

## Thought for the Week

*Thought for the day is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.*

*For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>*

*Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)*

*Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.*

### **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

#### **Matthew 20.17-28**

Do you know the hymn 'The Servant King'? It's by Graham Kendrick and was written in the 1980s. You might know it by the first line: From heaven you came helpless babe or from the chorus:

*This is our God, The Servant King*

*He calls us now to follow Him*

*To bring our lives as a daily offering*

*Of worship to The Servant King*

It expresses beautifully the teaching of Jesus in today's passage in Matthew. It was a lesson that was very hard to learn and that had to be taught over and over again before it really sunk in. So we hear Jesus telling the disciples for the third time, according to Matthew, that he would be put to death on the cross; and then would rise. But the very next episode is the mother of two of them coming to beg thrones on either side of Jesus, as if he hadn't said anything about suffering, as if he was about to seize power from Rome. Then the other 10 are angry and jealous that James and John had stolen a march on them!

So Jesus spells it out again. With us, it's not like any other human set up. We turn the usual ranking on its head. Power is not what we seek. With us, leadership is about service, sacrificial service. And he concludes with that memorable verse; 'the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many'.

That wasn't the end of it of course, and the shock, horror and confusion of the disciples at his arrest and crucifixion, reported faithfully by the evangelists, shows how little they had taken in of this message.

John adds the heart wrenching story of the footwashing on the night of the Last Supper, when Jesus tells them to follow his example and wash each other's feet. Perhaps the most touching narrative in the gospel and one that we usually re-enact on Maundy Thursday. Not this year since close contact and touching like that is way too risky just now.

But if we look back and think how slow the disciples were to take in this message and learn this lesson of service, what of the church ever since?

We must bring it back to home to our own individual lives, though, and our own faith journeys, as we seek to follow the Way of Jesus. This is the only level on which most of us can make a difference; ourselves. Have we, you and I, learnt this lesson? And like the disciples if we're honest, we will acknowledge that we are at best beginners in this lesson; that the business of putting others first and putting ourselves out for others is a daily challenge. In our 'me, me' culture, it is counter cultural.

So that hymn by Graham Kendrick makes a good prayer for Lent. The last verse says:

*So let us learn how to serve*

*And in our lives enthrone Him*

*Each other's needs to prefer  
For it is Christ we're serving.*

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may rejoice in your comfort,  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*