

29. May 2024

## Lessons from the Lord

Mk 10:32-45

*The disciples were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise." James and John, the sons of Zeb'edee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And 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; 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." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Here Jesus speaks clearly of the death that awaits Him in Jerusalem. His disciples must know this, and the Scriptures testify that the Son of God willingly accepts death for us: "No one takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own accord" (Jn 10:18). He knows what awaits Him and, as He tells Peter in Gethsemane, He could have escaped death at any moment by simply calling on the legions of angels who would have come to His aid (cf. Mt 26:53). But the Lord does not only announce His death, He also announces His Resurrection.

And the disciples? We do not hear any reaction from them... Surely these words were beyond their capacity.

It was Peter who wanted to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem, and the Lord vehemently rebuked him (cf. Mt 16:22-23). The Son of Man wants to go this way because it is the mission the Father has given Him; because His desire is to glorify the Father and to redeem humanity.

One can imagine, and even seem to hear through the text, the silence and the shock of the disciples... Their beloved Lord spoke these dramatic words. They could not understand, so they remained silent. Perhaps they looked at each other, not knowing what to do. Who can listen to the beloved Lord speak of all the terrible things that await Him without being frightened? Probably they had barely heard the hopeful message that He would rise on the third day. Even when the news of Jesus' resurrection was brought to them later, they found it difficult to believe (cf. Lk 24:9-11). In the midst of the disciples' grief over Jesus' words to them, the announcement of His resurrection must have gone almost unnoticed.

A second moment in today's Gospel is the petition addressed to the Lord by the sons of Zebedee. Having acknowledged that Jesus is the Son of God, the two brothers hope to sit at His right and left hand in His glory. But the Lord teaches them a lesson: *"You do not know what you are asking for"*.

Here too we receive an important lesson from the Lord...

There are petitions that we can and should always address to Him: that people may be saved from eternal damnation, that we may grow spiritually, that He may give us our daily bread, that sinners may be converted, that we may be protected from misfortune and need, among many others...

But our petitions go beyond their limits when they invade the field that belongs exclusively to God; when we invade it, so to speak, with our desires and requests. The Lord therefore clearly rejects this request, adding that *"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"*.

This teaches us that when we make 'bold prayers' - which we certainly can and should do - we should know very well where our limits are. When we present our intentions to the Lord, and perhaps we have gone too far with our requests, we should add: '...if it is your holy will'.

The third point is the Lord's warning at the end of this Gospel, reminding us that true greatness in following Christ consists in serving God and our neighbour. In this way we become like the Lord, who "*did not come to be served, but to serve*".

It is a powerful word that corrects all self-centredness, all false claims to dominance and misconceptions of greatness, and brings to maturity in us that wonderful virtue we call 'humility'.