

Text Isaiah 53:4-12; Psalm 91:9-16; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45
Theme Challenge the Paradigms
Subject James & John's request for positions; the Way of the Cross
Occasion 20th after Pentecost – October 22, 2006 –Peace – Pella

“It's hard to change the status quo,” she told me

Hm-mmm: *status quo* – the state of things – the way things are
This is because within the *status quo* there are paradigms
Hm-mmm: paradigms – examples – models of how to live
“Buy low; sell high” is an example of a business paradigm

Copernicus challenged a paradigm

He recognized the world revolves around the sun
The sun doesn't revolve around the world
People began to think in new ways about the universe and themselves
Watson in his book *Let God Be God* used this fact to help us understand Martin Luther's reform – how he challenged the *status quo* and a prevailing paradigm
Luther taught from scripture that what we do does not save but what God has done in Christ Jesus saves
Saved not by works but by God's grace

The 10th chapter of Mark is a collection of teachings by Jesus knit together by Mark so the Word of God, the teachings of Jesus, can live among us
In this chapter Jesus confronts the *status quo*;
he invites us to challenge the paradigms

Jesus teaches:

anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (10:15)
and **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. (10:25)**

Linger here for a moment

Jesus is not teaching about heaven and life after death;

He's teaching about life in the kingdom of God now – *the realm of God*
Living now in the realm where God rules
Living under the rule of God is difficult for the rich because, in this life, the rich make the rules: the rich set the paradigms, establish the *status quo*
Children, bereft of wealth and imagined-power, enter the realm of God more easily
When we are young, every paradigm is fresh and new
Paradigms provide order life, give direction and offer security
It's easier for children, in their innocence, to enter the realm of God

We heard or read about this after the recent murder of Amish children in Pennsylvania

The Amish community, in the face of their grief, responded with forgiveness for the murderer, attended his funeral, gave money to support his family

Their response was evidence of their innocent determination to live in the realm of God with the paradigm of forgiveness rather than vengeance

They were challenging a paradigm of the world

When I first arrived here, Peace was 11 years old.

I asked members to tell me some of our congregation's traditions

A charter member told me, "*Anything we do twice is a tradition*"

We were delightfully fresh and new: like children

The paradigms we brought with us were vulnerable to challenge

There was no *status quo*

We have some of our own paradigms – they've always been here but recently they have been named:

mission is our foundation

to love others and share the good news

together we grow peace

Here we are, 30 years old next month

Generally our ministries fit with our paradigms – and we're open to reforming them

These paradigms challenge many of the world's

Just before today's gospel reading Mark reports a dramatic teaching from Jesus:

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (10:31)

This challenges the world's paradigms

He is teaching a paradigm from the kingdom of God

But many who are first will be last, and last first (10:31)

As Mark tells it, the disciples were **astonished**, those following with them **were afraid**

Note how this contrasts with a prevailing paradigm in the world:

"be first, win, whatever it takes"

rings & medallions have served as evidence

George C. Scott, playing the role of General Paton, gave voice to this worldly paradigm as it has survived through the centuries

Maybe you remember the opening scene from movie released in 1969, during the heat of the Viet Nam War,

Standing in front of an enormous American flag Paton growled out,

Americans love a winner; and will not tolerate a loser

Americans play to win all the time ...

The very thought of losing is hateful to Americans

Though he supposed winning is an American value, I submit that it is a human paradigm taught among many cultures

You understand: people live in the paradigm to win
 Whether table games or on the playground, court, course, diamond or field
 Whether the classroom or business
 Whether the campaign trail or international diplomacy
 Winning and dominance are the prevailing paradigms
 Emphasis on the paradigms of sportsmanship, effort, and teamwork fade
 under the veil of victory

For Jesus to teach **first will be last, and last first** is very serious

So he took the disciples **aside and told them what was going to happen to him.**
"We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." (10:32b-34)

Clearly Jesus is living confidently into a new paradigm
 A paradigm from the realm of God
 Don't miss it – *Three days later he will rise*
 Yes, betrayal, condemned, mocked flogged, and killed
 By the world's paradigm a loser
 But *Three days later he will rise*

The kingdom of God is a realm beyond the limitations of this world's measure
 A realm beyond the grip of time and space

Before I go further, let's remember the Easter shout

Christ is risen!

