

Humble Yourself

Mark 10:35-37
Charlie Brackett

James and John came to Jesus saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want Me to do for you?" Jesus inquired. They answered, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."

Matthew 20:20 tells us these two brothers came with their mother, and she made the request in their behalf. There is, of course, no conflict here. Both writers have recorded for us the facts of what happened. Mark did not think it important to mention their mother. The incident centered upon the sons. The request was theirs, and the benefit, if granted, was theirs.

Not long before this, according to Matthew 19:28, Jesus had promised the apostles, they would "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" when He came in His glory. James and John remembered, but wanted more. They wanted the most honored seats among the twelve.

The request, however, was totally inappropriate. There is an interesting principle which governs relationships and status in the kingdom of God which they failed to recognize. That is, one who exalts himself will be abased, and one who humbles himself will be exalted. Being a Christian is all about serving others, not being served. James and John did not yet understand this principle though only a short time before Jesus had alluded to it with the words, "Many who are first will be last, and the last first." Over and over Jesus taught this lesson while He was with the apostles, but even toward the last when Jesus demonstrated the point by washing their feet, Peter objected still not getting the message.

It is not an easy lesson to learn. We cannot be ambitious for ourselves and succeed in God's kingdom. James said, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:10) All evidence indicates that the apostles finally learned; Peter certainly did. Listen to him at 1 Peter 5:6. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,.."

I know what you are going to say. I have the same trouble. Everything about our world is geared to pushing oneself ahead, getting what we can, achieving. But personal ambition has to go if you are going to be a Christian. You must be like Jesus. Humble. Serving. Self-sacrificing. And it will be worth it!