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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

November 8, 2015

*“Whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all, for the Human One didn’t come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many people.”*

Mark 10:44, 45 (Common English Bible)

Two of Jesus’ disciples, James and John, have a favor to ask of their Lord; when he came into his Kingdom they asked for the best seats in the house. Remarkably, there is present no sense of embarrassment. The request is impudent, presumptuous and, undeniably, selfish. Yet, the request is true to human nature as it is revealed throughout every generation. Seeking position, power and recognition is a well-established value that seems hardwired into the human psyche. So here it is seen even among Jesus’ disciples – the desire to leverage an opportunity to serve inflated egos and personal ambition. Personal fitness for what they ask isn’t a consideration.

This love of power and desire for notice is one of the most insatiable of all human urges. It is also a moral problem that is wrestled with throughout the pages of our Bible. Look at Jesus’ response to James and John who jostled to obtain it: “Whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all.” What a reversal of current standards! For Jesus, no one can be truly great whose life is not viewed in terms of service to another. Our highest self is achieved only through humility and assuming the posture of servant. It is recognizing any position of authority as an opportunity for advancing the common good. What Jesus offers is a life redeemed from pettiness and crudeness.

Naturally, this new understanding of power and position requires some imagination. A world view that shifts from domination by a few over the many must give way to another – one where the world’s foundation is spiritual and the knowledge that might is powerless to establish anything that lasts. Ultimately, this is God’s world and God settles nothing by might and sheer power. Our destiny is in something deeper and more enduring than power. We see what that is in his cross. Jesus demonstrates that genuine power is one that changes people from the inside out. Love overcomes hate, gentleness depletes the energy of force and people become more responsive to one another, building trust and partnerships.

I do wonder from time to time how the disciples’ responded to this teaching. It is not a popular lens to view life nor one most people would want. Jesus is free of pride and arrogance because he recognizes his dependence upon God. And in our best moments we know that if we lived as Jesus – with submission to God – the world would be an infinitely better place.

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