earth, and that grace is with us to this day. It is only through the love and grace of God that we can enter into the kingdom.

As you go out into the world this week, remember that Jesus taught us how to lead – with humility, vulnerability, as a servant; how can you be more like Jesus?

Amen.

Conversation Questions

1. Where do we seek greatness in the world's terms?
2. Where is Jesus calling us to serve instead of be served?
3. How might we become the youngest, the least, the servant?
4. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you?
What is it?
5. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Let your merciful ears, O Lord,
be open to the prayers of your humble servants;
and that they may obtain their petitions
make them to ask such things as shall please you;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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