

**Introduction**

When I was young we spent many of our holidays with my Grandmother in a small seaside village in Cornwall. It was the most wonderful playground. Of course we loved swimming in the sea and playing on the sand But I also loved the rocky cliffs and the high rolling Dunes. One of the games we used to play on the cliffs and rocks was 'King of the Castle'. One of us would scramble up a high rock, stand up and shout, 'I'm the king of the castle, you're the dirty rascal!' and the others would try to climb higher so they could do the same.

There is something in all of us that quite likes to be on top, to be able to look down on others and think we are better than them – even if it is only a game. We like to be in charge and respected and looked up to.

Another game we used to play continuously was, 'Follow my leader' Following and leading are intimately connected, but different activities. To follow is to go after, taking your lead from someone else. To lead is to set the direction and expect others to join with you in the task or journey. Both are very important.

Today most people find following difficult – think about how often we question those who would lead: Why? Where are we going? Is this the right way? James and John wanted leadership and status, but they were challenged by Jesus whose leadership is all about following; following God and doing what God asks. In the service this morning Dan and Claire have made a commitment to following Jesus, for themselves and on behalf of Lorelei, As a family they are committing themselves to being followers of Jesus. This means learning more about who he is and what he wants for us. It means listening for his voice, that small inner voice that speaks inside us and tells us what to do and how to behave.

**Hebrews 5:1-11****Mark 10:35-45**

It is an exciting challenge but it can also be a bit scary. Jesus was following the road to Jerusalem, as God asked of him, which meant ultimately suffering and death. James and John followed, but they tried to do so on their own terms. I wonder, are we a bit like James and John, do we do the same? In the service Claire and Dan said, on Lorelei's behalf that they would submit to Christ as Lord. That is a big commitment. It means living our lives and making our decisions with reference to God and not just pleasing ourselves. The cost of that can put us off, In a world where independence and being your own person is constantly emphasised it can be difficult to follow someone else – even if they are God.

When asked if they can share with Jesus in what he is doing, James and John say yes – but I don't think they understood what that would really mean. They wanted the power and authority but were not really clear about the cost. Similarly, we who follow Jesus and ask God to act for us, how committed are we to hearing and doing what God might be asking of us?

'Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.' These are the words of Mother Teresa. When we are challenged to serve a needy world, the task can seem overwhelming. The world is a big place. We may feel useless, helpless, but we can do one thing with great love. And we can start by thinking about the needs of the part of the world where God has placed us. We are all in this together – we need not feel or be on our own in doing so. During the last eighteen months we have found new ways of serving our community and being known in the community. It is important that we continue to show God's love and care to others as we slowly move out of pandemic to living with the Coronavirus.

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Are our eyes open to see God in every human being? Dare we pray less for what we want and more to see the world as God sees it? It is challenging seeing people who are different to us – people who have opposing ideas and principles, people we may genuinely fear – as all being God's children just as much as we consider ourselves to be. Jesus calls us to love and to serve 'all', not just our friends and family. That too can be very challenging, and is why, every day, we should pray (in the words of St Loyola): 'Teach us to give and not to count the cost.'