

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

RCL Readings¹ – Wisdom of Solomon: 1:16-2:1, 12-22 or Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 54; James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a; Mark 9:30-37

ACNA Readings – Wisdom of Solomon: 1:16-2:1, 12-22; Psalm 54; James 3:16-4:6; Mark 9:30-37

Seasonal Introduction. The Christian calendar revolves around two principal feasts: Christmas (involving Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany) and Easter (involving Lent, Easter, and Pentecost). However, throughout the year there are also smaller feasts. September 21 marks the feast of Saint Matthew the Apostle (in western Christianity). When Jesus called Matthew the tax collector, Matthew specifically wrote that there were many sinners who came to listen to Jesus. This feast is an appropriate time to reflect that there is hope for my sinful nation, my sinful neighbours, and even for me if we truly hear the reproof of God and obey the calling of our Lord to follow Him..

Common Theme. Many of the readings this week look at wisdom and the results of its application. There is a tension between the wisdom of earth, described as unspiritual and even demonic in James, and the wisdom of heaven, described as pure and bearing good fruit. There are, of course, many good things on earth. God created it and gave us minds to make life better for those around us. And yet, so often we use [our] science to make my life better. Knowledge does not make us better people if we use it only for the self. We need the Lord, His Spirit, and His wisdom lived out in humility and meekness to have true wisdom.

Hebraic Context. One of the most difficult issues that believers have to face is suffering. It is clear from the Scriptures that the righteous suffer. The book of Job deals with suffering and mankind's efforts to make sense of suffering. The prophets suffered as they proclaimed truth, even to those who would not listen. The martyrs during the exilic period suffered. Jesus and the apostles suffered. And we have been promised that we too will suffer. But it is not just the righteous that suffer. Suffering exists throughout the world, this is undeniable.² So why does God allow it?

¹ Alternate RCL Readings: Proverbs 31:10-31; Psalm 1

² If, as a Christian, we are not suffering or encountering others who suffer in order to help them, then we should probably examine whether we are truly following God. Both in proclaiming and living out what God commands. For there are many in this world who hate God and any who dare follow him and there are many in this world that need God's people to show the love of God.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

The traditional Jewish view is that God made the world and gave free will to all mankind.³ God continuously tells us to make good choices, “choose life”.⁴ This indicates that we do have a choice. If God is continuously asking for us to listen to Him, follow His commandments, and humble ourselves before Him it must be because we often choose not to listen to Him or follow in the ways He has told us to live. Unfortunately, we make bad, selfish, and evil choices with the free will that we have. If God forced us not to make those choices it would no longer be free will.

The skeptic who dismisses the existence of God because of the reality of evil and suffering does nothing to solve his or her problem with the reality of evil.⁵ The suffering continues to exist even if belief in God doesn't. All they have done is take away any meaning for the reality of suffering and the means by which we can reliably say, this way leads to life. Most of us would like a world without suffering but we can neither prove nor disprove that we would prefer a world without free will.

So, in this world where there is clearly a lot of suffering (suffering that is so often caused by people), is it possible that God allows and uses suffering to achieve some good? We, as humans, so often choose to propagate suffering or follow a way that would lead to suffering, but God also chose, by His own divine will, to suffer in order to bring peace and life.

³ There were minority views held by sects, like the Dead Sea community, that believed in total predestination and that there was no free will—everything was ordained by God. But the majority believed in free will while also recognizing that God is the King of the universe.

⁴ There are many places where God tells us if we do something then something will happen in return, such as God's response to Solomon's prayer of dedication in II Chronicles 7:14, “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” These are often stated with an expectation that we should choose to do the right thing. In the explanation to the Lord's Prayer, Jesus said “If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” We can also make the opposite choice, “But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

⁵ Several atheist philosophers now admit the argument against the existence of God based on the existence of evil and suffering to be fundamentally flawed. Examples are: J. L Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, “We can concede that the problem of evil does not after all, show that the central doctrines of theism are logically inconsistent with one another.” And William L. Rowe, *The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism*, “Some philosophers have contended that the existence of evil is logically inconsistent with the existence of the theistic God. No one, I think, has succeeded in establishing such an extravagant claim.”

