**Twelve – Wk 4 – James: The Greater**

**We are walking in the disciples' footsteps - exploring standout moments with Jesus and what we can learn about being a disciple.**

**Mark 3:13 And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons.**

**16 He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**

**They were not the most gifted or qualified, but God took these ordinary people and did extraordinary things.**

**THE TWELVE: All four gospels and Acts list the twelve.**

**The lists are slightly varied as nicknames and surnames were used.**

**1. Simon (Peter) - Son of Jonah / 2. Andrew (Simon's brother)**

**3. James - Son of Zebedee / 4. John (James’s brother)**

**5. Philip / 6. Bartholomew (Nathanael)**

**7. Matthew (Levi) / 8. Thomas (Didymus = the twin)**

**9. James / 10. Jude (Judas/Joses/Thaddeus)**

**11. Simon (the Zealot) / 12. Judas Iscariot (the traitor)**

**They were called as disciples and became Apostles.**

**\*\* Today, the first of the Apostles to die for Jesus – James.**

**What we know:**

* **Raised in Bethsaida (like Peter & James) moved to Capernaum**
* **He was the older brother of John and a son of Zebedee**
* **Zebedee was married to Salom, Mary’s sister** 
  + **Matt 27:56 (Mom) Mark 15:40 (name), John 19:25 (Mary’s sister)**
  + **James and John were Jesus’ cousins**
  + **Their father and mother later became followers of Jesus**
* **He was a former disciple of John the Baptizer like his brother (Jo 1, Matt 4, Acts 1:21-22). BTW – Johnny B was also Jesus' cousin**
* **Fishermen by trade and partners with Peter and Andrew**
* **He is one of the first four people (w/ John, Peter, and Andrew) who at the same time left everything to follow Jesus. (Luke 5, Mt 4:21-22)**

**\*\* He was part of the “big three” inner circle.**

**He saw things the other disciples did not (extra miracles, teachings, the transfiguration, taken to the garden with Jesus to pray, etc.)**

**His personality:**

* **Nicknamed by Jesus, “Boa-ner-ges,” = “sons of thunder”**

**(total metal band name)**

* **He had a thunderous personality – much like John the Baptist.**
* **Known to have fierce judgment. \* Deeply committed to Jesus.**
* **Usually mentioned after Peter – it assumed he is second to Peter.**

**Today - two stories stand out with James.**

**\*\*\* Sons of thunder**

**We see this in - Luke 9:51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. (It was near the time for his crucifixion – heading to Jerusalem passing through Sameria) 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. 53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. (Headed to Jerusalem for Passover, they did not want anything to do with them. They were mixed Jewish-Gentile people and did not recognize the Passover or the Temple.)**

**54 And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” (How dare they!! Do they know who you are! Do you want God to kill them?) 55 But he turned and rebuked them. (of course, not - that’s foolish. Some manuscripts, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save *them.*”) 56 And they went on to another village.**

* **Righteous anger – is right**

**He was quiet and meek, yet deeply convicted by sin to act.**

**Righteous anger is to love what God loves and hate what God hates.**

**God gave us anger as a gifted emotion. It motivates us to take quick action. But motivated selfishly and without compassion, anger becomes sinful and destructive.**

**Paul writes – Ephesians 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not:**

**Examples of both righteous anger and sinful anger…**

* **Righteous anger – must be tempered**

**Strong personalities are important and needed in leadership – but they must be subject to the Spirit and the attitude of Christ.**

**Zeal must be tempered with meekness, lest it bulldoze people.**

**What the “Boanerges brothers” suggested was inappropriate even though it was true that the Samaritans were wrong, sinful, disrespectful, and worthy of judgment. Then why were J&J rebuked?**

**Two issues with their statement:**

**1. God is the judge of the wicked – not us.**

**1 Cor 5:12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside.**

**Romans 12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”**

**2. Their righteous judgment had turned into sinful pride and hate.**

**James 4:6 - “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”**

**They were condemning the pride and arrogance of the Samaritans, but they themselves had become prideful/hateful.**

**1 Peter 5:5 Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”**

**Unfortunately, we do the same thing as James and John - condemning the wicked and in our righteous anger against sin – we become hateful, harsh, wishing death upon people.**

**They wanted to hate their enemies, but Jesus has called us to love our enemies, bless them, and pray for them.**

**This pride shows up in another story with James and John.**

**Sons of Ambition - an embarrassing story.**

**By this point, they have been walking with Jesus several years. They loved Jesus, but were getting a bit too comfortable…**

**Mark 10:32 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. 34 And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”**

**Jesus knowing clearly what was to happen, is leading the way! But they were following, afraid and confused.**

**(So, they are walking and talking and…) 35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” (Really? Sometimes Christians have the same attitude – such pride and arrogance with God) 36 And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” (insert Jesus eye roll) 37 And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” (Seats of honor and authority. They wanted the two most prestigious seats.)**

**Quick peek at Matthew version – Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. 21 And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”**

**It makes sense that his aunt (Salome, Mary’s sister) came to him to get preferential treatment. Playing the family card.**

**This request is evidence they (all of them) were still unaware of the purpose of Jesus. Convinced he was to overthrow the government.**

**Jesus is pouring out his heart about the cross and they can’t stop thinking about political power and positions - the church is still guilty of this. But - God is up to something greater!**

