

Mark 10:35-45  
Pentecost 22B  
October 21, 2018  
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I've read recently that the presence of virtual beings in our lives--  
iPhone's Siri feature, and smart home devices like Amazon  
Alexa and Google Home--

The ever-growing presence of these is leading to some  
bad manners among people who use them.

And it's also not helping children learn how to address real people  
in their lives.

These devices receive our commands or our questions,

Like, "Alexa, play relaxing piano."

Or "Siri, what's the weather today?"

In our house, we often ask our Google Home to play music for us,

Or answer our questions, both random and pointed,

About anything in which we are interested.

Instead of going to our computer or phone and typing it in the  
Google search,

We can simply ask Google aloud.

For our devices are always listening. . .

Whether that's cool or scary, I won't go into right  
now.

But the point is,

We don't have to say "please" to Google, or Siri, or Alexa.

And we definitely don't have to say "thank you" or  
anything at all once they respond to us.

We've gotten our answer,

Our request was granted,

And we move on.

In the article I read about these devices and our manners,

It was noted that some parents are making a point to say  
“please” and “thank you” when talking to Alexa in their  
homes,

So that their children are hearing the polite way to ask  
for something,

To interact with someone who is helping you.

Even though Alexa and Siri are not real people. . .

Maybe we should speak to them like they are.

It strikes me in our Gospel today that the disciples treat Jesus  
kinda like we treat Alexa or Siri.

James and John say to Jesus,

“We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”

“Grant us to sit,

One at your right hand and one at your left,

In your glory.”

There’s no “please,”

Or “May we?”

It’s not really a request at all,

Even though they say they are asking.

“We want you to do this.”

“Grant it to us.”

We are trained to have manners,

To say “please” and “thank you,”

To offer respect by asking nicely for things.

And so the brothers James and John seem a little rude and  
assuming today.

But we honestly don't speak much differently to Jesus ourselves.

In our liturgy, we say,

“Grant us peace.”

“Hear our prayer.”

“Have mercy on us.”

Certainly these are requests and even pleas we make of our Lord,

But they're also kind of presumptuous.

Even bold.

These are pleas we make from the depths of our hearts.

Forgive us,

Renew us,

Lead us.

Save us.

The thing is,

It is deeply faithful to cry out to God in this way;

Because when we speak these words,

We are saying that we believe God will do these things!

God has promised to do these things,

And we trust that God will.

Because God keeps promises.

God keeps promises of glory,

and redemption,

and salvation.

God keeps promises of life abundant,

And life eternal.

And part of the promise is the reality of it all--

The other side of the coin,

The other piece of the picture.

The reality of glory is that there is also suffering.

The reality of redemption is that we desperately need it.

The reality of salvation is that there is something  
from which we need saving.

The reality of life abundant is that scarcity is often all we are able  
to see.

The reality of life eternal is that death still lurks and takes us.  
So there's this reality,

This other side,

The human, sin-stained side that exists alongside the  
promises of God.

It's a reality that Jesus names for James and John,

“The cup that I drink you will drink,

And with the baptism with which I am baptized,

You will be baptized.”

While Jesus' words about the cup and baptism certainly hold for  
us a connection to the sacraments of Communion and baptism,

He also seems to speaking of the suffering he will endure.

The cup of salvation is also the cup of his blood.

The baptism that washes clean is also a drowning flood.

We who live in the promises of God

Also live in the pain of suffering.

We who are unworthy recipients of the promises of God

Also are stuck in sin,

inevitable death,

and the grave.

The suffering of Jesus is part of the story, too.

The suffering of Jesus is part of the promise.

The suffering of Jesus leads to the glory.

And this suffering changes things for us.

We don't live in just the glory--

We also live in the suffering.

We witness suffering,

We experience suffering,

We cause suffering.

When we drink the cup,

When we receive baptism,

We acknowledge suffering at the same time that we  
claim the promised glory.

Jesus is reminding us that glory isn't all there is. . .

But glory is where it ends.

Today, Faith Promise Sunday, we recall the promise God makes  
to us--

The promise that, in and through Jesus Christ, we will live in  
glory.

The promise that God will grant us the victory.

The promise that God actually already has.

And claiming all of God's promise as true for us,

We can be bold like James and John,

And claim the glory over the suffering.

We can be bold and choose to live in abundance rather than  
scarcity.

We can be bold,

and we can make our own promise to God in our  
financial living and giving.

As Pastor Lyle noted for us last week,

In our response to God's gracious gifts,

We don't *have to* do anything--

We *get to* do everything!

The poet Anne Osdieck penned the following in response to  
today's Gospel:

Can we  
drink of your cup?

Can we do  
what you  
do?

No.

Certainly  
not on our own.

But  
through you,  
with you,  
and in  
you?

Yes.

With  
your beloved  
grace.

Grant us to drink the cup with you,  
and to become people

for others.

When we enter into Christ's suffering,

We do become people for others.

Our lives become for others.

Just as Christ became for us.

And the glory we receive,

The glory we are promised,

We can claim boldly just like James and John.

Without even saying "please."

And, in the way we live and serve and give,

Our lives sing out, "Thank You."