

*Re-Opening To Divine Presence:*

*"At My Greatest!"*

Mark 9:30-37, James 3: 13 – 4:3, 7-8a  
September 23, 2018

The disciples were doing the best they could as they traveled with Jesus.

Mark portrays the disciples, as he usually does, as "not quite getting it" and they have started arguing amongst themselves outside of earshot.

Should be reassuring to us for try as we may, we often don't get it either and don't want anyone else to know...so we switch the subject or pick an argument, bait and switch kind of tactics....to protect ourselves, too.

I can think of a lot of other responses Jesus could have had to what was going on...anger, frustration, blaming and shaming....been there?

But even as they dodge the deeper issues, talk behind his back, even in their humanness, Jesus never abandons them or cuts them off.

**He doesn't react to what they're doing but goes deeper to what they're really needing.** Remember from last week: respond able! He does the same with us.

They were following just outside of earshot arguing about who is the

greatest ...as if they/we have to prove we're loved...the *most!*

Did the disciples need to feel better than one another?

What would the criteria be for who is the greatest disciple?

~Did one say, well, I went to feed the poor,

~and another say, well, I traveled uphill in the snow all the way to town to visit the sick,

~and one say, well, he likes me best because he asked me to go to the garden to pray with him,

~and one say, well, I gave up the most to follow him?

I wonder how they were going about deciding who was the greatest. I wonder how we do.

Jesus helps them to know how to proceed in this argument by simply turning to a child who was already there with him, women and children and families right there with all of them....

he welcomes a child who has no outward power....and says this is what makes us great. More about that in a minute.

You see....

I don't think their struggle was really about who was the greatest. I don't think that's our struggle either.

I think they, even in the company of Jesus, they felt an emptiness inside.

We humans have an immense need for affirmation and we live in a world that doesn't give it easily. So, we create situations (we create!) where we can find the affirmation we need

by being powerful...  
even if it means  
putting someone else down,  
picking fights, drawing lines in the sand....as if then we won't need to face our real longings and lack of self-worth.

Here's where that James passage really comes into play.

We so often do murder parts of ourselves and others, set up disputes and arguments, try to fill a void in our lives at the expense of others.

We want what is easy. We want what will make us feel good quickly and bring us pleasure in the moment instead of really listening to our hearts, naming what we really need. Trusting others hear us.

When we ask God for help in fulfilling our deepest needs, we know it won't be a quick fix or a fast return. So, many of us simply don't ask.....we don't want to go there.

We're even willing to give up believing in a God rather than slow down, willing to resist our desire for instant gratification, resist being part of the solution rather than the problem, because that takes time and staying power.

We'd rather argue instead. *Arguing doesn't confront a thing...but it conflicts everything! **Re-assess!***

This is where kids have it all over adults. They know what they need. They ask for it. They have the innocence of trust to believe others really care about them,

and they will endure much to get their needs met, they won't give up even if positive channels of asking and

receiving are closed to them, so they must act up or out (our fault not theirs).

And *we* often act out too but whoa to us as we  
**manipulate rather than articulate!**

Children still believe deep inside that they matter enough for someone to address their needs. They do....matter!  
You do....matter!

## **Here at church/in our faith we are indeed learning...yet,**

\*So often I...we...each of us....go to war....instead of be at table with each other.

\*We hide behind false subjects to avoid real issues....at the dinner table at home.

\*We bait and switch or shame and blame...around the conference table at work.

\*We create false divisions rather than “own” our true agendas or needs...turning the tables on others.

We get all these little wars/conflicts going!

And we coulda’ had a confrontation instead! Go with our fronts and have a chance of filling up our neediness, addressing our needs...

by...telling the truth in **kindness with “I” statements.** But even a “just” confrontation doesn’t mean the issue resolves right then and there.

But at least everybody in the issue has the opportunity to own their own stuff and state their true need.

Only then does the subject have a chance of being the real issue! This is the place to begin to begin...to re-turn, to that inner home.

