

Oct 21, '18, Anthon UMC, Mark 10:35-45, "Walk With Me"

Walk with me. What is God asking you to walk toward? There are a lot of things we aspire to that we may even accomplish if we put our whole heart, mind and body to getting to it...things we never thought we could get to. So how are you making it? Have you accomplished it, still trying, or have you given up?

We don't all get what we want. Dwight David Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States says that when he was a small boy in Kansas, he went fishing with a friend of his. Young Eisenhower confided to his friend that his dream was to one day be a major league baseball player. Interestingly, Eisenhower's friend said that his dream was to be President of the United States. Eisenhower said wistfully, "Neither of us got our wish."

One of most fierce dreams I have heard of recently is in the news telling us that 4000 people from Central America are now walking through Mexico in mass on their way to the United States determined to walk into our country away from the violence and poverty of their own homes, somehow to gain their dream of a new life. How do we help them? How do we save our country from being flooded with a wave of illegal immigrants who have no food and shelter, but dream of having our way of life? This walk is turning into a nightmare. How do we walk with godly compassion when we

feel threatened by those who are walking toward us to be us? If anyone thinks this country is a horrible place, why is so much of the world walking toward us? At this time I have no answers. I doubt you do either. All I can handle is this little slice of what is being asked of me and right now, until we figure out where this march of men, women, and children is going to end, I am focusing on CROP Walk. This we can do. This walk might even enable some people in need to survive in their own homes.

CROP Walk, is a dream of defeating World Hunger that challenges us every fall and calls us to willingly walk, or willingly give of our money to support a walker. We walk with the hope that our walking will make a difference in the world.

Everyone has hopes and dreams of a better life, dreams of an upward climb to greatness if not survival. But sometimes the walk to get there is costly. Sometimes we don't know how costly until we are totally committed to the journey. This morning's Gospel of Mark tells us about two walkers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee who had dreams, ambitions. They, along with Simon Peter were Jesus' closest disciples. They walked all over with Jesus for three years, present for all of the significant events in Jesus' ministry. For example, when Jesus went up on the Mount of Transfiguration and later in the garden of Gethsemane, certainly two of the

more dramatic moments in his ministry, he chose these three to walk with him.

Jesus nicknamed James and John the “Sons of Thunder.” That’s quite descriptive. My guess is that they were quite dynamic individuals. They had been fishermen when Jesus called them. Undoubtedly, they were quite successful in their fishing enterprise. “Sons of Thunder” sounds like a pair of leaders, entrepreneurs, movers and shakers. It is only natural that they would move into a leadership role among the disciples. So, it should not surprise us that one day these “sons of thunder” came to Jesus with a request. They wanted to negotiate a better position in the company. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” Trick request!

That’s happened to all us parents, hasn’t it?” “Daddy,” a child will say, “I need you to do me a favor. Promise you’ll say ‘Yes’” They don’t tell you up front what it is. They expect, because you are their Mom or Dad, you will automatically grant whatever they request.

James and John feel they have that kind of relationship with Jesus. At least they feel with the miles they’ve put under their belts walking with him they’ve earned special consideration for a ride on his coattails.

Jesus replies, “What do you want me to do for you?” It’s always wise of parents and grandparents to ask that question before committing to an unknown request from a child.

James and John’s response was not subtle. “Let one of us sit at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.” Traveling with Jesus must have been like traveling with a rock star. The adulation of the crowds was intoxicating. This was **the** messiah. James and John’s words affirmed that they believed that Jesus was who he said he was, and if this is so, then they needed to get their ducks in a row since he had chosen them as his “special friends.” All they had to do was knock Peter out of the running to get the best two seats for the Kingdom reign...get their names on the ballot first, narrow the Big Three into the Big Two.

However, with Jesus, knowing what he knew of the future, this seems to hit a sensitive nerve, I imagine it to be like biting down on tinfoil with a cavity in your tooth. Jesus’ responded, “You don’t know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” Here is where we see a real disconnect between the disciples’ expectations of why Christ has come into the world and Christ’s own plans. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” Jesus was meaning, can you bear the pain and

suffering and death I am to bear? They obviously had let Jesus' words about going to Jerusalem to suffer and die, go over their heads. How many times had he told them this? Are we up to three by now? They just were not computing what he actually said. I do know that people tend to hear what they want to hear in a sermon and ignore what they don't. I can say something in a message that I think would really resonate with people listening, and they don't get it, or at least no one says a word about it later. Perhaps it **is** safer to keep silent rather than get pushed a step further in the Christian walk. And then there are the times I didn't realize I was saying what certain people think they heard in the message, and they comment on it. Go figure! So it was with the disciples.

