



## The treasure within us

### From the Feast of St. James the Apostle

Read:

Matt. 20:20-28

2 Cor. 4:7-15

Saint James "the Greater", the Apostles whose Feast Day we celebrate on July 25th, was one of the sons of Zebedee that are mentioned in Matt. 20:20-28.

James started his Christian journey as a very impulsive, self-centered young man. Even after hearing Jesus preach about unconditional love, he told Jesus to leave the villages that had rejected them and their ministry. And even after hearing Jesus teach about humility, he dared to ask Jesus (through his mother) for a place of honor in God's kingdom.

Praise God, James eventually developed a true understanding of Christ's message!

We are all earthen vessels — imperfect, belonging too much to this world, easily cracked, not very beautiful — but nonetheless holding a heavenly treasure within, as it says in 2 Cor. 4:7-15. That treasure is God's Spirit. That treasure is what makes us holy even when we sin. As long as we have not cast God away from us (a mortal sin), we are still essentially holy. We might not be acting holy, but we still have the Holy Spirit within us.

The Lord gives us room to learn from our mistakes and repent from our sins. He gives us opportunity after opportunity to figure out what we did wrong, not to condemn us but so that we can learn from it. Repentance means change. What matters more than confessing our sins is the effort that we put into growing and improving after we face our sins.

If we desire to be holy and we basically keep moving in the right direction, toward heaven's perfection, God is very pleased with us.



Notice that Jesus did not condemn James and John for wanting places of glory. Nor did he criticize their mother for wanting her boys to have the best. He recognized their potential and understood their inability to see the full picture of what it means to be tops in God's kingdom. He didn't notice their arrogance and pride, he also saw ignorance and enthusiasm.

We will forever be earthen vessels, but our cracks will get healed when we pass through the refining fires of purgatory. No longer will demons and temptations interfere with our growth. Think of purgatory as your long-awaited, final process of being transformed into the golden chalice of the Lord's love that you've always wished you could be.

When you get mad at yourself for failing to be holy and perfect like your heavenly Father, remember Saint James. In fact, ask Saint James to pray for you. He knows exactly how to help you.

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