



**October 22, 2006**

Preaching: Rev. Ronni S. Verboom

Mark 10:35-45

## “Greedy for Glory”

I have two sons and two daughters. They are all grown now, but when they were kids they drove me nuts every time we rode in the family van. Our old Dodge Ram van had plenty of room in the back, but only three doors: the driver’s door, the front passenger’s door, and one sliding door that provided access to all the back seats. The rule was: all kids ride in the back. So, four kids eager to get in the vehicle and start moving, faced only one door.

Let me tell you, each departure was a drama. It’s as though our van was a spacecraft blasting off to another habitable planet seconds before the earth was going to implode. Eight legs and eight arms scrambled to the vehicle, with plenty of screaming and shoving. The goal: to be first, to be ahead of the others, to actually seize control of the door, open it and climb aboard FIRST.

My kids all remember this. It was a significant part of their childhood. It’s gratifying to hear them puzzled by it now. “Why did we care so much? It was crazy! We just had to be first- it was so stupid!”

So. Were my kids the only people to be like this? Hardly. Think about our Gospel for today. It appears that James and John were like my kids. James and John wanted to be first. They wanted to have control and power in the kingdom Jesus kept talking about. James and John were greedy for glory.

It’s heartbreaking that this conversation took place shortly before Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus and the disciples had been traveling together as Jesus healed, taught, and reached out to children and outcasts. Then he took his closest friends aside to prepare them for the hard times ahead. He said he’d be betrayed. He said he’d be arrested. He said he’d be mocked and spit upon. He said he’d be flogged and killed. Then he said three days later, he would rise.

Check this out today—open your Bible to Mark 10, and you’ll find these details in the verses just before today’s reading.

So- Jesus predicted all this torture and what did his two close friends do? They showed nothing but self-interest. They didn’t express sorrow or concern. Their attitude was completely a “what about me?” attitude. It seems almost as though they thought, “Hey, if Jesus is going to die soon, we’d better get in our requests before he kicks the bucket.”

Jesus was a means to an end: GLORY. They were greedy for glory.

Are we ever like this? You know we are. We need to look at ourselves in order to really be Christ-followers.

Just coming to worship, listening to music, feeling the power of the Holy Spirit when we sing--- these are all great, but this is NOT all there is to following Jesus.

We need to examine ways WE are greedy for glory- ways WE try to be first.

-Who do you sit with at lunch, whether it’s in the middle school or in the corporate cafeteria?

-Who do you invite over to your home?

-What “career” or type of work appeals to you?

-How do you spend your free time?

-How do you spend your money?

-How do you behave when you’re “in line”, whether it’s at the checkout line at Jewel, or driving on the expressway?

Being first, or at least ONE of the first, often directs our behavior. Hey, it’s great to have an I-Pass on the tollways, isn’t it? At Disney World you can get a speed pass, to jump on a ride ahead of the folks in line. Even ski areas have started this—letting you buy a special pass to cut into the lift lines.

So- why can’t we have this? What’s so terrible about a little glory? We all want to shine sometimes, to be respected or admired. What’s so bad about that?

It’s not. It’s not bad. It’s just that Jesus has a different standard for greatness- Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be great among you must be a servant.”

Please hear this: Jesus has a place of honor and glory for you. Caring for others, feeling love and compassion for them, discovering the joy of giving rather than grasping in greed: THIS is the place of honor and glory Christ delights in giving you.

When we serve, give and share in love and humility, God is glorified.

Then WE shine with that glory.

We don't need to be greedy.

There's enough glory for all.

We so often operate out of a fear of scarcity. God calls us to operate out of trust in his abundance.

There's a wonderful old story about this truth. It's called "Desert Pete's Well:

A rundown hut stood near a seldom-used trail in a desert in California. Nearby was a well, the only source of water for miles around. Attached to the pump was a can with a message inside, written in pencil on brown wrapping paper.

This was the message . . .

