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## What Do You Want?

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# What Do You Want?

## **Abstract**

"[Jesus] redirects us toward giving ourselves for the glory of Christ and the benefit of others."

Posting about sacrifice for Jesus' sake from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<http://inallthings.org/what-do-you-want/>

## **Keywords**

In All Things, lectionary, desire, generosity, disciples

## **Disciplines**

Christianity

## **Comments**

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

# What Do You Want?

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 [all in allthings.org /what-do-you-want/](http://allthings.org/what-do-you-want/)

May 10, 2017

Shirley Folkerts

## Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 100](#)

[Jeremiah 23:1-8](#)

[Matthew 20:17-28](#)

What is it you want? We want many things—food, technology devices, health, confidence, transportation, success, clothes, a winning season, the safe return of a loved one. The list goes on. What is it *you* want? Jesus poses this question to James' and John's mother in our reading of Matthew 20.

The mother replies with her request for her two sons to have the highest positions of honor—one at Jesus' right and the other at his left in his kingdom. Her request reveals an attitude of selfish entitlement to the prestige and honor that goes along with these positions next to a king. Jesus responds with his version of the common quip “Be careful what you ask for!” He points to his impending death by posing the question, “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” The disciples who continue to follow Jesus in his kingdom will indeed face persecution and even death if they continue to follow him.

The other disciples were angry when they heard what James and John had asked. They were not upset because James, John, and their mother had made a wrongful request. No, they were upset because James, John, and their mother had thought of making this request before the rest of them had! All the disciples were hungry for these positions of power.

Instead of dismissing the disciples, Jesus turns this blundering request into a teachable moment. He gently redirects their perspective away from greatness and power. Instead, he calls them to humility and service. He warns them not to be like the Gentile leaders, who throw their weight around and who bully the people under them.

It's easy for us to read this story and be appalled at the mother's request. It's easy for us to roll our eyes at the way the disciples responded. But the truth is, it's always easier to judge a character in a story for his or her behavior than it is to take a hard look at ourselves through the story.

When we pause and put ourselves in the story...Jesus comes to **us** with the question “What is it you want?” It sits there like an unspoken preamble to every prayer. What do you really want Jesus to do for you? All too often, our requests reveal an attitude of entitlement and the desire for an easy life. We treat God like a vending machine. We ask him for what **we** think is best or what **we** think **we** deserve and hope that he drops our request nicely in our lap.

If we stay in the story...Jesus gently teaches us about letting go of honor, power, and possessions. He redirects us toward giving ourselves for the glory of Christ and the benefit of others.

If we stay in the story even longer...Jesus asks us a second question. We begin to recognize that servanthood leads to great sacrifice. That second question lingers in the air: “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”