

Pentecost 18(B)

1. We are on the way with Jesus and the disciples, a journey that leads to Jerusalem and the events we commemorate during Holy Week.

2. In today's reading, Jesus is concerned with teaching, in particular, teaching the disciples.

a. Like elsewhere in Mark, the disciples are struggling to understand, and apparently distracted by other topics, like their own greatness.

b. Jesus once again details how his being the Son of Man, or the Human One, is a threat to the powers that be, and they these same powers will act, soon and decisively.

c. The disciples don't know what to say. Interestingly, Jesus doesn't want them to say anything anyway.

3. This leads to a lesson from Jesus about the priorities of God's Kingdom or reign.

a. There is no greatness within God's reign, Jesus teaches, that doesn't involve the powerless in our community, like small children.

b. There is no greatness within God's reign, he continues, that doesn't involve gentleness and mercy

c. The writer of James seems to be on the same page here: *the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.*

4. There is an important teaching here about humility

a. The kind of humility that Jesus teaches and embodies reflects the connection between the word humility and the words for human and humus, the soil.

- b. Humility here is about being grounded in who we are and whose we are as beloved creatures of a gracious Creator.
- c. To be humble is to live out of the gracious and generous life of God – and not principally out of our own demands for power and control.
- d. Humility is not weakness; it is a state of being that recognizes our dependence on God and one another for our own growth and flourishing.

5. If humility is one of the priorities within God's reign, I wonder what this means for us at St David's.

- a. How do we practice being grounded in God, being human and humus?
- b. Where do we find signs of generosity, mercy, and kindness in what we do and who we are?
- c. Can we risk being dependent on God and one another for our growth and flourishing as a community?
- d. To practice humility doesn't take money or special programs; it's not even something we would advertise on the electronic sign.
- e. It asks of us to let go of the idea that we are self-reliant individuals and embrace our dependence on God and each other.
- f. Hardly an easy thing; yet might it not be the most life-giving thing?