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St. Mark's, LaGrange

James and John are excited.
They can't wait!
They are following THE messiah.
The real one.

There have been false messiahs.
There have been people they're excited about before.
There have been those,
like John the Baptist,
who seemed to be sent straight from God,
but who just wouldn't let anybody call them messiah.

Instead, they proved their holiness,
like John,
by going out into the wilderness,
by eating bugs and wearing a hair shirt.

But now...they've got Jesus.
They've got the full meal deal.

Sure, he's a little...restrained with his power.
Sure he's more humble than they are,
but that all proves his holiness.
That all proves that he really is the one
and when he decides to finally let loose:
those Romans better WATCH OUT!!!

But first...they want to ensure their places.

They want to be certain

that they know where they stand.

They want to give their lives to Jesus

and see what they get back in return.

What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asks.

“And they said to him,

Grant us to sit,

one at your right hand and one at your left,

in your glory.”

In your glory.

Perhaps I'm reading too much into this,

but I can't help but hear

In your glory,

with a little bit of

so that we can be glorified too.

Jesus takes them seriously.

He says, *You don't know what you are asking.*

You don't know the suffering

and the pain you are asking for.

Much as I've tried to tell you,

y'all aren't hearing me

when I tell you about the cross and the tomb,

or even about the resurrection.

Perhaps it was inevitable that these 12 would go down the way they did.
Or rise in glory the way they did.

Perhaps Peter,
 following after THE messiah,
 was always bound to be crucified upside down,
and most of the rest were run through with spears or crucified too.

 Only John seems to have escaped the martyr's death,
 dying of old age,
 so the tradition goes.

What do we think?
What do we think it means to follow THE messiah?

In some Christian quarters,
 martyrdom is being manufactured.
 From the mania about Heavy Metal music in the 80's
 to the sometime hysteria
 around disallowing teacher-led prayer in school,

there is a confusion in some Christian quarters
 around a loss of privileged status
 and actual martyrdom.

Why?

Why do we go looking for martyrdom?

From Roy Moore's attempts
to place the Ten Commandments in front of the Alabama Supreme Court
to a desire to end poverty
or global warming from a committee meeting,
Christians across the political spectrum
want to do 'BIG THINGS for Jesus.'

And when I put it that way,
I can understand the impulse.

I want to do big things too.

I'm not sure I want to be famous for Jesus,
but I want to know that I'm making a difference.

I want to know that I'm helping create the kingdom.
I want to know that Jesus might recognize me,
and at least say,
"Well...Allen tried,
and I love him for that."

Fred Craddock,
prophet of the creeks and hollows of North Georgia
and world class preacher of the gospel,
he summed it up like this.

*To pour myself out for others
...to pay the price of martyrdom
- I'll do it.
I'm ready, Lord,
to go out in a blaze of glory.*

*We think giving our all to the Lord
is like taking a \$1,000 bill
and laying it on the table
- 'Here's my life, Lord.
I'm giving it all.'*

*But the reality for most of us
is that the Lord sends us to the bank
and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters.*

*We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there.
Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles
instead of saying, 'Get lost.'
Going to a committee meeting.
Give a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home.*

*Usually, giving our life to Christ isn't glorious.
It's done in all those little acts of love,
25 cents at a time.*

*It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory;
it's harder to live the Christian life
little by little
over the long haul.*

And it is.
It's harder.

There's always room for doubt,
for second guessing.

If you lay that \$1,000 bill down on the table,
and it all goes to hell,
you can say,
Well, at least I tried.

If we are laying that thousand dollars down
a quarter at a time,
it will take us our whole life.

And along the way,
we'll keep finding nickels and dimes in the couch cushions.
We'll be picking up more to give
all along the way.

It really will take us our whole life
to give ourselves to God.

Our WHOLE life.

And I wonder if that's what it means,
to give your life to Jesus.

It doesn't happen all at once.
It doesn't happen in one decision.

It happens sixteen times a day.
And when I fail,
when I hold on to that quarter
instead of giving it away

I can turn right around
and I can give a way fifty cents or a dollar the next time around.

I wonder,
if giving our whole life to Jesus,
will just take,
well...
our whole lives long?