In order to prove that God is at fault for evil, the protester would have to prove that free will does not exist (a proof that cannot be proven) and that there cannot be a reason for suffering that is good. History shows that many good men and women have suffered to do something good for others even in the face of the free will choice of other men and women to create that suffering. Even so, we cannot prove that God has, or does not have, a reason for suffering in this world.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

The question from today's readings isn't just on the nature of suffering, it is whether we will have the wisdom of heaven or court death by the error of our life—to bring on destruction by the works of our hands. It is a question of whether we will refuse to set God before ourselves.⁶

Martyrdom for the Lord was not a meaningless death, rather it was the death of the righteous that actually aroused God to action and brought on the redemption.⁷ The nature of suffering is brought forward throughout the Psalms, which constitutes the prayer book of the Jewish people, and yet the same people who suffered were pushed towards repentance and thanksgiving. It's good to pray through suffering! The gospels also highlight the tension in the teaching of Jesus that He must suffer but it will bring on the redemption.

Wisdom of Solomon 1:16-2:1, 12-22.⁸ Wisdom literature commonly contrasts what is righteous and the wisdom of God with the wisdom (or folly) of the ungodly. Wisdom 1:16-2:1, having just declared that God created the world with “no destructive poison”, sets the stage by suggesting that those who do not revere the Lord consider death as a friend.⁹ This is not a passive action. The unrighteous actively befriend death, make a covenant with it, and seek to poison that which God created to be good.

⁶ There have been many Christians who see the law as being a bad or, at least, an outdated model. This is despite the fact that Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” To follow God, to have a correct relationship with Him, includes listening to Him and doing what He asks of us—not just the few things we are good at but the entirety of His ways. If the entire world freely chose to obey the commandments of God, there would be no stealing, no murder, no war, no hatred, no gossip, no laziness, nothing that causes all the evil that we can readily see. There might still be some people who would be wealthier and others who would be poorer but where there was true poverty or hunger there would also be the people of God ensuring that the love and gifts of God would be readily available, both physically and spiritually. That this world does not exist is clear. It is also clear that we do not keep His commandments for we do not love Him.

⁷ See Mark 9:30-32

⁸ On occasion, the lectionary includes texts from the Apocrypha. Apocryphal books are not included in the Hebrew canon of Scripture, but they are in the Septuagint and Latin versions of the Old Testament. Thus their place in Christian tradition is today somewhat ambiguous and is often based upon the history of any particular denomination.

The Book of Wisdom is a late Second Temple Period work. It is also often called the Wisdom of Solomon, even though it was clearly not written by Solomon. The text appeared shortly before Jesus' birth or even during his lifetime. The Wisdom of Solomon not only can contain some truth we can study but it also gives a valuable glimpse into the theology of the world of Jesus and the Apostles.

⁹ Today, many have no belief in the afterlife and see death as the end of all things as they do not believe in a god. They must define morality based on their own beliefs and behaviour—which hasn't made the world any less a world of pain and suffering, in fact, it is quite the opposite. However, belief in the occult and an active fight against God is becoming more and more common in various parts of the world. (Although, we should also be encouraged. The gospel is still stronger as it is the news of God's victory just as the kingdom of God continues to expand in many parts of the world.)

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Proper 20 – Year B

Why do they seek death? Why do so many people create suffering rather than seek for that which makes for peace? The righteous, according to these people, become the proof that their way is wrong. But rather than listen and turn to life, the unrighteous sought (and will seek) to test just how faithful the righteous will remain to God. Will the righteous remain faithful to God even in insults?¹⁰ What if they are tortured? What if they are killed? They also test God.

These actions should be opposed by the righteous, who actually speak the truth (calling sin what it is) and remain faithful in times of persecution. Wisdom 2:13 notes that the righteous possess the knowledge of God, and it is this wisdom—including belief in life after death—that motivates their righteous behaviour. For the believer, the end is not final nor unhappy, for God is our Father and He will reward those who are holy and blameless.

Unfortunately, the situation has not changed in the modern era. The secular world is not comfortable with the Christian worldview. Perhaps this is because they don't like the moral restraints implied by faith and God's laws. Perhaps the antagonism against the household of faith betrays that, deep down, the secular world is actually not confident that God does not exist. Maybe when the ungodly encounter the righteous they are confronted with the reality that perhaps it is the ungodly who are suppressing the truth.

