

## MESSAGE, MARCH 28 & 29, 2009

Lessons: Jeremiah 31: 31-34, Hebrews 5: 1-10, Mark 10: 35-45

Intro. In the movie 'Patten' which according to historians is very accurate. A striking contrast between two famous WWII generals is set up. General George S. Patten played by George C. Scott is brash, vain, dashing with his riding whip and ivory handled pistols. The Nazis considered Patten their most dangerous opponent. According to one scene in the movie, Patten was willing to gamble the lives of his own troops in order to make a name for himself. Patten, deliberately put his men in the way of enemy fire in order to beat his ALLY. Yes, you heard me right. In order to beat his ally though rival British Field Marshal Montgomery in the capture of a strategic city.

On the other hand there was General Omar Bradley played by Karl Malden. He also was a very skilled officer, but didn't seek the headlines like Patten. Bradley just wanted to get the war over and get his men home. In the same battle where Patten was trying to outdo his ally Montgomery, Bradley was out in the battlefield front lines with his troops, dodging shrapnel, risking his own life for his boys. Patten's nickname was the General's General. Bradley's nickname was the Soldier's General. They represent two totally opposing world views =

### **SUPER STAR OR SERVANT?**

Jesus Christ, did not come to grab the headlines. Jesus Christ, did not come to make a famous name for Himself. Jesus Christ came to be our Savior, the sinners Savior. And that is what I want to talk to you about a little bit today based upon our Gospel lesson, Mark 10, particularly the last verse, verse 45:

**THE SON OF MAN/JESUS CAME NOT TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY.**

I. In our human nature we all live with a mistaken identity = SUPER STAR and we transfer our mistaken identity upon Jesus, also and so we can become disillusioned, disappointed with Jesus and His Church. Jesus, Himself doesn't have that problem of mistaken identity. Jesus knows His own identity very, very well. Jesus knows why He, Almighty God humbled Himself to become our Savior. The incident of our Gospel lesson with the sons of Zebedee, James and John occurs we're told in the verses just preceding our lesson as Jesus and His disciples were on their way UP to Jerusalem 'with Jesus leading the way'. Going UP to Jerusalem would have conjured up in the disciples minds of going UP like King David of the past. Going UP to Jerusalem meant obviously going UP with honor, UP with power, UP with authority, going UP like all the great Kings of the past to conquer Jerusalem with force and military might and destruction.

So, it is reasonable for the James and John to request 'one to sit on Jesus right and the other on His left'. Jesus, was their SUPER STAR going UP to Jerusalem.

Jesus, had a very different view of things however. He knew His going UP to Jerusalem meant He was actually going down to humiliation and death. In the verses immediately preceding our lesson we read Jesus saying 'the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death ... will mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. Three days later He will rise'. Jesus Word's collaborate our epistle lesson, Hebrews 5 describing Jesus' humiliation 'Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears ... though He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered'. GOING UP TO BE SUPERSTAR OR SERVANT?

Our human nature thinks the way UP is to make others lower. To look good we measure ourselves against others. It's the General Patten syndrom at the expense of others even our allies we want to be the General's General. Jesus, on the other hand shows us God's view of greatness, God's view of glory = humiliation, submission, reverence, prayers, tears, suffering, sacrifice, servanthood being the Soldiers General. And this servant/ humiliation of Jesus is mostly clearly seen when we see who it is taking our place, who it is being our substitute upon the cross = it's God incarnate, God in flesh and blood being crucified for us. The God of all Creation going UP being nailed UP on the cross in the place of His sinful creatures = you and me, SUPER STAR OR SERVANT?

II. We can't be to awfully harsh against Jesus' disciple, James and John, however. They simply are verbalizing what all of our human natures believe. Though Jesus had clearly taught them, just as we know to pray 'Thy will be done, heavenly Father', these two ask that it's their will they want done, 'Grant us to sit, one at Your right and one at Your left in Your glory'. I'm sure James and John were as excited as children making a Christmas or birthday list for me, me, me.