(He has risen indeed! Alleluia!)

We challenge the paradigm of death
 it could not hold him
 it will not hold us

As Mark reports it, the disciples were walking along with Jesus following his dramatic teaching about the way of the suffering, when James and John approached Jesus (presumably a private conversation along the way – you can imagine it – walking in a group but apart, gentle voices)

"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." (Mk 10:35b)

Change the *status quo* Jesus; consider a new paradigm

Instead of you telling us what to do;

let us tell you, Jesus, what to do (like praying "*My will be done*")

"*What do you want me to do?*" asks Jesus

"*Let us sit at your right and at your left when you take charge,*" they say

Instead of Jesus, the teacher, sitting and the disciples, the students, standing

They would like to sit alongside of him

That's a paradigm shift
 Not subordinate to the teacher but equal to the teacher

To be sure, in Mark's telling there is a time when mortals are at the right and left of Jesus
 When Jesus is lifted high on the cross,

They crucified 2 robbers with him, one on his right & one on his left. (15:27)
 That's not what James and John had in mind
 They were working a worldly paradigm – a paradigm of glory

Jesus is immediately worried about them

"You do not know what you are asking. Are you able ... (10:38a)

He had just described the way he was headed – what he was facing
 Suffering, humiliation and death

They are bold to say, **We are able. (10:39a)**

They had seen Jesus shining in glory with Moses and Elijah on a mountain top
 That's surely what they hoped for – denial of death; grasping for glory
 With hindsight I can tell you the legends that James and John did go the way of
 suffering, humiliation and death
 James would be crucified

John would survive being thrown into boiling oil and then wild beasts and
 finally exiled to a barren island to die at an old age with other convicts

Consistent with Jesus' obedience to God's ways and rule

He has no authority to grant position to these two
 He would not challenge the paradigms of God's rule in their behalf

Of course the other 10 are indignant

We know the feeling
 when others advance themselves; parade their accomplishments
 especially when we are diminished in the process

Jesus admonishes them gently: **it is not so among you (10:43a)**

And he offers another paradigm of the kingdom
whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (10:44)

I hold in my memory the response from one of the saints who returned to public life after
 an extended time of living as a hermit when he was alone devoting his time to prayer and
 study – he was asked, "Why did you stop?"

He responded, "*If I live alone, whose feet will I wash?*"

Following Jesus Christ invites us to challenge the paradigms

Belonging is extolled beyond winning
 Giving is our preference over getting
 Serving becomes our privilege rather than the opulence of the elegant, luscious life

Not so long ago I imagined how this could be lived for a few days from among us
 Beyond our annual mission trip to Agua Prieta – you can still sign up
 Beyond our support of AIDS orphans – there are 160 awaiting sponsorship
 Beyond our weekly food distribution – your generosity is always appreciated

I have in mind this paradigm teaching from Jesus

and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple-- truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward." (Matt. 10:42)

What if at Tulip Time we would fully subscribe the LYO Lemonade stand?

We already donate many of the supplies for the tea, lemonade, coffee and almond bars

Suppose we would also give to the LYO the gross amount they have earned each year at the lemonade stand (covering the cost of other menu items)

Then, without publicity, when a person places their order, we would give it to them in the name of Jesus without fanfare and without charge

When the Pella Historical Society asks for their 8% of our profits, we would still pay from the net gain

Challenging the paradigm of Tulip Time profit in behalf of Christian hospitality in this city of refuge

In this would be our quiet, determined witness to live now in the realm of God while also providing an experience in generous, biblical hospitality for our young people

I offer this without expectation

only as an example of how the people of Peace might challenge another paradigm

In life we live with all sorts of paradigms

Unless we challenge the paradigms the *status quo* prevails

The Son of Man (Jesus) came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. (10:35)

The *status quo* might be working for you but it's not working for millions of others

The gospel of Jesus Christ is an invitation to a paradigm shift

A Copernican revolution – a Lutheran reformation

We are not central – others are central

We live not to be served but to serve

Let us be all the more determined that

Together We Grow Peace

He is our peace