

Psalm 104: 1 - 9, 24, 35c

Job 38: 1 - 7

Mark 10: 35 - 42

Hebrews 5: 1 - 10

## **Who is God and who is not?**

### **Notes on the Old Testament Lessons**

The psalm for this week is a song of praise. God's greatness and power are lifted up and extolled. This psalm is thematically connected to the other passage from the Hebrew Scriptures. In it, Job's complaints about the injustice of his suffering and his demands to face God so that his voice may be heard are finally answered. Yet they are not answered as Job expects.

In this passage, God does not even address Job's sufferings or the question of whether or not Job's actions had caused his affliction. Instead, God's voice thunders down with words that sound scornful. Yet in these words, and in the words of the psalm, an important relationship is established.

These words focus on the "otherness", the holiness, of God. They establish a baseline for the relationship between God and human beings. All of the other relationships that we have with God: friend, savior, judge, et. al.; are based on this core relationship. God is Creator; we are not. God is Savior; we are not. God is Judge, and we are not. Perhaps a T-shirt that was popular a few years ago says it best: "There are two things that are certain. 1. There is a God. 2. You are not Him."

### **Notes on the Gospel Lesson**

In the parallel story in Matthew, it is the mother of James and John who come to Jesus with this audacious request. Whoever spoke the words, this encounter is a continuation of the discussions found in Mark 9: 33 - 37. The disciples apparently thought that Jesus was going to set up an earthly kingdom and they wanted their place of power in it. To counter this misunderstanding, Jesus repeats in this passage (Mark 10: 43 - 44) the statement that he made in Mark 9:35.

If a message is so important that Jesus says it twice, perhaps it is an important message for us to hear.

### **Notes on the Epistle Lesson**

There are two references in this passage to the "order of Melchizedek". Melchizedek was a priest in Salem, the ancient name of Jerusalem, who blessed Abram and to whom Abram gave a tithe (see Genesis 14: 17 - 20). As early as the Old Testament period in which the Psalms were written, Melchizedek had become the ideal, the ultimate, priest. Messianic connotations were associated with his name. God would triumph with a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (see Psalm 110).

Jesus is, according to the writer of Hebrews, the ideal and ultimate high priest. It is Jesus who is “made perfect” and becomes “the source of eternal salvation”. In this way, it is Jesus who becomes the bridge between imperfect human beings and a perfect God. It is Jesus who closes the gap between us and the holiness, the “otherness” of God. God is still holy. God is still the Creator; is still the “other”. Yet through Christ Jesus, we now have access to God and eternal salvation.