



St Marylebone
Parish Church

St James the Apostle 2021 8.30 am and 11 am

Matthew 20.20-28

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The biblical lists of the Apostles mention two people called James: James, the son of Zebedee, and James, the son of Alphaeus. History has come to call them "James the Greater" and "James the Lesser".

'Greater' and 'Lesser' not because of their varying degrees of holiness, nor their relative status as apostles, but simply to differentiate how much 'airtime' each of them receives in the pages of the New Testament.

The name "James" translates *Iakobos*, the Greek form of the name of the Patriarch, Jacob.

This James was the brother of John, one of the innermost group of three privileged disciples whom Jesus admitted to important moments during his ministry.

With Peter and John, James is present at the raising of Jairus' daughter from death, the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and Jesus' Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the first, James see Jesus' power over sickness and death; in the second, Jesus revealed in divine splendour and glory as the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, and in the third, James comes face-to-face with suffering, ignominy, and humiliation.

Three very different experiences of Jesus and the Kingdom that was being ushered in through the birth, life, ministry and death of the Messiah.

Each experience moderates and refines and distils James' faith and his experience of the incarnate God whom he has chosen to follow.

Three experiences which prepare James for that ultimate moment of epiphany when Christ's glory is fully revealed in and through Christ's sufferings on the Cross of Calvary.

James' growth in faith, his journeying to maturity, is only brought to fullness by the descent of Holy Spirit at Pentecost and it is sealed by the shedding of *his* blood when Herod lays violent hands upon him and beheads him along with others who had belonged to the infant Churchⁱⁱ.

Later traditions, associate James with the evangelisation of Spain and with the story of his body being brought back in a stone ship from Jaffa to Galicia and thence to Compostella where it was buried.

Whatever the legends, what we do know, is that James heard Jesus' voice, responded to his call with alacrity, spent profoundly transformative moments in Jesus company, grew in faith and hope and love and witnessed to the Gospel – even in death.

Faith is not something that comes 'ready-made', 'pre-packed', delivered on the back of a Deliveroo scooter or from the back of a Hermes van. Faith must be learned and modified, tried and tested in the light of each new revelation and experience.

In his eager innocence and inexperience and from an unformed immature faith, James might well have asked his mother to secure a top-table seat for himself in the Kingdom, but as his faith grew and matured and flourished, he also became the first of the Apostles to have to witness to his faith in Jesus through Martyrdom.

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits thou hast given me,
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
and follow thee more nearly, day by day.
Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Mk 3: 17,18; Mt 10: 2-3

ⁱⁱ Acts 12: 1-2

ⁱⁱⁱ Prayer of St Richard of Chichester