Jeremiah 11:18-20. The people of Judah did not seek God when confronted by their sin. Instead they embraced death. In rejecting God, they also rejected and persecuted the followers of God. Jeremiah, as the voice of truth and condemnation, became a major target of persecution. Who would dare condemn Jeremiah, the prophet of God? The men of Anatot, the hometown of Jeremiah.¹¹

For a people who actively conspired against God, having someone stand up and speak the word of God in their midst was unacceptable. As Jeremiah's family and the people responsible for him, any disgrace or shame that was felt due to Jeremiah's chastisement of even the king and priests (which included the people of Anatot) would fall on them. And so Jeremiah's prophecies would be stopped one way or another—through silence or death.¹²

¹⁰ For many of us, this is where we fail. Long before we are tortured or killed we turn away from God at the first obstacle—at the first sign of persecution. If we are to be tested by the unrighteous then we should not fail the test and become like them—we should remain true and show them what is right and true. They will see what is true, then they will have to decide if they will continue to embrace death or turn to God.

¹¹ Anatot was a city in the land of Benjamin slightly northwest of Jerusalem given to the Levites. It was the home of some prominent priests in Israel's history, such as Aviatar (who wore the High Priest's ephod for David) but more importantly, for the sake of this passage, it was the hometown of Jeremiah himself. (Anathoth in most English translations.)

¹² This form of honour killing is still found in various parts of the Middle East—including prominent families from the more "civilized" countries and cities.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

The Lord protected Jeremiah by giving the prophet special knowledge of the plotters. Jeremiah's immediate response wasn't to stop prophesying or to flee but rather to pray. He acknowledged God's providence and knew that God would be a righteous judge. Jeremiah did not look to his own hand but rather he looked to God to enact divine retribution on his behalf—vengeance is Mine says the Lord! Persecution will come on those who shine light in the darkness.¹³ But Jeremiah trusted in God to act righteously towards him and his enemies while he continued to do the very things that caused his persecution—namely, obedience to God.

Psalm 54.¹⁴ David served as one of the commanders of Saul's army before he was betrayed by Saul and forced to flee. But even after David became an outlaw, he continued to serve as a guard against raids from the Philistines and tribes from the south to save the people of Judah. Psalm 54 is written in this context, where David had just defeated a Philistine raid and saved the region and yet the inhabitants (likely due to fear) betrayed him.¹⁵ The people of Ziph did so twice, in I Samuel 23 and 26.

Psalm 54 is part lament and part hymn of thanks. There was a need, as evil men sought David's life, but in seeking God's help there was also a sure hope. David called the Ziphites strangers even though they were Israelites from the tribe of Judah, David's neighbours, and had the benefit of David's protection.¹⁶ Stranger (זרים, *zerim*) isn't simply someone you don't know, is something that doesn't belong.¹⁷ The Ziphites became strangers because of their behaviour and

¹³ See Wisdom of Solomon 1-2, along with the many passages in the prophets, gospels, and epistles that state the same.

¹⁴ Psalm 54 is composed by David for the overseer (לְמַנְצֵחַ), often translated as chief musician. Exactly who this person is remains unclear. It could be one of the choir leaders (Asaph, Heman, or Jeduthun) or someone else. Some Jewish commentators take this to mean God Himself from the word נָצַח (*netzah*), perpetual. (Thus some of these songs, such as are found throughout Psalms and even Habakkuk 3:2-19, might be written as a direct prayer to the perpetual overseer).

¹⁵ In I Samuel 22, Saul killed the High Priest and many other priests in Nob because they gave even the most nominal of hospitality to David—giving him and his men some bread to eat. This news would have spread quickly throughout the land as a warning. Now, in I Samuel 23, the people of Keilah and Ziph had received aid from David. But rather than doing the right thing, they betrayed David to Saul because they feared death more than God.

¹⁶ Ironically, after the people betrayed David to Saul, the Philistines once more raided the land that David had been protecting. This forced Saul, who had been seeking David to retreat to deal with the problem caused by the sudden lack of protection that David had been giving Judah. This, in turn, allowed David to escape from the betrayal of Ziph and Saul.