**(They wanted positions of high status in the Jesus administration) Mark 10:38 Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” 39 And they said to him, “We are able.” (They really had no idea – the heartache, sacrifice, and suffering it would cost them.) And 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, (completely immersed in suffering)**

**To "drink someone's cup" means to share in their fate.**

**Jesus is prophesying that his Apostles will indeed taste the cup of distress. They will be persecuted, tortured, and killed. But they did not understand it yet – but they will.**

**40 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.” (already been determined by the Father) 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant (irritated – frustrated) at James and John. (None of them had any idea what Jesus was talking about… the two were like, “Awesome we are going to get something cool!!”)**

**42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, (the twelve) “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. (in this world, leadership is often a pursuit of power and control – but that is not the kind of leader Jesus is or what we are to be – nor our motivation?)**

**But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, (Diakonos) 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave (Doulos) of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

* **God grades greatness differently than the world**

**They were motivated by competitiveness, pride, arrogance, superiority, and esteem. Seeking position and influence.**

**There is no seat grabbing and power plays in the kingdom.**

**Christ and followers of Christ are not to lead like the world does. At the time they were thinking fleshly.**

**Jesus uses two words here with James:**

**43b …whoever would be great among you must be your servant,**

**Servant – (diakonos) waiter - same word for minister/deacon in the NT.**

**Someone willing to serve and prefer others above self – with no glory.**

**Many want to lead for what they can receive – or how it makes them feel. In Christ, to be great is to put others ahead of self.**

**44 …whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.**

**Slave – (doulos) one without rights - under another’s authority.**

**This is not promoting slavery. But someone willing to do the most menial and lowly tasks imaginable upon request.**

**We want to be called servants until we are treated like one.**

**Many want positions to be served. But in Christ to be great is to do the work no one else wants to do and not seek reward.**

**This issue had come up several times:**

**Mark 9:33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. 35 And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”**

**Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them 3 and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.**

**These knuckleheads could not get it through their skulls.**

**Matthew 19:30 - But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.**

**Matthew 20:16 - So the last will be first, and the first last.**

**Matthew 23:11 - The greatest among you shall be your servant.**

**They were prideful. We are with JESUS! He raises the dead, feeds 1000’s, heals the sick! He is unstoppable, and so are we!**

**\*\*\* Who is the greatest? Those who consistently sacrifice their comfort and put others above themselves – they serve others.**

**Ironically, the biggest challenge of many churches is getting people to serve the body. Some won’t even sacrifice a Sunday for one hour or once a month for two hours.**

* **Many want power and position without patience and pain.**

**“So many want the position without experiencing the trials?”**

**Some think getting a degree, a brand, logo, social media page, title, and promoting themselves – entitles one to success.**

**But that is not how God chooses who he uses.**

* **A great leader drinks the cup of pain and is immersed in suffering.**

**You don’t know what you’re asking. Jesus calls it, the cup and the baptism.**

**He told them you don’t see it now… but you will.**

**I used to worry about my family's call to leadership. Because it is sometimes filled with heartache & betrayal – I trust the Lord.**

**To be great in the kingdom is to embrace the potential for suffering. I think of the believers in persecuted nations.**

**Then, a great declaration of Christ – (Jesus responds to James and John) Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

**Jesus was walking literally to Calvary – nails were to pierce his hands and feet – a crown of thorns pressed into his skull - hung on a sinner's cross - ridiculed. What a price!! The Blood of Jesus! Why would he do that…? His great love for us!**

**Jesus referring to his cross - John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**

**His ransom is a purchase out of bondage, into new ownership. He took judgment - we get freedom. He suffering, we benefit. He says to them and us - this is how you lead.**

**The Apostle Paul writes - Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

**He had every right to be served, He is creator God in the flesh!**

**He could command legions of angels down to stop it, but he embraced it for us. Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man” came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

**Even God the Messiah - are you better than God?**

**What happened to James?**

**After Jesus’ the resurrection tradition claims he traveled to modern-day Spain and Portugal, then back to Jerusalem. But this is unknown.**

**Death: It is the only death of an Apostle recorded in the Bible. 44 AD**

**Acts 12:1 About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. (feared their influence) 2 He killed James the brother of John with the sword, (beheaded) 3 and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread.**

**He was the first of the Twelve to sacrifice his life for Jesus. Interestingly, John, his brother, was the last.**

**His arrest: History records that the one who accused him attended the trial and was moved by the witness and conviction of James. He saw the humble, bold, and joyous attitude of James like a conquering hero who had won a battle.**

**Wondering how one could be so brave and hopeful, he ran to join the disciples of Jesus. Becoming a follower of Jesus, he was arrested and beheaded next to James. On the way there, he asked for James' forgiveness. James graciously welcomed him. He was a changed man.**

**James went from an arrogance firebrand and to embracing death for the sake of the Gospel. He drank the cup of Christ’s suffering.**

**His name in history is - James: The Greater.**

**Some say because he was perhaps older or taller than the other James. Some suggest it was - for being the first apostle martyred. The last, became first. God humble us!**

**Prayer:**

**\*\* What are you angry at? Is it righteous anger?**

**Has it turned to pride and hate? Repent.**

**\*\* Are you pursuing greatness? The greatest in the kingdom is the one who serves another? Humble us Lord, and move us to serve others.**

**\*\* Only the humble who recognize their need for Jesus can know him.**

**Christ carried a sinner's cross, though he was without sin – for this sinner (me) and you.**