



“Sibling Rivalry”

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Mark 10:35-45

As a kid, I was notoriously stubborn. My parents would say one thing and I was bound and determined to do the other. They might suggest something, and I would ignore it, thinking “yeah, ok. What do you know? I’m going to do this my own way.” Parents in the room, you know what I’m talking about. And kids, I think you do too.

Resisting our parents’ guidance is pretty much par for the course. We could all think of a family tv show - drama or comedy – where the kids are resisting their parents’ lessons or where their parents are trying to guide them.

Our story for today is like that. Our story is about resistance, but not about resisting a parent’s teaching, but rather resisting the teaching of Jesus, resisting the call of Christ.

Several weeks ago, I preached on greatness. The disciples thought following Jesus meant being great, being powerful, about being recognized. Today’s story continues that theme because Jesus is still trying to teach the disciples what it means to follow him, what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Today’s story shows that the disciples still don’t get it. They are still resisting what Jesus is trying to teach them. James and John ask to be on Jesus’ left and Jesus’ right – to share in Jesus’ power, glory and praise.

The disciples are resisting Jesus’ call to follow him – this call that requires them to be servants, to give something up, to serve others and not themselves.

Why are they resisting? It is for the same reason we still resist Jesus’ call today. Fear.

What Jesus was calling the disciples to scared the living daylights out of them. And if we are honest, it scares the living daylights out of us because discipleship is hard. It is difficult because it requires servanthood. It requires sacrifice. It requires us to give up the ideas of this world and live into God’s ideas of the world. That’s scary.

It’s scary because we know that following Jesus means following Jesus – doing what Jesus said and doing what Jesus did. Shane Claiborne and Tony Campolo, who wrote the book, *Red Letter Revolution*, are Red Letter Christians – a movement of people who are attempting to simply live out the teachings of Jesus, which in some Bibles are printed in red letters. They seek to “take Jesus seriously.” I want to draw your attention to the subtitle of this book because it is powerful. “What If Jesus Really Meant What He

Said?" Holy Moley. That's powerful. I'm going to repeat that. What if Jesus really meant what he said?

We know following Jesus means following Jesus. Jesus gave his all. He went to the cross. He suffered. He felt pain. Why? Because he loves us. Jesus loves every human being. Jesus gave his all for us and he is calling us to respond by giving our all. This is huge. And if we stop for a minute and process what this means, this call can be scary.

I know because I've grappled with this scariness in my own life. Many of you know that I resisted God's call to the ministry over a series of many years. At 12, God planted a seed. I resisted. Throughout college, I strayed. I wandered off, but God kept working in my life, trying to guide me. I resisted. After graduation, God called me out into the world, to serve God's people in a far-off place. Again, God was ever-present, accompanying me through it all. Even when I kept resisting – even when I was too embarrassed to act on this call - God kept nudging me. I ignored this call. I resisted this call. It was really, really scary, people!! But God kept working on my heart.

We all resist. In our own ways. We might say, we are too busy. We don't have time when someone asks us to serve. We might assume someone else will fill gap. Someone will step up to the plate. We might ask, "Why bother?" We might say, "It won't make a difference." We are like those disciples, James and John, who want to be on Jesus' right and Jesus' left. Sometimes, we think following Jesus should mean easy street. It should mean comfort. But, just as Jesus told his disciples thousands of years ago, he tells his disciples today – us – that "following me is hard." It means being last, taking the back seat, serving others. It means loving like Jesus did – with grace and in abundance.

Friends, the good news is in those words that I just spoke. Jesus loves with grace. Jesus loves in abundance. Jesus loves us, even when we resist his call. He will keep working on our hearts. Jesus gave his all for us. Jesus did this amazing thing for us. And now, we get to respond, to give thanks, to praise this awe-inspiring act. We get to show Jesus' grace-filled love. Because Jesus meant what he said. Jesus gave his all for us and he is calling us to give our all to him.

Amen.

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