

**Sermon Notes – October 20, 2024**  
**The Holy Gospel of St. Mark 10: 35-45**  
**Peace Lutheran Church**  
**“Your Kingdom Come”**

The great theme for this day is what it means to follow Jesus. As we might expect of the disciples in Mark, they get it wrong over and over again. James and John ask for the most honored seats (although they do show confidence that Jesus will end up well), but Jesus indicates that His authority is limited. And in fact, the reader may realize that He is completely redefining glory: the places the disciples ask for may be those of the two thieves on Golgotha, and the cross is Jesus' throne. Certainly, He warns them that following Him means sharing His fate: rejection, suffering, emptiness. Jesus' ministry, in fact, is to be a servant - of God and of others. And to follow Him means to share that service. Despite what the hymn says, the cross is not traded for a crown; the cross is the crown.

The Servant Song from Isaiah certainly echoes the gospel reading with its emphasis on suffering and self-emptying service. But the ambiguity of the first reading also fits with today's gospel. It is not clear whether the servant in the song is intended to be the king, the nation of Israel personified, or the prophet himself. Like Jesus and His followers, these three figures have a close enough connection that what is true of one is likewise true of the others.

Despite Job's confidence in the reading from last week - that God would provide an explanation that a reasonable person could understand - today God reminds him rather forcefully that there are things beyond human ability and human understanding. This is unsettling. However, it is also in line with Jesus' own declaration that there are things (His final companions, the dating of His return) that are beyond His control and even beyond His knowledge. While we humans can, do, and should keep stretching our range of knowledge, our grasp will never be complete. Part of our mortality is our finitude.

As the author of Hebrews would affirm, however, Jesus' incarnation and identification with us means that the word from heaven will no longer be simply, "Its a God thing; you wouldn't understand." That strict line distinguishing creature from Creator becomes poorly defined, and in Hebrews it is perhaps eliminated altogether. Our mediator has experienced finitude and mortality and remains our councilor of attorney, whose victory is certain. The Melchizedek mentioned is the priest-king of Jerusalem who blessed Abraham and gave bread and wine; that office was then claimed by the Davidic kings.