

“What Would Jesus Want?”

Mark 10: 35-45

Divinity member Randy Gentler shared with me something he wrote a few months back entitled, “What Would Jesus Want?”

Many of us may have that crazy neighbor who is always complaining about our kids and calls the cops on every little thing you or they do.

At the dinner table, we might want to say nasty things about him in front of our children. But what would Jesus want?

Is there someone at work who talks about you behind your back? Are they cruel and childish? Isn't it easy to want to do the same to them? But what would Jesus want?

I've had enough of drivers who tailgate and weave in and out of traffic. I just want to honk my horn, shake my fist, and call them names. But what would Jesus want?

Is there a friend or family member who constantly puts up Facebook posts of their expensive trips, new cars, the latest phones, and their perfect children? Aren't you just sick of it? Doesn't it make you just a little envious? But what would Jesus want?

Have you hurt people you love or disappointed family or friends? But you cannot ask them for forgiveness? And you believe God will not forgive you? Have you been hurt and disappointed by a family member or friend? And you can't bring yourself to forgive them.

But what would Jesus want?

Global warming, school shootings, inflation, shortages, and threats from enemies. Many study, watch, read, talk, and most of all worry about such things constantly to the point of being obsessed.

But what would Jesus want?

The furnace stopped working, the roof leaks, the car needs a transmission, and you have had enough! Maybe you are thinking “Why did God make this happen? I’ve prayed to him. But he’s no help.”

But what would Jesus want?

I cannot believe groups of people like BLM and Pro-Palestinians are able to obstruct traffic, commerce, and prevent citizens from going to work? I’ve heard people say, “Just drive through them!”

But what would Jesus want?

There are those who feel ‘All LBTGQ are sinners and are going to hell’. Some believe anyone of a different race or culture from them are worthless.

But what would Jesus want?

What Jesus wants:

- Jesus wants everyone, especially His followers, to love others. To be kind to people. Not hateful, resentful, or antagonistic.
- Jesus wants us to be respectful to all people, even if we do not care for them. Be accepting and tolerant of those different from us. Try putting ourselves in their place.
- Jesus wants us not to obsess over events which are beyond our control.
- Jesus wants us to take everything to him in prayer. Turn your concern over to him.

- Jesus wants us to know that he does answer our prayers. It may not be what we want. But he answers with a ‘yes’, a ‘no’, or a ‘not right now’. He will always walk with us and help us through difficulties.
- Jesus wants us to know that whatever we may have done, he has forgiven us. Jesus is reckless with his grace.

What would Jesus want?

Not what we would always want to do.

In today’s gospel text, James and John assume Jesus will be the next president of Israel and they want to make sure they are in line to be the vice-president and secretary of state.

James and John don’t realize that they are infected with the virus of sin. The particular virus that threatens to lock up their lives, and bring their spiritual lives to a frozen halt is pride and ambition. They come to Jesus, not with a request, but a demand: “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you” (v. 36).

It’s then that their pride and ambition are revealed: “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory” (v. 37).

Jesus knows that, if this sort of attitude infects them and the other disciples, it will totally freeze their spiritual life and any opportunity to be of service in the kingdom of God. So, Jesus isn’t buying what they’re selling. He says, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

“We are,” they reply.

“The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those whom it has been prepared” (vs. 38-40).

Then Jesus explains how he, himself, will offer his life as a “ransom” in order to unfreeze, unlock, bring to life those whose lives are mired in, stuck in, frozen in sin.

The other 10 disciples were “indignant” when they heard about this exchange, mostly because they hadn’t thought of the scheme first. But Jesus, the expert, pulls them all aside, and begins to talk about the problem of sinful pride that’s been infecting them all. “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” (v. 42). It is those in power, in other words, who tend to hold people hostage, requiring much from them while giving little or nothing in return.

“But it is not so among you,” says Jesus to his disciples. “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all” (vs. 43-44). Those who follow Jesus do not hold others hostage to their ambition and personal gain. Instead, they pay dearly on behalf of others, giving of themselves and their resources to serve others. As followers of Jesus, we live generously.

It’s the paradoxical economics of Jesus: You only gain when you give away. Thus, the theme of our October stewardship emphasis “Live Generously”. To live generously is to give away as Jesus gives away.

Then Jesus explains what he will be giving away: his very life. “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (v. 45).

This is foreshadowing, of course, of what Jesus will do on the cross. He will address the problem of a people whose lives are locked and encrypted by sin by paying the ransom permanently, and doing a total system reboot that will keep them clean and secure forever.

It is a steep price to pay, but the result is a redeeming of our sinful past, thus making it possible for us to effectively run the love and grace he installs in us when we follow him.

It’s no coincidence that this theme of the cross as ransom is prevalent throughout the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Paul makes it plain that there is only one who mediates between God and humankind, bridging the gap in the relationship caused by sin: “Christ Jesus, himself human who gave himself as a ransom for all”. Elsewhere, Paul reminds us that we were “bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20) and that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13).

The death of Jesus on the cross reboots us with his sacrificial love. We no longer need to keep paying the debt of sin in our lives because it’s been canceled. We are set free to operate and work as God designed us to function to live generously, to give our lives on behalf of others so that they, too, may experience the freedom and new life offered by Jesus Christ.

So, what are some of the things that threaten to lock up our lives?

What brings our lives to a complete halt?

What causes a total freeze of our love and affection for the things of God and the welfare of others? For Randy, it's whenever we don't do what Jesus wants us to do.

For James and John, it was their ambition and pride. Thinking only of themselves, they sought to gain a position in the kingdom that would elevate them even above their companions on the discipleship journey.

For some, it is greed for wealth that shuts down, not only our spirituality, but our humanity. For others, it is lust that ruins relationships. Some find that envy and jealousy eats away the inner life until it is raw and bleeding. Others are too lazy to care one way or the other. Perhaps it is anger and an abusive and controlling personality that keeps your life frozen and dysfunctional.

Whatever it is, if the gospel is anything, it is about being freed from the things that freeze us. It is about being set free! It is about being released to a new life! It's about living generously!

What can we do to prevent our spiritual lives from freezing up?

- *Stay in God's word.* The psalmist wrote: "How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word" (119:9). In that same psalm we read, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path" (v.105).
- *Prayer.* When worry and anxiety tie us up in knots, we're instructed to pray: "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with

thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). Notice the “guarding” function of the peace of Christ! The peace of Jesus Christ guards us, protects us from the viruses that threaten us.

- *Community.* We find strength in numbers! It’s no accident that those who are in AA go to weekly meetings. It is a key to their sobriety. Likewise, the Bible reminds us “to provoke on another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).

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May the peace of God . . .

#708 – Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love