\*So when someone is continually late for meetings, the subject is not the issue.

\*When someone yells at you over and over, the subject is not the issue.

\*When someone expects more and more of you, the subject is not the issue.

\*The issue is almost always an unmet need within them that gets projected onto you in the form of a conflict.

*We each do this...project our issues on others, and sometimes...usually?  
we even know it!*

But, there’s so much we don’t know. We go so fast in our lives, how would we ever have time to know.....ourselves!

Inner Wisdom goes slow, slow enough to discover what it is you don’t want to know, don’t want to show.

Wisdom is about staying in relationship during the hard times...it’s about facing the situations we either create or find ourselves in.

Wisdom is being honest with yourself and acting with pure intentions, in ways that are

“peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

(Think of this in light of just today’s headlines!)

The subject...of who was the greatest...was not the issue.

**But Jesus doesn’t yell at them. He focuses them on the real issue by confronting them and asks them to look within to that childlike place within...**

**and so honor the emptiness that presses against them in ways that cause them to bicker about what wasn’t important....so they don’t have to deal with what is important!**

Take a deep breath, take the long view.

We get to re-set, re-start, re-adjust, re-open, re-do!

**To be truly whole, to *open to divine presence***

**....requires understanding and understanding requires staying in relationship**

**and that takes time and worshipful, intentional work.**

**It will indeed bring you to your knees!**

Are you willing to confront....your issues, confront your self?

Jesus came to help you change yourself from the inside out, to confront yourself and bring forward your wisdom addressing the big issues of your life...

rather than avoid them, blaming others for them, jumping all over others about them.

You can almost hear the sound of discouragement in Jesus’ voice when he says, “What were you guys arguing about?” (Oh please, re-focus!)

...hear it when he asks *you* what *you are* arguing about.

But Jesus doesn’t walk away mad, or go to war with you, or ignore you.

Instead of scolding, he gets closer and offers another way, another focus, helps name the real issues you can really give yourself to.

He draws near....God draws near!  
You draw near to God, please!

He sits you on his lap just as surely as he sits the child...welcomes you.

He welcomes each of us personally, one at a time, he does see each of us as the greatest, he honors the wisdom deep within (often easily seeable in children).

**And he doesn't want what is great in you to grate on others!**

Dave's wisdom from Monday night.

Making ourselves the center of the universe is a short-sighted agenda that quickly damages those around us and ourselves.

We deserve more...we can re-open and start living more fully again!

Draw near to God.

See your issues more honestly and express needs more gently.

Take a breath.....

This week, walk to Capernaum/Milwaukee/Oak Creek/Hales Corners with Jesus, quietly or sharing as you like.

As you arrive at your house together, tell him: "You know Jesus, the other day I was pumping myself up when I was talking to Sue or Rich or Jim or Sally, at that meeting.

I was trying to prove I was somebody. I so want to be heard. I guess I don't really feel very good about myself, so I'm pushing others around. Trying to make things happen my way.

Jesus, what should I do?

Would you pick me up and take me in your arms?

I really want to feel like your child good enough the way I am.

Jesus, just hold me for a few minutes.

Give me the courage to be who you've made me to be...that would be really great!

Who can help me Lord? I knew that...give me courage to ask for the support I need."

Every one of us is great.

Every one of us has that child-like quality of trust and humility and honesty still within us longing to be born out.

**Every one of us know how to listen, to stay alongside, to hold back judgement, to make sure our own need for affirmation is being met at no one else's expense.**

To be the greatest, you only need a heart full of grace...for self, then others.

A soul generated by love.

And I add: to be great you only need the desire to connect with others and receive life's wonders...as a child does.

Re-mind, re-connect, re-invigorate, re-acquaint, re-move,  
re-awaken, re-vive, re-frame, re-group, re-pond,  
re-member, re-imagine, re-frain, re-new, re-purpose, re-lax, re-align, re-purpose, re-  
group, re-deem, re-store, re-ally!