But, even when we get our own way, what happens? Our way keeps changing doesn't it, we're never satisfied. We're always asking for more and usually at the expense of others.

Besides do you think James and John really knew what they're asking, to receive Jesus' cup and baptism? I don't think they do any more than most people today don't really know what it means to follow Jesus Christ and be His Church. Cup in the Bible is an analogy to what a person's life is full of and baptism means what washes over a person, or what is applied to a person. Jesus' cup and baptism, what His life is full of and washed with is humiliation, suffering, rejection, torture, denial, betrayal, a cross, death. That is Jesus' glory, you see. James and John have mistaken identities of themselves and they transfer their

mistaken identities upon Jesus. They don't understand Jesus' cup and baptism and glory at all. Neither do the other 10 disciples when they become indignant 'ticked off' at James and John. In these 12 disciples of Jesus we see the sad truth of our own human identity since Adam and Eve, it's all about me. Our human nature wants to be General Patten, a General's General that tries to outsmart and outdo and outmaneuver his own allies at the expense of other people. Instead of General Bradley a Soldier's General, that means we have to be in the front lines of the battle field. That means we have to stick out necks and be willing to die for Jesus and His Church. That means we have to get off our white horse and fight in hand to hand combat, face to face combat against our enemies, our human nature and this world and Satan who always wants us to be #1. And in the process of that spiritual battle we are going to be wounded and bloodied and injured and even experience death of self for the sake of others, for the sake of Jesus, for the sake of His Church, Immanuel Lutheran, Plainview.

III. Jesus' matter-a-fact response to James and John is remarkable isn't it? Jesus does not even scold His disciples, that would have been my way of handling those guys, put them in their place. Jesus, instead humbly teaches God's Word as His battle weapon, the sword of the Spirit as Ephesians 5 pictures God's Word. Jesus teaches His servant hood of drinking His cup full of our sins and being completely washed in our condemnation upon the cross. The very reason He was going UP to Jerusalem. Jesus IS a conquering King, but through being our Suffering Servant and that is what we are going to shout our Hosanna's about Palm Sunday, next Sunday.

Jesus inverts the pyramid doesn't He? Jesus turns everything upside down and inside out from our sinful nature's world view of how things are supposed to work out. All of you I'm sure have heard of the Ponzi scheme of the Wall Street trader guy Madoff. Madoff was simply practicing a world view which has been around for a long time and which permeates our entire society, ever since Adam and Eve wanted to be their own gods in the Garden of Eden. It's really fundamentally the cause of the entire collapse of the big Wall Street bankers, it's the Patten syndrome of wanting to be the General's General. The bottom of the pyramid is all the people who were over mortgaged by deception, lies, fraud, so the Big Shots UP in Wall Street could rise higher and higher on the peak of the pyramid. You can achieve immense fortunes and power and authority and glory UP on top of life's pyramid. But, all human sin whether it's General Patton's arrogance, whether it's Wall Street's greed or whether it is our own arrogance and greed comes due, there is a final accountability and judgment, soon or latter.

Jesus, our God works entirely different from the greed and self serving world or of our Adam and Eve human natures. Jesus, inverts the pyramid. Teaching His disciples and us through His Word and His

Sacraments = ordinary water of Baptism, ordinary bread and wine of Communion, ordinary words in a book, the Bible that real authority, real power, real glory are demonstrated when we're put at the bottom of the heap. God's New Testament/Covenant of Jeremiah fulfilled in Jesus changes our entire identity 'I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more'. As forgiven people we are forgiving people = we are people who serve because Jesus has first served us. We are people who sacrifice because Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us. Through Jesus Christ our entire world view, our entire identity is changed and inverted. Jesus identity through His Word and Sacrament becomes our identity – the middle word of the Holy CHRISTian Church is Christ. Jesus inverts us self serving sinners through His Word and Sacraments into His = SUPERSTAR SERVANTS, the Soldiers General. Amen