And so like children they answered Jesus' question about their ability to walk with him through the fire with, "Oh, we can, we can. These men who didn't yet know what they were saying, answered. "Lord we are able!" Remember when you believed you could do anything. Youth believes. "Sons of Thunder" believe they can do anything, don't they? James and John were still very young men. They still believed they were invincible. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit on my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

Just when you think you have God right where you want him...just when you are so sure you know what door God has opened for you, you find out differently, and maybe some doors are better not entered.

When the time Jesus was talking about came, it was two thieves who occupied the place at Jesus' right and left hand on the cross. It was James who indeed did die a martyr's death by the sword of Harold Agrippa, and John, well we do think John lived to be an old man, living on the isle of Patmos where he wrote the Book of Revelation.

When the other disciples heard what those two had asked of Jesus they were angry...oh not angry because of the insensitivity to Jesus' coming death. Anger is a funny thing. It can scramble your thinking process and you get angry at the wrong things. Get this...they were angry because James and John asked for that honor before they did. Does it make you feel any better about your own humanity to know these heroes of the faith, these saints of God had to have a special teaching session right then and there on the fact that, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first"? Jesus had to give them a special teaching session on the servanthood that God expects of the people who follow Him. So maybe we'll get it right yet too. As Rick Warren opening words in his best selling book, The Purpose Driven Life, say, "It's not about you!" It's about the kingdom and the

kingdom will not plunge you into prosperity theology where God gives you every whim of your heart, including a Mercedes and a Rolex, or maybe even win the over a billion dollar Powerball jackpot, as some preach on TV each Sunday morning.

Jesus calls us to a different ethic. God honors servanthood rather than power. He challenges us to begin living the kingdom rules here and now. It's a tough sell because these rules are not the way the world is walking and the church and its members must relearn this teaching over and over again.

The drive for preferment might be called the number one enemy of the Christian church. Every denomination, congregation and pastor is tempted to look out for number one rather than serving kingdom needs. We are tempted by grand titles, vestments, and church buildings – tempted to water down the word to entertain or sell and brings in larger attendance rather than the faithful word. Personal ambition did not begin with James and John, neither did it end with them.

Jesus does not require more than he is willing to give. He modeled service and sacrifice from cradle to grave. Listen: "While in the form of God, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being in human form he humbled himself, and became

obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.” Let us not forget both the incarnation and the crucifixion were acts of great service and sacrifice.

“A Ransom for many.” Jesus tells his disciples he must die, and now he tells them why. The word “ransom” is found in both Testaments and refers to a payment made to free a prisoner or emancipate a slave. The Jewish people are accustomed to a sacrificial system in which sacrificial animals atone for the sins of the people. Now Jesus says he must give his life as a ransom for many. In these few words he introduces the theology of atonement. The cup which Jesus must drink refers to divine punishment of sins which he bears in the place of the guilty.

Sacrifice and servanthood permeate Jesus’ lessons. It is a good place for us to be this day of CROP Walk. For the last couple of weeks we have shuddered to look at pictures of the disaster Hurricane Michael did. We took a collection for it last week. Thank you for giving and if you still want to give to it, you are invited to do so. And now at CROP Walk we are asked to do a fundraising walk for people who are in need of our sacrifice all over the world. Some of the money comes back to our local area but most of these are people we will never see and we can ignore and go on our merry

way if we wish, or we can do our best to minister to them by putting our feet and cash into action.

Opportunities come all the time. In November we will have the opportunity to take our Ingathering Kits to Cherokee to be packed and used by UMCOR to help those who suffered disasters or those who need supplies to teach their children the simple basic of schooling who walk long miles to get there. And so in many ways we “walk because they walk” – for and with those near and far who have need of the essentials of life, today we walk for them to have food and water and shelter in CROP Walk. It is such a privilege to walk nearby in the Little Sioux Park, with other towns and denominations all over the nation gathering to walk for this cause. Are you walking or supporting a walker? We might not be prepared to take in an immigrant crossing our border on his or her way here, or we might, but right now today we can help someone have a better life where they are.

In all these things we walk, following Jesus in sacrificial ways that in the end make us feel lifted up to be on his right and left hand in our hearts a greater position of honor today than this world could ever offer...The question of the day is, “Are we able” when Jesus says, “Come, Walk with me.”