

## WHAT ABOUT ME?

It is good to carefully listen..... we may need to hear what is being said.

I'm not sure if the disciples were listening carefully, because ...**again** we hear, said in a different manner, the message Jesus said before, which is: the first will be last and the last first.

This time, Jesus tells them that he has come to serve, and not be served. It is a lesson that the disciples are slow to learn.

Of course, we are much smarter; we catch on pretty quickly. ??

I suppose we should NOT be too harsh on the disciples, I do think that they are "slowly" catching on. They are beginning to see the divine in Jesus and they are connecting Jesus' life and message to heaven – eternal life, too.

In today's Mark passage, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, thought they better speak up for themselves, and approach Jesus with, "will you grant us a request?" *Will you do me a favour?*

Jesus doesn't fall for that trap, and wisely responds, "What is it you want me to do for you?"

They pointed out that they were doing a lot for Jesus and didn't want to be forgotten – they wanted to be remembered when the "rewards" were being handed out. They wanted to have seats of honour next to Jesus when "Jesus" is Glorified.... in the here after.

Their's was a typical question from limited, self centred thinking.

It is in the same flavour as the Rich man's question: What must I do to inherit / have given to me.... eternal life?

Simply put: "I want Jesus to get me to heaven".... and, in this case, to be there in the elite section,.....as if there are such designations.

[sigh]..... It just doesn't work that way.

There is a lesson, in Jesus' answer .....which is "the natural process is honoured."

For example, all the prayers in the world won't give the Leafs the Stanley Cup. (And, I'm not sure prayers are enough to get them to at least win one game???)

Jesus challenges the disciples to understand the depth of their question– to understand THE REAL COST of following Jesus, and that it is not Just about getting into heaven.

>Did we hear that????

And then, Jesus added “besides, it is not up to me to hand out rewards and..... you’re missing the point.

In the Mark passage, the two disciples are in essence demanding, “What About Me?” and Jesus is answering it is **NOT about you**.

It is **NOT** about rewards.

It is **NOT** about status.

True living / following Christ is about serving, and.....

It is about the first being last, AND THE LAST FIRST.

This is a difficult concept, and it applies to everyone, all the time,....no matter one’s status.

Here is a lesson from seminary, shared by another student—a friend of mine that I talked with this week.

He related that during his second month at seminary, one of the professors gave a pop quiz. He was a conscientious student, and breezed through the questions, until he read the last one:

“What is the first name of the woman who cleans this classroom building?”

Surely, he thought, that it was some sort of joke. He had seen the cleaning woman several times.

She was tall, dark haired and late middle aged, .....but, he confessed to himself, “how and why would he know her name?”

He handed in the quiz, leaving that last question blank.

Just before class ended, another student asked if that question would count toward the grade.

“Absolutely,” said the professor. “In your lives, you will meet many people AND ALL are significant. They deserve your attention and care.”

The student never forgot that lesson.

\*All people are important and No one deserves elite treatment.

I agree, and I don’t think pastors should get special treatment either, such as going first when we have potluck lunches.

As I said before, I think it would be fair just to go in alphabetical order.

Speaking of being humbled, .....Job comes to mind.

This week,.... Job is the feature for the Old Testament passage.

In today’s text, Job, ... fuelled by his despair and anger, challenges God’s apparent injustice and in return receives a “reality check”.

Job is reminded, in a terse manner, that despite our aspirations to the contrary, we humans NEED God.

Because God is God and WE are NOT.

Job cried out in a **demanding** and angry fashion, “**What About Me?**”

And, God loudly answered, “Who do you think you are to demand anything from God?”

Most of us likely find this passage in Job rather shocking.  
Most of us have not experienced living under all powerful lords or masters.

I’m going to run with this for a minute.

We generally think of God as **our** big benefactor in the sky who takes care of us, replies on demand, honours our investments and so forth.

It is likely alien for us to think of our relationship with God in terms of ....we are the fly who could be swatted anytime.