¹⁷ Certain jobs were to be for the priests only, no one else was allowed to act as the priests—if they did so they were considered a stranger to that office (זר, Exodus 29:33, Numbers 10:3, 38, 18:3-7). Likewise, anything not proscribed by God as an offering was strange (זרה, Exodus 30:9, Numbers 3:4, 26:61). Foreign (זרים, Deuteronomy 32:16) gods were an abomination and those who followed evil, even the nation of Israel, were estranged (נזרו, Isaiah 1:4) from God.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

not simply because of their place of birth—they acted against what was proper by mistreating David.¹⁸ God anointed David to be king, so their betrayal of David was also a betrayal of God.

But through this ordeal, David looked to God for help and salvation. He was confident that God would rescue him and take vengeance on his enemies. This confidence is something we can all pray into when faced with persecution. David concluded his psalm with the correct response to the redemption of the Lord. David would bring both sacrifice and praise to the Lord. Both are freewill responses to what God has done—they are not a bargaining chip to persuade God to act favourably.¹⁹

James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a.²⁰ Having just concluded that it is very difficult to have wisdom when the tongue is involved, James asked, “who is wise and understanding among you?”. Most of us want to make wise choices in our lives. Learning the hard way is not an enjoyable experience and we usually want to avoid repeating it. And so, in our search for wisdom, our culture has produced a lot of self-help material in books, podcasts, social media, and even television. And yet, in our of our search for wisdom, James says wisdom is not found on earth.²¹ True wisdom comes from heaven.

Unfortunately for many of us who listen to self-help books and media posts looking for simple answers, wisdom is not some esoteric knowledge that we can meditate on in order to live a better life. James urged the community to “conduct...his works in the meekness of wisdom.” Wisdom is something that can be seen by how we conduct ourselves—our behaviour.

None of the seven qualities that James mentioned regarding wisdom can be practiced within the mind or while we are alone. In order to be “open to reason” we must be willing to listen to others. In order to be “full of mercy” we must physically (through word and deed) show mercy towards others. Wisdom, unsurprisingly, has some of the same qualities as the fruit of the Spirit—gentleness and peace.

¹⁸ This reality can also be seen in the warning of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.”

¹⁹ Although God does look favourably on those who freely obey Him and will judge those who act in faithlessness it is not a way to force God to act according to our own will.

²⁰ ACNA includes James 4:4-6

²¹ In fact, James called earthly wisdom both unspiritual and even demonic. If we ask our parents, teachers, or even celebrities for wisdom, it isn't always going to be demonic. It can actually be quite useful. While the world might deny it, the Judeo-Christian faith has actually become quite prevalent as God's morals and ethics were practiced and His light shone in the darkness. However, one of the core doctrines of earthly wisdom is that of the self—this James specifically called unspiritual and demonic. Jealousy and selfish ambition have no part in the wisdom from above. James also noted that this focus on the self will inevitably lead to disorder and vile practice. This is self-evident throughout history, including today.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

Earthly wisdom (unspiritual and demonic) starts with “you”: your passion, you desire, you covet. The world may present it in constructive and valuable ways, but this remains the wisdom of this world. James connected something entirely different to wisdom from above—meekness and humility. But humility isn't seen in demure quietness, humility is shown through our actions. God gave us many examples of humility in sacred history, from Moses to Jeremiah to the Messiah to James and Paul. The followers of Jesus, the Messiah, are also expected to seek after and act in these characteristics. The alternative is grave indeed as, when we focus on ourselves, we embrace the way of the world, become proud, and end up fighting against God almighty. It is the meek who inherit the earth. It is the humble that can withstand Satan (by the grace of God).

Mark 9:30-37. The final thing Jesus did before He started His final journey towards Jerusalem was to talk to His disciples.²² As Jesus and the disciples journeyed south through the Galilee, He neither taught nor healed in the open. Rather, Jesus taught in private. He wasn't explaining about the Kingdom of Heaven in parables nor did he expound on the Torah. Instead, Jesus taught about suffering—that the Son of Man would be seized, persecuted, and executed. The Son of Man would also rise from death.

