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“It shall not be so among you” Mark 10:43).

*Sir 36:1, 4-5a, 10-17; Mark 10:32-45*

The Gospels reflect how little prepared the disciples were for what happened to Jesus. They also do not spare the Apostles for their obtuseness in wanting the glory of accompanying the Messiah to Jerusalem so much that they missed his explicit warnings about the paradox awaiting them.

Mark, thought to be the earliest version, recounts how James and John tried to get Jesus to appoint them his chief lieutenants, a rank above the others. Matthew adds to this story that they even asked their mother to make the appeal for them (20:20-28). This causes dissension among the disciples, a show of ambition totally contrary to Jesus’ example that his movement was not about power but about service.

The story contains words that might have rewritten church history if obeyed, that Jesus did not want his followers to be like the rulers of this world, lording it over others, making their importance felt. “It shall not be so among you” has not, to my knowledge, been the motto on any episcopal crest, and the renaissance court practice of color-coded rank and costume has taken firm hold as the image of church authority.

The Gospel writers did not spare the first Apostles any embarrassment, and in fact founded the church on their need for mercy when their crucified and risen Master forgave them for their ignorance and pride and sent them forth to preach the unconditional love they learned the hard way. They all drank the cup he drank and were baptized with his baptism. We are all in their shoes today, following Jesus through the paradox of his suffering and death to discover the true glory of humble

service. Is there any other way?

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