

The Feast of St. James (Sixth Sunday after Trinity)

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

- [0 : 0 0] There was a long-time Anglican priest in our diocese who died several years ago who used to say that the ministry draws two types of men.
- Those who are workaholics and those who are lazy. The latter are attracted to the ministry for the praise and adoration of others, believing that their position of authority provides them with respect and power.
- Such people want to be seen, they want to be in the limelight, but behind the scenes they are not dependable nor are they trustworthy. As I thought about our gospel text this morning, those words kept ringing in my ears.
- We heard here in Matthew chapter 20 how the mother of James and John asked that her son sit at the right and left hand of our Lord.
- She was asking that they be given a position of authority and honor. Jesus answers by saying, you do not know what you ask.
- [1 : 1 4] Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? The cup and the baptism that our Lord mentions here has to do with his suffering and death.
- But these disciples do not understand this as they boldly answer Jesus by saying, we are able.
- We go on to read that their request and their answer draws anger from the other disciples. The disciples see this as presumption and posturing at its worst.
- Jesus then tells James and John that they will drink of the cup that he drinks from and that they will be baptized with the baptism he will receive.
- But they still do not understand that this is not about elevation. It's about humiliation. It's about suffering and death.
- [2 : 2 1] It's about the cross. Today we celebrate the life and ministry of St. James the Elder or sometimes called St. James the Greater.
- The term greater does not mean he was more important than the other James who wrote the epistle that bears his name. No, this James was the brother of St. John the Evangelist who authored the final gospel as well as three epistles and the book of Revelation.
- And James and John were given the name sons of St. John the Crusoe by our Lord for their relentless courage and their zeal.
- But James would learn what it means to follow Jesus, which is not about power. It's not about honor. It's about taking up the cross. It's about following Christ with humility and grace.
- At the end of our gospel reading here in Matthew chapter 20 verses 27 and 28, we heard those words from our Lord. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.
- [3 : 3 5] Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Ministry in the kingdom of God is not about us.

It's not about being front and center, nor is it simply wearing a clerical collar. It's not about recognition or receiving praise from others.

It's not about pretending that we have greater insight into the mind and heart of God. No, it's about dying. It is about dying to our own ego and our own pride.

It's about being teachable, submitting ourselves to Christ and his church. It's about being people that faithfully confess our sins, pray, and faithfully receive the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

It's about loving God and loving our neighbor and seeing ourselves as servants for Christ and for others. It's about service to others, getting outside of our own comfort zones so that we exalt Christ and we lift up others.

[4 : 57] St. James certainly came to understand this. After our Lord's resurrection and ascension, James went to Spain where he preached the gospel.

Tradition tells us that he had little success at first and even became a bit discouraged. But he learned that faithfulness is the way of the cross.

It's not circumstances. It's not living on the mountaintop highs. It's in the valleys. It's not about worldly success or good results.

And after diligently working in Spain, eventually people began responding to Christ in this rather remote area of the Roman Empire.

After 10 years of slugging through ministry with disappointments and with struggles, his earthly ministry would conclude with St. James participating in that baptism and in that cup that our Lord spoke of.

[6 : 09] We heard from our epistle text here in Acts chapter 12, how King Herod, that is Agrippa I, King Herod had James killed by the sword.

James was beheaded in A.D. 44. What's interesting is that James and his mother, they got their original wish, what they desired.

James was the first. James was the first of the apostles to be martyred for the faith. This zealous disciple paid the ultimate price of following our Lord.

He did not receive the fanfare and the accolades of others. No, he was the first of the apostles that ended with a sword being put to his neck and dying for the faith.

But the story does not end there. Spain did become a fertile ground for the gospel where the Christian faith spread like wildfire.

[7 : 21] That famous phrase from Tertullian, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, truly describes the life and the ministry of St. James.

St. James. And he now prays for us before the throne of God. He prays that we might be faithful to the very end.

St. James demonstrates that faithfulness is the call for all baptized Christians. St. James's voice joins the chorus of those around the throne of God chanting endlessly.

St. James's voice joins the Lord. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. Amen.

Dear friends, may we imitate the life, the sacrifice of this extraordinary saint by giving ourselves to the service of God and to the service of others while we yet live here on earth.

[8 : 36] Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen.