

The Road Home:

"Seating Options"

Mark 10:35-45, Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c

July 14, 2019

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Every time I come in this place to worship,
I pick my seat.

I'm used to sitting right here in the first row of chairs.

It's been a long time since we've spoken about *why* I sit where I sit.

But first, why do you sit where you sit?

Really...think about it.

What are some of the reasons we sit where we sit?

There used to be two big chairs up there...

oh, there they are...back there!

Does part of you still wish they were up here?

Did you ever sit there...when you lead worship here or elsewhere...*or maybe when no one was looking?*

Up there.

That's where the pastor is "supposed" to sit and the one leading worship with her.

For Pete's sake, *why then isn't she sitting there?!?*

Jesus says, "The cup that I drink, you will drink"

(it gets harder before it gets better because I am asking you to buck the system...not for the sake of bucking,

but for your sake and the sake of others...people are more important than systems, traditions, habits).

Jesus says, "and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized"

(you are washed with the grace of God which takes away the past and opens you to the present,

in-courages you to follow me and not your former ways or the ways of this world).

Jesus says, "but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

....and so, for whom has it been prepared?

For your pastor?

For the one with the most power and authority through their position in the church? an elder? a deacon?

Is it someone outside the church?
Jesus said someone is prepared to sit there...who?

...who will it be who gets to sit with God in paradise?

It's a good thing Jesus goes on to explain because just like the disciples,
we all want to be powerful, get the attention of sitting up front in the big chairs in
our lives...yes we do...

at home, at work, at church, in our organizations.
That's not necessarily bad!

We all need affirmation and credit and
a sense of our own power,

and we get bent out of shape (like the disciples)
when we don't get it!

So...are power and authority bad things?

Who gets to sit up there? ...to have power and authority?

Well, I don't imagine Jesus in Jesus' glory is sitting on a throne.

That would be the last place I'd expect to see Jesus...

the last place I'd expect to see God is sitting in a great stone chair amongst the
clouds!

Where is Jesus seated? What seat would he choose?

Jesus is wherever there are those who are in pain,
in confusion, caught up in the culture,
caught up in despair, left out or behind.

Jesus is with those who need him most...including you!

Jesus is not like a worldly king...it's not a worldly kingdom he's after...

it's a kingdom where we are all together as a covenant community...community the way it can be...

where everyone has power and “say”, joy and fulfillment, the sense of being heard and mattering.

...not in chairs but around a communion table
of internal empowerment.

And Jesus says, “You know that among the Gentiles, those whom they recognize as their rulers...lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.

But it is not so among you. ...and whoever wishes to be first among you (sit in the “seat” next to Jesus) must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life.”

Power is not a bad thing in and of itself.
Without it, you won't survive! God wants you to survive!
In fact, Jesus is giving us a pep talk to be powerful!

...and to take that power and use it as the divine ruler
of life would have us use it: to serve others!

This is how we are prepared to sit in just the right seat next to Jesus, with God...forever...

by using our power and abilities and time and gifts
to serve the needs of others...just like Jesus did...
just like many of us are beginning to do.

You see, there's open seating in heaven!

Enough seats for all of us who get it...and God never gives up on anyone until they do!

I believe God never gives up on anyone...no matter how mislead, how evil, how destructive, how hateful, how corrupt in power.

I believe God will go even beyond time and mortality to reach us. Like in that confession...he descended into to hell and on the third day he returned...I wonder if anyone chose to come with him...

In God's timing, even “*that*” person you will see
“in heaven” sitting next to Jesus *as you* sit there with him.

There are no power plays or jobs or houses or titles
in this life that assure the best seating with Jesus.

In this life, those who engage in power plays only get temporary rewards...folding chairs!

...until, in God's timing, they “get it” and take their seats.

But make no mistake! Those are not cheap seats!

When we follow Jesus (on the road home) using our power for the good of all, we are saying yes! to living a life diametrically opposed to many of the values and norms of society... including church norms!

It may mean befriending the most unpopular kid at school.

It may mean losing a job rather than compromising your integrity.

It may mean refusing to blindly obey your government.

It may mean going hungry yourself in order to feed others.

It may mean giving up an event to go to church where your presence impacts people.

Drinking from the cup that Jesus drank from is not easy.
We may well wish to ask God to take it away if possible

...just like Jesus did at first...filled with sorrow
at the cost of discipleship. It's a hard road to follow!

There is a cost, but we are called to serve...

as Jesus did...called to make a difference in the lives of the people around us. And we deserve to make it home!

-So, how will you know if you're making the right choices to reserve a good seat for yourself?

Would you feel comfortable with your choices if you saw Jesus standing next to you as you made them?

He is.

You do know how to make good choices. You can feel it, even if as you try to deny it, you *can* feel it.

-How do you know...if there'll be seating available for you in heaven when you get there?

Look at who you are serving right now in your life through the choices you are making?

Are you self-serving? Serving in easy ways?

Serving leftovers instead of a banquet?

Or, serving others beyond your own family...and including them.

I know it's scary to serve.

It's even scary to serve in your own church where others are known to you and you are cared about...

how much scarier to serve people you don't know who are so needy.

But you are equipped and able to do this work.

God made you to be able to do this work and God gives us each other to make it easier to go and serve...

one by one, together...powerful!

This the way...this is the road!
A map even...all the way home!

So...where are you seated? Well...

We are about to start donating for holiday meals and gifts for the hungry and poor at DI and around our county.

How many excuses do you have to say no I don't really have enough money left over to help out?

...beware...folding chair!

We are being better stewards of our space as we host outreach mission all year long and greet those outside the church with more inviting worship.

Are you really willing to let our increasing building needs and YOUR fond memories of the past keep you from supporting mission and keep you from true worship and ministry?

...beware...folding chair!

We are being invited to teach Sunday school, support ASLC, participate in DI.

How many excuses will you make saying you don't have the time to do that?

....beware...folding chair!

We are in process inviting people to honor Tippe's ministry through financial support...
Impacting our lives as well as the lives of others.

How many excuses do you have to say no...I'll not give more?

...beware...you just may be sitting on a folding chair!

How many excuses will you make to avoid changing your life in any way that will help you devote **more you** to others, or even just to come...

and so be on that road home...with us?

Those changes it will take may just be what

can lead you to the life you say you long to live.

They may be just what keeps you on that road...
so you get to go home...
to yourself, to our God, with each other.

Not going to do it? Think I'm being too pushy? ...beware...folding chair!

You know...*if you sat up there* in those big chairs,
it wouldn't really feel good.

I think that it's partly because the chairs would face away from the cross and the table.

**The cross symbolizes the courage (not the suffering, but courage offered to freely chose a do-over!)
which comes if we truly sup with Jesus at the table.**

The cross and table symbolize the joy that comes in being freed from the perspectives of this world...
being in community...
in staying on that road home...bumps and all!

There is a cost, but there is joy in freedom!
Praise be to God! Good seating is available!

For God's sake, for your own sake, pick a good seat...
a new seat!