This pump is all right as of June. I put a new sucker washer into it and it ought to last five years. But the washer dries out and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork end up. There's enough water in it to prime the pump but not if you drink some first. Pour in about ¼ and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium fast and pump for all your worth. You'll git water. The well never has ran dry. Have faith. When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller.  
Desert Pete

P.S. Don't go drinking the water first! Prime the pump with it and you'll git all you can hold. And next time you pray, remember that God is like the pump. He has to be primed. I've given my last dime away a dozen times to prime the pump of my prayers, and I've fed my last beans to a stranger while saying Amen. It never failed yet to git me an answer. You got to git your heart fixed to give before you can be give to.

Today we begin our focus on estimates of financial giving for the coming year. As we look forward to the ministries Christ is calling us to carry out in 2007, this story of Desert Pete can inspire us. Jesus calls us to be generous, not greedy, to give trusting in

his abundance. As we do, the glory of God in Jesus Christ fills us and shines through us.

Biff Staples, Chair of our Finance Committee, has a challenge for us this morning:

*(Invite Biff to share.)*

Friends, not only is this church counting on you, Christ is counting on you to spread his good news and do his work! May his Spirit teach and inspire us to do this!  
AMEN!!

Message from Biff Staples:

## WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Our pledge campaign starts today. Our church typically never receives enough offerings to cover its projected operating yearly spending. Year after year, we have had to delay or reduce spending on what we were planning, because offerings did not meet expenses. Some say "This is typical for a church". But, I do not think Baker Memorial United Methodist Church is "typical" or "average". I believe it is well above "average". But to fulfill this vision, WE need to prioritize our hearts and our giving. WE need to put the Lord first. WE need to think about what is really important to us.

Is it . . .

- Christian Education of our young people?
- Adult Christian Education?
- Helping the needy? Such as...
  - Meals for Lazarus House
  - Stuff the Turkey
  - Angel Tree outreach
  - Shelter Assistance
  - Salvation Army bell ringing
  - Food Pantry Items
  - Habitat for Humanity
- Youth Mission Trips?
- Missionary Support? Including...
  - Our new refugee family from Myanmar
  - Helen Shepherd-missionary to Mongolia
- Someone at church when you need help?
- Christian friendship & activities for youth?
- Confirmation

Meaningful Worship Experiences?

Traditional

Worship in Message, Metaphors, Music and More?

Successful short term fundraising campaigns? For example...

Redbird Mission School bus Fund

Building needs/building endowment fund

Various Music Ministries? A wide variety consisting of...

Cherubs

Wesley Singers

Baker Youth Ensemble

Chapel Choir

Chancel Choir

Men's Ensemble

Chapel Bell Choir

Chancel Bell Choir

Instrumental Ensembles

Holiday Brass Ensembles

Stephen Ministries?

Shut-in Visitation?

Hospital Visitation?

Community Outreach?

Prayer chains to pray for YOU?

Senior Activities?

The Endowment Funds?

Walk to Emmaus retreat support and weekly accountability reunion

Groups?

College Scholarship availabilities?

Bereavement Support?

Vacation Bible School?

Fiesta!

Small Group Ministries?

Scouting?

United Methodist Women?

United Methodist Men?

Football ministry and golf league ministry?

Go Bears!!

Beautiful facility in which to worship our Lord?

These are just some of the things that have been prepared for us by those who came before us . . . the Saints... and expanded upon by our generations. The bottle has been left full for us. Let us not drink from that bottle. Let us use what is inside to prime the pump, so that we can enjoy and share all that is available. And after we've quenched our thirst and tasted life, let us not forget to leave the bottle full for others, just as the Saints did for us.

In the next day or two, you will receive an envelope containing the pledge campaign information. This year's campaign is focused and direct. It contains a letter about our church, the story of Desert Pete and the need to prime the pump, a pledge sheet, and a return envelope. Please estimate your giving for next year. Complete the pledge form and return it to church. We need YOUR pledge to finance our ministries. We need YOU to think about What's Important. We are counting on YOU! Thank-you!