Yet, that is what God is telling Job.

We are not God. We are far from being God and comprehending that should be humbling.  
.....humbling as a fly on a kitchen wall.

We are not swatted like a fly .... only because, as we believe, God is a God of love, patience and grace.

However, I do wonder about what God is thinking when we continue to choose war as a solution, seek revenge against criminals, exploit the weak and abuse creation.

If we are as a fly, then we should feel a little nervous.

Moreover, if we tried to picture the contrast between ourselves and God, then we may not be so quick to arrogantly demand, “What about me?”

Yet, “What about Me?” is the chorus of the culture we live in.

We see and hear it constantly, and we know that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Those who fuss and cry to get their way, usually are successful.

TV commercials reinforce that bellow—What about me?— with “We got what you want!”

Anymore, the theme of being a citizen is “What is the government going to do for me?”

*Leslie is studying to take her citizen’s test, and the study booklet presents numerous responsibilities and requirements for being a citizen. ....*

*My guess is all that can be forgotten once you pass the test????.*

Because, most citizens act like little birds in a nest.... begging.. “I want more.... Give ME something..... What about me?”

Candidates are keenly aware of this selfish condition, and every election is full of promises, “If elected, I’ll do this or that for you,.... instead of solving problems,..... and helping those without a voice / those without power to speak out.

Everywhere we hear, even in churches:  
“**What about me**”? What are you going to do for ME?

And,..... how is one to survive in this competitive world if we don’t blow our own horn with “What about me?”

So, what is the big deal? If we don’t take care of ourselves, then who will?  
Should we consider being last, and putting others before us?.....  
Or, is this just more idealistic, wishful thinking that we all come to expect in a Sunday sermon– stuff that really doesn’t work in the real world? ?????

\*\*I don’t think Jesus would have been so repetitive about the message, if it really didn’t matter.

Even so,... what is the problem with looking out for number one?

The most obvious problem with demanding “What about me?” is that it is arrogant and self centred.

And arrogant, selfishness is an inward flow / movement of passion.... which is counter to Christ, ..... and it demands to be treated above others. It demands to be as a god.  
Reading Job should enlighten us a little about the risk of demanding that.

I was in New York last weekend. New York screams: WHAT ABOUT ME?..... and the Wall Street executives are still screaming that.

I had conversations about unrestrained capitalism, and was asked a number of times, “What’s wrong with striving to be as rich as possible?”

*I don’t believe many people there learned much from the recent recession.....*

\  
If it is not enough to take Jesus’ message to heart for noble reasons, then we should be aware of the countless other hazards and dangerous of proclaiming and living ME FIRST.  
A ME / self centred society allows hyper-Darwinism... which is the law of the jungle..... where **not only do the strong take** what they need to survive, but they also exploit the weak and take much more than what they need. And, this creates all sorts of injustices and social tensions and travesties.

In the US, average the ratio between what a CEO makes and an entry level position is more than 400 to 1. A couple of years ago, in Canada, it was 37 to one, but lately we have been rapidly catching up.

So, what's wrong with someone making millions and billions, while others can't keep up?  
???

For starters: it is mean and arrogant—counter to Christ's way,... and greed and exploitation leads to destruction, through war or revolt or aggressive oppression.

The arrogant "I" / me first is the cause of most wars, It happens when the collective "What about me?" strives to assert its influence / get its way.... over others. And, war is often fuelled by the corporate "What about me?" to reap huge profits in military related production.

In other areas:

The demand "What about me?" is the base of the argument for private healthcare options – "What about me?..... I have money,... why should I wait in line with the poor?"

What about me calls out for lower taxes, which really does not help the poor and the powerless?

"What about me?" obsesses about the flu, while millions go hungry in poorer countries, and demands to get the H1NI vaccination first.

"What about me?" calls out in many forms, and that cry can be heard echoing through many churches, too.

