

Upside-down
October 21, 2012

Mark 10: 35-45

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." 36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. 37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." 38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" 39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 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." 41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Ladies and gentlemen, God is alive and well at Hooker Memorial Christian Church; let me say that again, God is alive and well at Hooker Memorial. He is working with and through us. I'm sure if you think for just a moment, each of you could tell of a God Wink that has happened here recently. It may have been something that happened in front of a group of people, or it could have been something only you witnessed. Two weeks ago while I was delivering my morning message on the Prayer of Jabez, I reached a point in the sermon where I was talking about how we have watered down the word blessing. During biblical times when someone, Jabez for example, asked for God's blessing, it was asking for the supernatural. To "bless" in Biblical terms is to receive a supernatural favor. Bless or blessings is a word that tends to be diluted in its meaning today. When someone sneezes we say bless you. I was about to say how we say bless you if someone sneezes. At that exact moment, someone sneezed, I said bless you. If she and I had rehearsed it, it couldn't have happened more on cue. I truly believe God had a hand in that. At another point in the sermon I said, and I quote, "You said it once already today, but did you say it or did you pray it; Matthew 6: 13 **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**" End quote. That is a line from the Lord's Prayer and I think we all recognize that line. I think it was somewhere around Tuesday when I wrote that part of my sermon. No one had seen anything I had written. Little did I know that as chair of Worship, Valorie was working on last Sunday's service and message. The program was on the Lord's Prayer. That was another God Wink. There are just two examples of how active God is in the life of this church. He is indeed alive and well and working through us.

Last week was such an example of where I plan to go today, it is another God Wink. You see, today's message is all about service. Finding substitute ministers can be a difficult task on some days, impossible on others. That's what Valorie found out when looking for someone to fill in for me last Sunday. She went from plan A, to Plan B, To Plan C, and to Plan D. Finally, it was, the Elders in this church can handle this. Elders are supposed to be the spiritual leaders within the congregation. As we have our monthly elders meetings, that is one of the things that I am emphasizing. Last week was a perfect example of the spiritual services that our Elders perform. I would like to thank Kathy Nunn for taking care of the Joys & Concerns and the Morning Prayer. Gene Owens took care of Communion; thanks Gene. Maggie and Valorie performed the skit that was your morning Message; I heard it went very well. None of those individuals have said anything to me about how they felt taking on the roles they did last Sunday, however, I would bet that if I asked, each one would admit that they stepped outside of their comfort zone. Even then, they each did what they did for glory to God, and service to this church. I can guarantee not a single one of them did it thinking, "Hey, look at me, look at what I'm doing. I'm special because of what I'm doing." If anything they were probably thinking am I worthy enough to be doing this?

That's part of the problem we have with Christianity today; it is counter to everything we have been taught by society. Be number one, be the best, let everyone see just how good you are... Christianity is upside-down to that. Listen again to verses 43 and 44:

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. Isn't that counterproductive to societal norms? Isn't that upside-down from what we've been taught?

Verses 35 thru 37: **Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask". "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."** We read those three verses and kind of chuckle, maybe even look down on James and John. Just who do they think they are? Really, wanting to sit on the left and right of Jesus... They were asking to be counted as number one and two in their little group of twelve. But don't we do the same thing, don't we try to be the best in our own little groups. Don't we teach our children to do the same thing? That is why I'm saying, Christianity is counterproductive to societal norms, it's upside-down. How many of you have taught your children to be last, go to the back of the line, don't try to get in the front. We do the same thing in business, we step on people on the way to the front of the line, to the top of our jobs. It may not have been you stepping on people on your way to the top, but we each know people who did. We all know people who pushed their children to the top at all cost, and pushed themselves the same way.

Today, in just a few minutes, each of you will receive a survey. Kathy told you about it last week. In the process of trying to seek out the right pastor for this church, we as the search committee need your truthful and valuable input. (Explain process)

Before each of you start filling out the survey, I would ask that you say a silent prayer asking God to guide you. Ask God to help you determine what He wants for Hooker Memorial. As you fill out these surveys, I want you to remember James and John; remember how we shook our heads at them for asking to be on the left and right of Jesus; asking to be number one and two in the kingdom of God. Remember Matthew 6: 10;

10. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.