



SIEBENQUELL

But it shall not be so among you.



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In Mk 10, 43 Jesus says to his disciples: »But it shall not be so among you.«

This is a beautiful expression that highlights what should be a distinctive counter-cultural and counter-intuitive Christian trait. The competitive need to dominate others should not be what moves us. The tender but powerful images of the biblical stories teach us where we are to be found: standing beside people, or at their feet, but not above them. While others may chose the path of domination and oppression, we are called to lift people up, and encourage their journey toward another light, and another breath. The deep personal stories of each one of us, with all their complexity and messiness, their creativity and disorientation, their depth and shallowness, are not written by those who have had the ability to dominate us, but by those who have mastered the art of accompanying us in love. This is Jesus understanding of his own role in our lives: » For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.«

Jesus did not come to dominate the human. He came to redeem the human. This is not a grudging act of duty. This is his heart's desire. It is not merely an obligation laid upon him by God, his Father and our Father, but a hunger born of his own heart, a hunger for us. Jesus wants to reveal, even better, to unveil, what it means to be a human being, what

is life and what is not. He pursues this desire by drawing out a treasure of light, of sunshine, of beauty from each one of us.

Jesus liberates the new face of humanity; he redeems what is authentically human from the claws of the inhuman; he redeems the human heart from the deadly power of indifference. Jesus is the healer of the heart of darkness in the world, which has only one name: unlove. James and John, the »sons of thunder«, asked him: »We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.« They seek preferential treatment and status. But they are not alone in this heart of darkness. »And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.«

The other apostles get indignant. They are driven not by a love that seeks to heal and redeem their companions, but by rivalry, and by jealousy, because the two brothers have tried to manipulate the community in their own favour. This is always what is to be found at the heart of domination: the ambitious 2 and the indignant ten. They are merely opposite sides of the same culture of domination, oppression and control.

But Jesus does not follow their lead. He addresses the ambition of the two and also the indignation of the ten when he says: »You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.«

Jesus does not seek to shame them, but seeks their possibilities to live outside and beyond a culture of domination. He calls them to himself, in intimacy, heart to heart, and explains, argues. This is, of course, a time-consuming process. Why bother? Why not simply reprimand them and tell them to follow his teaching and example?

Because behind every human desire, even the most crooked, there is always a core of goodness, a desire for life, for beauty, for harmony. Every human desire always has a healthy part behind it, a very small part perhaps. But that is the part Jesus refuses to write off. Humans are not bad, they are fragile and easily mistaken.

The last sentence of the Gospel is of paramount importance: »For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.«

This is Jesus' unsettling self-understanding. It is a revolutionary and counter intuitive vision of the heart of the world. It suddenly illuminates the heart of God, the meaning of Christ's life, and therefore of the life of every man and woman. In our imaginations God is all-powerful, but in Jesus' self-revelation, he is a servant. He moves the image from all mighty to service.

Why did God create us? Many remember the answer from the catechism: To know, love and serve God in this life, and to enjoy him in the next. Jesus turns the perspective upside down, gives it a beauty and depth that stuns: we were created to be loved and served by God, here and forever. Just as we exist for God, so, too, does God exist for us, to love us, and to serve us, to give his life for us. And God lives to be surprised by us, by these unpredictable, free, beautiful, creative and fragile children. God can place each child's interests and needs before his own. This is the civilization of love and culture of encounter he craves, loves, and eventually will die for. Therefore, he has every right to say to all those who would follow his path and apprentice themselves to his way and his word yet turn to the temptations of domination and control: »But it shall not be so among you.«

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