One example is the over-persuasive evangelism with the encoded fear laden, message: "What about me?" IT sounds like: "you better get saved or you'll go to hell" ....or the revival promises that declare that "be a Christian and God will bless you with wealth and material goods.

Those types of messages breed fear and encourage a focus on **Me first**/ I better take care of ME.... and... what's in it for me.?

Those who respond to that flavour of the Christian message, more often than not, soon become frustrated and disenchanted when their lot in life has NOT dramatically improved and when they discover following Christ is NOT about ME or self.

Another example:

I have heard the comments, "I didn't get anything out of worship today!" .... or..... I'm NOT being spiritual feed.

Usually, those "I" statements are said by those who should be feeding the hungry and not demanding to be fed.....

In addition, there are personal perils when one chooses to live and proclaim "What about me?" / ME first.

Relationships and marriages are drained-out and ruined when couples demand, "What about me?", ,...instead of what about you or what about our relationship.

Substance abuse and destructive life styles are other byproducts from living....“What about me?”

Demanding WHAT ABOUT ME is self centred, arrogant and fear based. Fear based because there is a sense of depravity and a fear of not getting **what one is deserved** and earned.

Considering Job again: Do we really want to get what we deserve?

However, .....what about the times ....when we are truly overwhelmed?

What about the time when we are not asking to be first, but instead merely begging to get out of the bottom / the nadir of despair?

What about those broken times when pain is unbearable and we keenly feel the loss in our life..... and the disappointments?

What about desperate situations when we are at the bottom, when we are last? Can we then call out “What about me?”

The cry of help as a child cries out in the night ....is NOT an arrogant demand; it is not the petition for esteem.

That humble cry of “What about me?” is very different. That call is a surrender, and it is the acknowledging that God is God,..... and that we need God.

A toddler’s tantrum scream is very different from a child’s scream from being wounded or genuinely desperate.

GOD DOES RESPOND when we call out, and the Bible teaches us that God responds favourably to our invitations that are from our soul.

Moreover, we should note that:

In the Mark passage and throughout the Gospels, Jesus is not suggesting we be a door mat. Jesus is not declaring that following him is for the wimpy and the diffident, .....far from it.

It takes a lot of courage and strength to follow Christ!

It is not an easy journey, and following Christ is only possible with the help of God’s Spirit.

Following Christ way and message is a life of outward flow.... of giving and empowering.

Christ’s way is the way of “building up”, of doing creation, of doing peace and justice, .... of honouring God, ....of doing love, of growing, and it is a way of discovering more about God, too. God..... the source of giving, creation and love.

Here is an example / a true story. It could be most anyone’s story.

When Doug Meland and his wife moved into a village of Brazil's Fulnio People, he was referred to as "The white man," – an uncomplimentary term. Other white men had exploited the villagers, burned their homes, and robbed their lands.

But, after the missionaries learned the language and generously helped the people with medicine and in other ways, the aboriginals began to call Doug, the "good white man."

When the Melands began adopting the customs of the people, the Fulnio spoke of Doug as the "white aboriginal." Then one day, as Doug was washing the dirty, blood-caked foot of a local boy, he heard a bystander say, "Who ever heard of a white man washing an aboriginal's foot? Certainly, this man is from God."

From that day, whenever Doug entered someone's home, it would be announced, "Here comes the man God sent us."

God is in Christ,..... in being Christlike.

God is in the journey of following Christ.

God is in the serving, .....the giving, .....the rendering up, .....the letting go to God. God is in the giving,.... Not in the taking.

God is love and love does Not focus on self.

Love does not demand, "What about ME? / WHAT's in it for me?"

We know this. These is a redundant message.

It was repeated to the disciples many times.

We keep hearing it over and over again..... I wonder why?

I wonder why we keep thinking that salvation is a purchase instead of a journey of surrendering?

I wonder why we just can't seem to let go and trust God?

I wonder.....

////////////////////////////////////

Oh,..... The answer to what about me / what's in it for me?????

?????

I believe the answer is .....NOTHING, .....but God.

Is that enough?