

10.17.21 L29P21 Ransomed by the Servant Lord

- A man named Reuben Klamer died last month at the ripe old age of 99
- He was an inventor, and one of the things that he created was The Game of Life which is second only to Monopoly as the most popular board game in the world
- Since its introduction, The Game of Life has gone through a variety of versions, and the rules and game have changed over time, but originally, the goal of The Game of Life was to use a spinning dial to advance your little car across the playing board, fill your car with little pegs representing life events like getting married, and then winning at the end if you had accumulated the most money.
- The original 1960s version even had \$100,000 bills with the picture and name of then television personality Art Linkletter on them
- Now like many games, The Game of Life assumed a set of values, and the values embedded in this game were to get ahead, live a successful life, and end up with the most money
- This is a game that the disciples James and John would have enjoyed, and a game whose values they probably would have embraced
- In today's gospel reading we hear James and John trying to get ahead of the rest of the disciples [Mark 10:32-45]
- There were twelve disciples, and many other notable followers like Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, but from among all those followers, James and John tried to get ahead by lobbying Jesus to reserve for them the most honored places next to him when he came into his glory
- James and John asked for the privilege of sitting on the right and left hand of Jesus – that is, on either side of him
- Not surprisingly the rest of Jesus' disciples and followers were angry.
- Who did James and John think that they were?
- Why did they think that they were better than anyone else?
- Why did they think that they were so special?
- All that would be bad enough, and offensive to every other follower of Jesus, but James and John's attempt to get ahead was absolutely tone deaf and ironic!
- For not the first time, *but for the third time*, Jesus had told his disciples and followers that instead of earthly glory, he would soon undergo great suffering

- Jesus said that very soon in Jerusalem he was going to be betrayed and condemned, mocked and flogged, killed... and only after all that raised from the dead [Mark 10:33-34]
- The road to Jerusalem was not a way of worldly accomplishment, wealth, or glory, and James and John were tone deaf to this
- The road to suffering was the path of Jesus the servant, and so it was absolutely ironic that James and John sought status
- The way to the cross was the way of Jesus the servant – the Son of God who lowered himself to become a servant, and who had come into the world to give his very life as a ransom payment for the lives of his closest disciples... to give his very life as a ransom payment for the lives of his many other followers... and to be the servant to give his very life as a ransom payment even for the lives of all his followers today... including us
- Jesus said to James and John, and to us today, “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; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. [Mark 10:32-45]”
- The deep truth is that life is not a game – Life is a gift
- Our lives have been ransomed and paid for by our Lord who became our servant, in order to give his life for us
- And when we recognize that Jesus came not in blinding glory, but instead came in humble service to us and the world, then Jesus Christ’s humility will shape our understanding of both our church, and our individual lives of discipleship
- Because of the servant-Christ, our congregations need to be servants, not seekers of status, so we at Jerusalem need to continue to serve in ways that already do, like getting diapers for children and adults, support work with the homeless, feeding the hungry at the local pantry, under our cloister walk, and throughout the world... and we need to continue to look for additional ways to serve our most vulnerable neighbors
- Meanwhile, in our daily life, our goals shift – our goals shift from getting ahead and accumulating wealth, and our goals shift from seeking the privileged box seats where worldly wealth and power sits, to the bleacher seats where Jesus is much more likely to sit

- Life is NOT about getting, achieving, or accumulating – rather life in Christ is created and formed by our servant-Lord, who calls us to be God’s servants in the world, and to be a people who share in words and actions the abundance of Christ-like servant-love