

Minster Bethel Congregational Church (MBCC)

4/07/2021 -- Disciples in Question 11&12 – James and Simon

Unsung Heros



Next week is our zoom
"Church Parade"
All are welcome to join at 11am

All lockdown services can be found at: www.mbccs.co.uk

For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Romans 10:2-3

Good morning and welcome to this week's thoughts about the last two disciples.

Our 1st hymn for today is: "I the Lord of Sea and Sky"

[I, the Lord of Sea and Sky \(Here I Am, Lord\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have born my peoples pain.
I have wept for love of them, They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?



The reading is Romans 12 [Romans 12 NIVUK - A living sacrifice - Therefore, I urge - Bible Gateway](#)



James the Less and Simon the Zealot - 2 unsung heroes

This last year we have heard much about the unsung heroes, nurses, doctors, shopkeepers, teachers so many to mention along with the thousands of volunteers and those people just watching out for those around them. Most unrecognised and unnamed publically. Today we come to the final two apostles James and Simon. These two disciples are relatively unknown and are sometimes seen as making up the 12.

However, in the story of the creation we read that God created the sun and the moon as two great lights; the sun to rule by day and the moon to rule by night. He made the stars as lesser lights. As among the heavenly bodies there are greater and lesser lights so among the men who made up the Apostles there is also such a distinction.

The disciples did not all share the spotlight to the same extent. There were those disciples who were great lights, like Peter, James and John and there were those disciples who we do not know very much about.

Perhaps the final two disciples –the “lesser lights” should be more encouraging to us than those apostles that to us look like super saints. These “lesser” known apostles were just as important as the others and from them we can learn some valuable lessons. This is important because behind the scenes in any church there are always unsung heroes, people who serve quietly, without public acclaim, doing things that are essential to the health and growth of the church. The truth of the matter is that the majority of Christians must be ready to serve God in this way, anonymously, with little or no accolades.

James the Less reminds us that though we may not be known or recognized by the world we are still important to God!

The only thing that the Bible tells us about this disciple is his name “James the son of Alphaeus” (Luke 6:15). Matthew’s father’s name was also Alphaeus, and it is suggested that James was Matthew’s brother. In Mark 15:40 he is referred to as “James the Less” which is probably a nickname. James the Less or “Little James” was probably a small, young, quiet person who stayed mostly in the background. He reminds us of the unnamed people mentioned in Hebrews 11:33-38:

“who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Disciples like James the Less and the unnamed saints of Heb 11 remind us that though faithful, patient humble service may go unnoticed and unrecorded by men, it is not forgotten by God.

So though we may not be known or recognized by the world we are still important to God!

Simon the Zealot reminds that what we are zealous about is the most important thing!

In Luke 6:15 Simon is called “the Zealot.” In Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18 he is called “Simon the Canaanite.” This however, is not a reference to his being born in Canaan or the village of Cana. It comes from the Hebrew root (qanna) and means “to be zealous.”

Simon was apparently at one time a member of the political party known as the Zealots. One other famous Zealot we know was Barabbas; the man offered by Pilate and chosen by the people in the place of Christ. The fact that Simon bore the tag “the Zealot” for the remainder of his life may also indicate that he had a fiery zealous temperament.

It is interesting to consider that Simon had to associate with Matthew who was at the opposite side of the political spectrum. Matthew collected taxes for the Romans and Simon killed them whenever he could. If things had been different Simon could and would have likely killed Matthew, given the opportunity. In the end, because the both loved Jesus, they ended up working side by side for the same cause – the spread of the gospel.

What matters most in life is not our zeal but what we are zealous about. This weekend we have seen many very zealous about the football, tennis, cycling and other sports, and there is nothing wrong with that, unless that is all they are zealous about. The Bible reveals that it is possible to be zealous for the wrong reasons. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 10:2-3,

“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”

Simon is a positive example of changing an improper zeal for that which has a lasting eternal purpose.

We need to be reminded that what we zealous about is the most important thing!

So although these disciples are not well known they were faithful. Even such obscure men as James the Less and Simon the Zealot had their share in turning the world upside down for Christ.

They were little noticed but they did their best for Jesus. Some of the greatest work for of God is done by those who names are unknown.

Today’s Pray:

Lord, please help us to keep our zeal focussed on You. We know that even if others do not see our work for You, You always do. Help us to be the unsung heroes that turn this world upside down in your name.

Amen.

Our next hymn is “Take My Life and Let it Be” [Take my life and let it be - YouTube](#)

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee,
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee,
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose,
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart; it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee,
Ever, only, all for Thee.

