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It seems extraordinary to think that we're now into week seven of lockdown! It seems odd to think that just three months ago it would have been almost impossible to imagine what we are now experiencing as 'normality'; life can change much more quickly than we expect.

This week's passage for reflection is another example of the shifts of perspective and understanding that the disciples underwent as they 'did life' with Jesus, and the mistakes they made along the way.

This week, do take the time to pray for, or check in with, people who you might not have been in touch with since lockdown began, and particularly those who you have assumed will be fine! Seven weeks is a long time, even for the most resilient introverts among us; allow your perceptions of them to be changed! And if you're one of those resilient introverts whose resilience is running low, be kind to yourself and have the courage to ask for the support that you need.

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A mother's request

Bible Reading: Matthew 20:17-28 (The Message)

Jesus, now well on the way up to Jerusalem, took the Twelve off to the side of the road and said, 'Listen to me carefully. We are on our way up to Jerusalem. When we get there, the Son of Man will be betrayed to the religious leaders and scholars. They will sentence him to death. They will then hand him over to the Romans for mockery and torture and crucifixion. On the third day he will be raised up alive.'

It was about that time that the mother of the Zebedee brothers came with her two sons and knelt before Jesus with a request.

'What do you want?' Jesus asked.

She said, 'Give your word that these two sons of mine will be awarded the highest places of honour in your kingdom, one at your right hand, one at your left hand.'

Jesus responded, 'You have no idea what you're asking.' And he said to James and John, 'Are you capable of drinking the cup that I'm about to drink?'

They said, 'Sure, why not?'

Jesus said, 'Come to think of it, you *are* going to drink my cup. But as to awarding places of honour, that's not my business. My Father is taking care of that.'

When the ten others heard about this, they lost their tempers, thoroughly disgusted with the two brothers. So Jesus got them together to settle things down. He said, 'You've observed how godless rulers throw their weight around, how quickly a little power goes to their heads. It's not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for the many who are held hostage.'

Reflection

Identity and connection are at the heart of today's reading. It challenges us to consider where we find our own sense of identity: do we find its source in God, or are we distracted by how many likes we have accumulated on a Facebook or Instagram post? How do unfamiliar ways of 'being church' – and live streaming in particular – challenge and increase our understanding of what making connections might look like?

The disciples in our reading are jostling for position and recognition. A mother steps into this conflict and asks something of Jesus, without fully understanding what it would mean for her sons if her request was granted. How do we keep our eyes focused God, deepening our understanding of and connection with him? How might we grow in our understanding of what it means to be a true follower of Jesus?

This encounter with James, John and their mother prompts Jesus to explain to the disciples more about his own identity and the kind of leadership he has come to exercise. He is a servant who does not come to dictate but to emulate the heart of Christ in serving the least, the lost and the disenfranchised. As we look across our communities at this time and see the love, compassion and care that is being shown we can clearly see the love and outworking of that servant-heartedness to which Jesus so clearly refers.

We are called to discern where God is already active and at work and partner with him. Mother Teresa is quoted as saying 'Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.'

So let's spread the love of Christ everywhere we go!

Prayer

Lord, we pray today that you will give us eyes to see,

ears to hear and hearts to understand what you are calling us to do.

Equip us today to show your love, speak your words of hope and leave deposits of your Spirit everywhere we go.

Amen

Response

You and God

Find a quiet place and time. Read Matthew 20:17-28 again and ask God to forgive you for the times when you have been more concerned with recognition and reward than obediently following him and his will for your life.

- How can you step out in faith today?
- How could you be a messenger of hope to someone?
- How can you fulfil a promise that you have made to God in the past to serve?

You and others

Spend some time praying for your family and those you love, releasing their God given destiny in Christ. Ask God to lead you to specific places to pray when you are out on your daily exercise or if your confined to home use Google Maps to pray for your schools, hospitals and local community.

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