

Read Mark 10 verses 35 – 45 *“When the 10 heard this, they began to be angry with James and John.”* (Verse 41 NRSV)

Dear Friends

As we continue to consider how the 10 day waiting period between the ascension of Jesus and the day of Pentecost may have affected the disciples, let us turn our attention to James and John – nicknamed by Jesus as “The Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3 verse 17). This particular title seems to carry negative connotations and perhaps reminds us that we all have our own flaws. I wonder why they were given that nickname? The term, “Sons of Thunder” seems to suggest that these two men tended to be argumentative, held strong opinions and were willing to vigorously defend them – perhaps even to the point of spoiling for a fight!

In the story before us today, their request to Jesus that they sit by his side in the kingdom cause the other disciples to be angry with them. And perhaps they wouldn’t have minded that. Maybe there was nothing they liked more than a good argument. As they now waited with the other disciples, perhaps they were appreciative of having a captive audience. Not only could they now argue with one another to their hearts content, but they could draw others into the debate as well. Maybe they could get some of the others to choose sides between them. If they lived up to their nickname, their constant bickering with one another –or others – could only have added to any sense of anxiety or frustration that the disciples were feeling at the time.

Today, as we enter the 10th week or so of lockdown, we have gone through the novelty and acceptance stages and many are now feeling frustrated and angry. We are frustrated because we cannot see a clear way out of this current crisis – we do not know if or when we can return to work, worship or leisure activities. Very few people – our elected representatives - can debate these things publicly. Others will vent their frustrations online. The majority however, may well release their anger and frustrations at their loved ones – those with whom lockdown is being shared.

Just as listening to James and John arguing may have been uncomfortable for some of the other disciples, I suspect many people across our country and from all walks of life will be feeling uncomfortable because of the tensions, arguments and anger that are currently present in their own household. These are the largely unseen effects of the lockdown, but like me you will have seen reports of more places of refuge being available for victims of domestic violence, and of an expected spike in the rate of divorce and separation as arguments rage and tempers flare.

Despite our own frustrations, today let us pray for those who still live with sons – or daughters – of thunder in their midst.

Blessings

Peter