

If you were here a couple of weeks ago, you might remember the story of Sebastian's quick exit from Tron while we were at Disney. Well, that same day, one of my favorite moments of the trip happened. As I mentioned before, Bash was *highly* skeptical of any ride that could be considered "big." It was his first time riding any rides like this, and so prior to any ride, the line experience would be filled with questions like, "Is there a hill?" "Is it fast?" "How fast?" "Is the hill big?" "Is this scary?" It would go on and on in an effort to find reassurance that he could conquer whatever ride lie at the end of the line.

Well, somewhere along the way, Bash decided that I was his roller coaster partner. If it was "big" and he had questions, then he was riding with me. Not at all panic inducing when his skinny little body leave a large gap between him and the lap bar. So, near the end of our Magic Kingdom day, we are preparing to ride Snow White's Mine Train. We have gone through the litany of questions and he is nervous but ready. We get on and get going and you can tell this is a *little* faster than he was expecting and the nerves are kicking, until...the ride slows and we start going through the dwarves' mine. There are glittering jewels everywhere and animatronics of all the dwarves singing and it's all pretty amazing.

Now, earlier in the week, we had done a character dinner where Bash got to meet Grumpy and Dopey, so in his brain, he has a very solid grasp on these characters, he's met them. They were at our hotel. They were at dinner. So when he sees them in their mine on this ride, he gasped, looked at me and went, "I didn't know the dwarves were going to be here!" I don't remember how I responded, but he then asked, "But *how* did they get here?" And I said, "It's magic, bud," and in the cutest little awed voice he went, "I get it...the *Magic Kingdom*." It was like the perfect moment of the Disney experience. All the magic coalesced in that moment, because in his seven year old brain, it all made sense. Magic made this happen, and for me, his response made my experience more magical. I had ridden that ride tons of times, but seeing it through his eyes, it made all the difference.

Our gospel today features one of my favorite scenes to imagine playing out like it's on a movie screen. Jesus has now told the disciples *twice* what lies ahead in his future—arrest, death, resurrection. James, Peter, and John have experienced the Transfiguration and now they're on their way to the next town. You can envisage Jesus walking a little ahead of the group and like a parent with a bunch of teenagers in tow, he can hear mumbled bickering in the background. Every time he turns back they all scuffle back in place, hands behind their backs, whistling like nothing happened, and then

once they keep walking, the noise picks back up again. Now, this is Jesus so you have to imagine he has an inkling about what is causing the ruckus behind him, but he waits for the opportune moment to find out what exactly was going on while they walked.

They arrive at their destination, sit down to rest, and Jesus just casually throws out there, “Hey, what were you guys talking about while we were walking here?” Imagine the panicked looks between them, the “oh, oh that? It was nothing” responses. No one wants to fess up because they know that Jesus is going to be less than impressed with the answer. Their conversation featured that age old back and forth of “I’m the best,” “No, *I’m* the best.” With I’m sure a few, “Yeah, well Jesus took *us* up the mountains” thrown in for good measure. After Jesus has just told them that he is preparing his heart and soul for death, they’re arguing about which of them is the greatest. If the dwarves whistle while they work, the disciples bicker while they walk apparently.

Now, thank goodness I am not Jesus, because my reaction to this would have been laced with sarcasm and eye rolls and very little teaching would have happened, but of course, Jesus uses this as the perfect teachable moment because apparently the disciples *still don’t get it*. Jesus takes all of there who’s better talk and turns it around. The question is not who is better,

the question is how can you all serve one another? He does the whole first shall be last thing, but you have to imagine that Jesus, in his head, is like, “They’re totally going to be like yeah, but which one of us *is first?*” So he decides the only thing for this is a visual example. They’re clearly staying at a family’s house, and so he invites one of the kids from the family into their circle. Now, of course, our modern sensibilities are like oh, a baby!! It’s cute and cuddly and of course you want the kids involved. That is not what is going on here.

In Jesus’ time, kids were...kind of useless and thus unworthy of attention or notice. Until they were of an age to work the fields, help around the house, bring something to the table for the family, kids were unimportant. So, what Jesus is saying is, your calling isn’t about which of you is the most important, your calling is about taking the most forgotten, ignored, declared unworthy person in God’s kingdom and serving them, making *them* the most important. They are the greatest. The ones who are on the margins, who are lost, who are forgotten and written off as irrelevant and worthless, they are who you are called to serve. And not only that, but you are called to see the kingdom through their eyes. They are the ones who can teach you something about this world we’re trying to create. See the

kingdom through the eyes of the lost, of the ignored, and then see what you think of servanthood, humility, grace, and the love of God for all.

Now, I don't think that most of us on a daily basis go through the thought process of the disciples, like, clearly I am God's favorite, *but* I do think that more often than we would care to admit we do have the thought of, well, certainly God loves me more than them, or well, I certainly know more than them when it comes to faith. We have our own brand of writing people off when it comes to their relationship with God either because of our own egos or because of our own prejudices and biases. We know the people that if Jesus placed them in the middle of our circle and said that here is the example of faith and the kingdom for you to observe, to serve, and to learn from we would be like, Jesus, you're crazy. I don't need to enumerate them because they're playing through each of our minds now. If Jesus came up to you and said by welcoming them you welcome me, we would be like *deep sigh* we are in *so much* trouble.

We are only interested in serving as much as it keeps us in our comfort zones and we are certainly only interested in serving as much as it allows us to hold tight to our assumptions and thoughts about the world and our neighbors. Which honestly means that we're mostly only interested in serving ourselves, our own needs, thoughts, and opinions. Yet...what we

forget is something that disciples forgot so easily too. If they would have taken a step back, they would have realized how many would have looked at them and been like, really Jesus? A bunch of fishermen, a tax collector, some kids who are going to argue about who is better, that's who you're going to call? Ok. They had had their own experience of being pulled from the margins and told they were worthy and then quickly forget about it once they started to feel important.

How many of us have felt that way? Like we were lost, forgotten, lonely, marginalized to the point that no one saw us. Maybe because of our pasts, because of who we love, because of things we struggle with, there are any number of reasons why the world would tell us that we aren't enough, and yet Jesus is the one who pulled us into the circle and said you are welcome here, so why are we so resistant to doing that for others? Why do we refuse to share that kind of joy with those we see struggling to find a place within the kingdom? Why would refuse to see the world through the eyes of a child who is willing to see magic, wonder, and welcome at every turn? Dare to see yourselves through the eyes of that kind of wonder, through the eyes of God who looks at you and says, there's the one I will welcome, and then dare to turn those eyes out into God's world and give the same kind of welcome to another. There is more than enough room at the

table and we are called to not let anyone linger on the outside, but to welcome them in so that they can say with awe and happiness, “I get it now...*God’s* kingdom come...” **AMEN!!!**