A Different Kind of Power
Mark 10:35-45

This passage in Mark reveals a conversation Jesus had with two of his leaders, James and John. They want status and power, but Jesus speaks of *A Different Kind of Power*.

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” 36 And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” 37 And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

38 But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” 39 They replied, “We are able.” Then 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.”

41 When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. 42 So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

James and John had the wrong idea about power. Think of the misuse of power in our modern world;

dictatorships, spouse and elder abuse, fraud, racism, thief, classism, cover-up, sexism, greed, mass shootings, child abuse, genocide

We’ve got a problem with power.
Jesus nicknamed James and John, *Sons of Thunder.* (Mark 3:17) Apparently, they were “hotheads!” There’s a story of Christ sending messengers ahead of him into a village of the Samaritans to prepare for his coming. The Samaritans would not receive him, so when James and John heard of it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” (Luke 9:54) In other words, “If people won’t receive us, we’ll just torch them!” That’ll increase church membership!

The nickname is tongue-in-cheek. “Sons of Thunder.” James and John want some power. “Let’s get something done! Let’s show them who we are!” But it’s *A Different Kind of Power.*

Bill Turner, a businessman in Columbus, Georgia, wrote *A Journey Toward Servant Leadership.* (Smyth & Helwys Pub. 2000) In the foreword, Bishop Marion Edwards tells of a Vacation Bible School class in which the teacher had taught the children, “Here is the church. Here is the steeple. Open the door and here are the people.” You remember that. Here’s what Bishop Edwards writes;

> On the last day of Bible School, a new boy joined the class. The teacher didn’t know him but noticed immediately that he had only one arm. She worried how the other children might treat him but the class went beautifully and he fit in quite well.

> It came time for the children to do the “Here is the church” exercise and the teacher was suddenly struck by the thought, “The new boy is going to be left out. He cannot grasp two hands together.” Before she could redirect the class, they started the exercise with all their enthusiasm. She looked out the corner of her eye and saw a young girl reaching to clasp the fingers of the little boy’s single arm. The child said to her new friend, “Let’s make a church together.”

It’s *A Different Kind of Power!*

The power Jesus is talking about is not just people with two hands reaching down to those who have one. It’s not charity. It’s the power that comes from all people making a contribution, two hands/one hand, rich or poor, as equals, serving one another in Christ.

*Laurie Beth Jones wrote a little book entitled, *Jesus CEO.* (Hachette Books, 1985). She tells of a story she heard about a young man set to run in a 100-meter race in the Special Olympics in Dallas, Texas.

> He had trained for months but when the gun finally sounded, he leapt out in front of the rest and came tumbling down right in front of the starting block. The other racers, each as eager as he was to compete in
this event, nevertheless stopped running their own race and turned back to help him. The crowd came to their feet as his competitors lovingly lifted him up and then walked arm in arm across the finish line together. (pp. 289-290).

We’ve seen that display of A Different Kind of Power before, but not enough. It’s rare. We are more prone to see bullying, posturing, intimidating, self-aggrandizement. That’s not even true power. It may be over-compensation. It may be an attempt to cover weakness, but it’s not true power. True power has the heart of a servant.

True power is rooted in the value of the other. Those “special” people in the Special Olympics knew that “Nobody wins until we all win.” How different would the world be if we all lived by that code? Those “special kids” knew what Jesus was saying, ‘… and whoever wishes to be first among you must be servant of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve…’ (Mark 10:44-45a)

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Many of you will remember what happened 13 years ago at the West Nickel Mines School in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. This was the article carried by the news media.

Dozens of Amish neighbors came out Saturday to mourn the quiet milkman who killed five of their young girls and wounded five more in a brief, unfathomable rampage. Charles Carl Roberts, IV, 32-years old, was buried in his wife’s family plot behind a small Methodist church, a few miles from the one-room schoolhouse he stormed Monday. About half of perhaps 75 mourners on hand were Amish.


That’s A Different Kind of Power. Some would say it was weakness. You should retaliate. Punish. Show force in return for force. Surely there must be justice in the world, but not at the expense of mercy. Jesus redefines power.

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The antithesis of Christ is a What’s-In-It-For-Me? attitude. We’ve all seen that attitude kill marriages, families, businesses, churches, medical practices, law firms, classrooms, football teams, friendships, and even nations.

On this Memorial Day weekend, we remember those Americans who gave their lives for the defense of freedom and the pursuit of justice, not only for our nation, but around the world. They would have never asked, “What’s in it for me?” There will be no sacrifice in any arena of life if that’s your life question. True power is servanthood.
Like many of you, I grew up watching the *Wizard of Oz*. *Dorothy* and the *Tin Man*, the *Scarecrow* and the *Lion* finally get to *Oz* to make their requests to the *Wizard*. *Toto*, Dorothy’s little dog, goes over to the *Wizard’s* throne and pulls back the curtain to expose a little old man standing at the console talking into a microphone and manipulating the levers. He’s pretending to be a great *Wizard*. It’s a sham.

Dorothy says, “*Why, you are a bad man!*” to which the *Wizard* responds, “*No – I’m a good man, just a bad Wizard!*” (Bennett Sims, *Servanthood*, p. 30-31)

Power is not always what it appears to be. You can pretend to have it when you really don’t. You can look for it in others when it’s really within yourself. You can use it to elevate yourself, or to serve others.

Jesus pulls back the curtain and exposes the facade of power that James and John seek. He points **all** of us to *A Different Kind of Power*;

‘...whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...’ (Mark 10:43b-45a)

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Congregation: **Amen**