

TEXT: *Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

I was a young parent once. I know how it feels. Your first child comes into the world and you try to do everything right. You sterilize the bottles and carefully read all the labels on the baby food jars. You watch his progress on the pediatrician's growth charts and can't help but brag a little when he seems to be so quick at catching on to words and sentences. He didn't have to be a super star, nor did she have to grow up to be a beauty queen. You pray that the Lord should keep them faithful for eternal life, but secretly, the thought of your kids being social standouts of some kind lay buried deep in your heart.

But like that TV commercial says: "Life comes at you fast..." and our children grow up to be what they will be and not what we dream them to be.

Christian parents have this certainty, however, and it should be given TOP PRIORITY in the raising of all our children: JESUS HAS WON FOR US THE GOOD LIFE. Our life will be good in Heaven. Until then, we will serve the Lord.

In the previous chapter Matthew records that Jesus said to His disciples: *I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Mt 19 You can almost see Mrs. Zebedee's excitement and pride! *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."* Think of it! Our two sons ruling in the kingdom of the Messiah! "Speak up, boys! If you don't, I will!"

What had not been heard was what Jesus had been telling His disciples. The Bible says: *Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"* Scripture tells us that as the time for Jesus' crucifixion came nearer, Jesus spoke so specifically about his purpose for being on earth, Peter vehemently rebuked that kind of talk coming from Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus actually turned on him and called him Satan. They so disliked this kind of negative talk their ears filtered out the words: *On the third day he will be raised to life!* It is the nature of sinful man to ignore the resurrection. All they could hear were Jesus' words: ... *you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Mt 19 Power, wealth, honor! Mrs. Zebedee wasn't going to let that escape her family's grasp!

My sinful nature is no different than theirs. When life is good and the blessings are abundant, we think little of what our Lord Jesus suffered in winning the victory over sin in our behalf. The Resurrection is a long way off. The here and now is indeed the here and now and we would like to "the good life" in the here and now. Just "follow the money" as they say and it will testify to what is most important in our lives. Like Solome, that was her name, the dear mother of our text who looked at her two sons with dreams of grandeur in

her heart, we want the best advantages we can get for ourselves and our children's social advancement.

Jesus then said to Solome: ***"You don't know what you are asking ... Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."*** Jesus would not be distracted from his mission and purpose. He would carry the cross and be crucified in order to win for us the Good Life that is truly good: eternal life in heaven. And before they would die, Solome's sons would drink the bitter cup of carrying their respective crosses of being Christ's witnesses on earth. And before we get to enjoy the truly good eternal life of heaven, we too will be given crosses from our Lord's loving hand to carry. If you are a Christian and a child of God you will indeed carry your crosses through life in order to stay focused on the cross of Christ and the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation that is ours.

That hope stands before us whether we are enjoying good times or bad. And all who believe this find that the real good life on this side of heaven is to carry our cross and to faithfully serve the Lord.

The Bible says: ***When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.*** They were indignant. That's because James and John's mother, Mrs. Zebedee, got there first with her request. They were jealous to see this bold request was brought before the Lord. And then, instead of rebuking them for such a bold request, Jesus simply said: ***"You don't know what you are asking ... Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered.*** How can the Lord rebuke these faithful Christians? Isn't that what we ask our confirmands on Confirmation Day? Remember your Confirmation Day? You stood before the congregation before the altar of the Lord and were asked if you believed all these things that the Bible teaches. You said, "I do!" You were asked if you would be faithful to the Lord and his Word even to the point of death, and you said, "I will." Did you know and understand what you were promising? Peter told Jesus that he would follow him to the death and Jesus told Peter he would fail and even deny him publicly three times.

The disciples were indignant about the bold request of this Christian mother in behalf of her two sons, James and John. But Jesus wasn't indignant. That's because he knew her faith and her misplaced-zeal. The other ten disciples were just jealous that she was beating them to the punch in speaking for such honor -- an honor that they all had been arguing about time and again. In fact, Scripture tells us that even on the night before Jesus was crucified, his disciples argued about who of them were the more important.

What Jesus said to Salome, was meant for them all: ***Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."*** But how they would live and serve their God was known only to the Heavenly Father. And Jesus, patient with the Old Adam of his dear disciples, then instructed them about how to live a good life here on earth before they enter the Good Life He would win for them: ***Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."***

As a disciple of Jesus, each of us has the certain hope of the Good Life for eternity in heaven. But how God plans to use us here on this earth isn't always clearly seen. But HOW we can live a good life of service is the same for us as it was outlined for his first disciples: ***whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*** You and I serve the Lord by giving of ourselves to serve others. Take this beautiful facility that serves as our church and school. It was built by the sacrifices of many who gave of themselves for their Lord and their church. It continues to be supported by many who put others and their Lord above their own self-interests. It stands as a testimony that at this location a congregation of Jesus' disciples gather together to worship the Lord and to hear again and again that Jesus has won for us the Good Life of an eternity in heaven.

Jesus didn't get angry with Solome and her strange request for her own sons. He simply advised her and all his disciples to look forward to the Good Life that He has won for us on the cross, and to willingly continue to carry our crosses in this life always considering what a great privilege it is to serve Him. Then, like so many Christians who have passed through this life ahead of us, we too, will say at the end of our lives here on this earth: "I've had a good life, and the best is yet to come!" Amen.