Jewish tradition has a long history of religious figures who suffer. The majority of the prophets suffered greatly, including John the Baptist. The book of Job is a long commentary on the nature and purpose of suffering. The martyrs in exile, particularly in the time leading up to the Maccabean wars against the Greeks, suffered and died. Even the Dead Sea community could be seen as suffering from both internal (Jewish) disdain and foreign (Roman) persecution.

This painful history was analyzed and discussed during the 2nd Temple period and produced an awareness of redemptive suffering. The Dead Sea community spoke of a suffering messiah, elaborated on in the Talmud.²³ IV Maccabees most strongly correlated the blood of the martyrs and suffering with redemption and atonement. An elderly priest, Eleazar, when facing death by torture and fire stated, “You know, O God, that, though I might have saved myself, I am dying in burning torments for the sake of the law. Be merciful to your people, and let our punishment suffice for them. Make my blood their purification, and take my life in exchange for theirs.’ After he said this, the holy man died nobly in his tortures.” (IV Maccabees 6:27-30)²⁴

²² Each of the Gospel writers comment, in their own way, that Jesus deliberately chose to go to Jerusalem. He did so with the full expectation that He would suffer and die once He arrived at His destination. See passages such as: Matthew 16:21; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 13:33; John 11:7-8.

²³ Fragments of text from Qumran, such as 4Q285, are somewhat disputed regarding the idea of a redeeming figure who would suffer, or even die. But the Babylonian Talmud is much clearer regarding a suffering Messiah as seen in *Sukkah* 52a-52b.

²⁴ IV Maccabees was likely written at the same time as the Gospels and Epistles, or possibly as late as the Apocalypse of John.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

Regarding the history of pious suffering, the author continued “Here lie buried an aged priest and an aged woman and seven children because of the violence of the tyrant who wished to destroy the way of life of the Hebrews. They vindicated their nation, looking to God and enduring torture even to death...they having become, as it were, a ransom for the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those pious ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated.” (IV Maccabees 17:9-10, 21-22)

Despite this tradition and history, the disciples did not seem to process what Jesus was teaching. We might wonder why not, as to us Jesus seems to have been speaking quite plainly. This was also not the first time he had taught concerning his fate in Jerusalem (see Mark 8:31). From our position in history we have the benefit of hindsight and read the Scriptures in the light of the resurrection. For us things appear obvious. Mark and Luke both mentioned that the disciples are actually afraid to ask Him what He meant. We may ponder this and wonder why?

The disciples had spent several years with Jesus. During that time they witnessed many miracles, healings, and demon exorcisms. They themselves had been empowered by the Holy Spirit, sent out in teams and taught, healed and exorcized demons in the name of their master. Why would they suddenly be afraid to ask Jesus to elaborate on a very hard teaching?

Perhaps, in context, it shouldn't come as a surprise that the disciples (having not understood or ignored the statement of Jesus) started to ask about greatness. Jesus used the phrase “Son of Man”, a term that came from Daniel 7. The Son of Man was powerful, even divine—His kingdom was established forever and was given all authority. And so the disciples started to speak of authority but did not want to ask the one who had authority what He meant regarding losing authority in a world that surely needed a political redeemer—not a suffering messiah. In a political world, where Jesus had defeated the Romans and established His kingdom, the disciples argued about which of them would be most worthy to rule with Jesus.

The disciples, understandably, were embarrassed by this discussion when Jesus asked what they were talking about.²⁵ And so Jesus sat down and gathered the disciples.²⁶ Interestingly, Jesus did not condemn the disciples for their discussion. Instead, He molded their discussion and showed them a better way to be worthy of being great in the kingdom of God. Being worthy

²⁵ Oh, those silly disciples—they are always saying and doing stupid things. Perhaps we should take note of our conversations throughout our own week and wonder how we'd react if Jesus asked us, “What were you discussing on the way?”

²⁶ Sitting down to teach, whether in a synagogue or open area, was the Jewish tradition at the time. And so, when Jesus gathered them and sat down the disciples would have known that they were about to hear something very important from their master.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

did not mean having great power or ambition. Rather, being worthy was to show hospitality to even a child.²⁷

Jesus stated that those who are great are actually the last (the first shall be last) and the great also serve—not desiring to be served. In the messianic kingdom to be established by Jesus, the greatest of characteristics would be humility, love, faithfulness, gentleness, and care for the lowly and poor. We are encouraged to serve those who have little status in the eyes of the world, and yes, there is also a reward for doing so. Receiving a child is as receiving the Lord—through serving each other we deepen a personal relationship with the Father.

