

**Servant of All**    Seventh Week in Ordinary Time    Tuesday, May 17, 2016    8:15 AM  
**Jas 4:1-10;    Mk 9:30-27**    (There's a fundamental weakness whereby people might actually know what's best, but not do it.)

**“If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”**

By coincidence both the first reading from the Letter of James and the Gospel according to Mark happen to be dealing with the same topic. The topic is communion. How do we achieve communion? **How do we get along, and what is at the root of basic division and dispute and conflict in a group, in a community?** The answer is what is basically wrong is self-importance. **Self-importance puts each person in conflict with every other person:** so with the disciples on the road arguing about who is the greatest; so in the community of James where jealousy, envy sets one against the other.

Well, **Jesus' point is that we have to see through what the world tells us about who we are.** I think the translation in James is rather poor: “lover of the world”; I think it means love of the world. And it means the world's love or **the world's way of valuing.** That is at the root of a sort of illusion that we grow up with. So we are **misinformed by the world** about who we are and then **we are driven by the evil one** that instigates every kind of inappropriate behavior and inappropriate desire, which then sets us one against the other. **Jesus' view** is if you really want to be first, in other words, if you really want to be godly, if you want to be like God, well, he is revealing what that means: being servant of all. That's godly. **What's God doing? Serving all, creating and sustaining everything all the time.**

Now this message is not new. It was not new to Jesus. It was not new to James. It was in the Old Testament; by the way, it happens to be in all religions in some form or another, because it's actually obvious. Unfortunately it is completely absent from the general mentality of the modern West, which has become irreligious and secular and therefore riven with divisions, not that the

whole world wasn't always riven with divisions because **people have never really practiced the religious principles that have been known**, shall we say, for centuries in all places. So here we get the idea of what Augustine was talking about, original sin; that is, **there's a fundamental weakness whereby people might actually know what's best, but not do it**. The wisest of the wise know precisely what needs to be said and done, and yet no one wants to follow. That's the condition we are in. **Jesus** entered into that condition; that is, in St. Paul's words, he **entered into sin so as to bear all the consequences and by so bearing them carry them and transform them by divine love and demonstrate precisely the path that he is, the way that he is to life, to a new world**.

Now traditional spirituality talks about mortification, which are acts, little choices, whereby one does not follow one's preference. That is a little bit too small. What we need to do is really **sit with this gospel and let it sink in** to the point where it really becomes true and our former way of life becomes false. Then we are getting somewhere.