Hebraic Perspective. The disciples constantly wrestled with the tension between the hope of the coming, redemptive messiah and the teaching of Jesus. The sacred history of Israel demonstrated that sometimes Israel was militarily secure and politically ascendant. At other times it was subjugated and exiled under foreign powers. When at their lowest, the prophets spoke of repentance but they also spoke of a victorious redeemer—this raised the hope of an impoverished people. But the prophets also spoke of the Lord's servant who would demonstrate the true nature of servanthood expected of God's people.

The disciples weren't the only ones that saw this tension. In the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 98a-b, the sages discussed various aspects of the coming redeemer—oscillating from the Davidic king, mentioned plainly in the Scriptures, to the suffering servant found in more obscure passages. When discussing the name of the messiah in *Sanhedrin* 98b the sages comment that: "The Messiah, what is his name? ... The Rabbis say, The Leper Scholar, as it is said, 'surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted.'"

Midrash *Ruth Rabbah* 5.6, likewise, comments on Ruth 2:14 regarding a suffering messiah²⁸, "Boaz said to her at mealtime: Come here.' Rabbi Yohanan interpreted this with six

²⁷ Jesus used one of the children in the house he was staying at for His illustration. Many of the disciples of Jesus were married and likely had children. These children would have been included in many of the activities, such as the Last Supper, of Jesus as teaching was mandated by God in the familial unit and this teaching was most common in traditions such as Passover. However, we can also note that they would come to listen to Jesus teach as would any other disciples of Jesus (men, women, and children), such as was the case with the feeding of the 5,000 from one boy's lunch.

²⁸ Ruth 2:14 is, quite literally, simply a meal occasion where Boaz invited Ruth to eat along with Boaz's hired workers. There is no mention of a messiah or a king. And yet, Jewish scholars avidly examined the text for the finest of details as from Boaz and Ruth the King and Messiah would be born. Both the Messiah and redemption were seen as part of the story of Ruth. And so every aspect of the text and their relationship was studied through the lens of redemption but also the hope of the Messiah. Boaz had yet to redeem Ruth at this point in the story, but in hearing the story a second, third, or tenth time, there is the hope that redemption for these righteous persons is surely coming soon.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 20 – Year B

approaches... 'eat of the bread' – this is the bread of the kingship. 'Dip your loaf in the vinegar' – these are the afflictions, as it is stated: 'Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath.' ... Alternatively, it is referring to the messianic king. 'Come here' – draw near to the kingship. 'Eat of the bread' – this is the bread of kingship. 'Dip your loaf in the vinegar' – these are the afflictions, as it is stated: "He was pierced for our transgressions."²⁹

Both a powerful redeemer and suffering saviour are found in the Biblical text. Reconciling this tension has been a long and difficult journey in the Judeo-Christian traditions. It has also, unfortunately, been reconciled with simplicity in some Christian traditions by completely separating the first and second coming of Jesus without any nuance. It was in this tension that Jesus taught His disciples that the Son of Man must suffer but also serve. Simultaneously, He showed through His actions that He had authority and would make a powerful king.

Being a servant does not mean that you have to be powerless, actually it's the opposite. Serving and giving is the ultimate expression of love without diminishing power and authority. God gave His Son. The Son obeys the Father. The creator of the world washed the feet of His disciples. You can be powerful but you can also serve. You can be a servant but that doesn't mean you are powerless.

²⁹ In Matthew 27:48, it is interesting that one of the bystanders, upon hearing Jesus cry out to God in affliction, ran and brought a sponge with vinegar for Jesus to drink. It is quite possible that this *midrash* was already in circulation and the bystander who brought the vinegar understood vinegar to be a reference to the Messianic King who was afflicted and pierced for our transgressions. Another possibility, and, as often was the case in 2nd Temple theology, not exclusive to the former possibility, is that Matthew saw this as fulfillment of Psalm 69:21.