

You just have to like and admire the disciples – they are such good role models for the rest of us trying to follow after Jesus. I mean their words and their actions always show how they understand Jesus and his mission.

--NOT--

No, on the contrary -- the disciples are constantly missing the point of Jesus' words, and seldom grasp the implications of the kingdom of God breaking into the world around them – and that the values of the kingdom are much different from earthly values.

Let's just do a quick review of the disciples' high points in the Gospel over the last six weeks. . . beginning with today and working back.

So today has James and John almost demanding places of honor in the kingdom of God – wanting to sit at the Lord's right and left. . . what part of humble don't they understand?

Last week, when we had our guest speaker, Ashar – we had the option of using a much longer reading in which would have heard Peter say to Jesus: "Lord, we have given up everything and followed you" certainly implying, "what's in this for us". So much for losing oneself in pursuit of the Gospel.

The week before, when Jesus explained Moses' teaching on divorce – the disciples did not quite understand – and so when they were alone with Jesus- they had to ask him to explain it again --- as if it were going to become any easier the second time around. . .

The week before, John said, "Teacher – we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us." So much for acknowledging and encouraging the gifts of others.

The week before, the disciples were arguing on their way to Capernaum about who was the greatest among them. . . there comes that issue of humility – or the lack of it – once again.

Then, a whole six weeks ago, after Jesus told them for the first time he was going to suffer and die – Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him for think such things --- as if the pursuit of the kingdom of God was going to be a rose garden. . .

And on and on we could go. . . the disciples are constantly missing the point of Jesus' words and seldom grasp the implications of the kingdom of God breaking into the world around them – and that the values of the kingdom are much different from early values. . .

So while we cannot always admire the disciples' response to Jesus --- the one we can admire is Jesus himself ---

Because Jesus never gives up on them!!! Modeling so well the covenant relationship that God has with his people – that no matter what they do, or how far we stray – God still loves us!

Jesus was able to be that positive role model for us – because he knew how to think like God – and not like a mere human being.

Yes, Jesus was well aware of the weaknesses of the disciples – but he never dwelled on them. He always looked for the good hidden within – he continued to work with the disciples and continued to pull the best out of them.

He knew each and every one of them was called and gifted – and he continued to encourage them to use their gifts for the building of God's kingdom.

So if there was hope for the disciples – and there was – they abandoned Jesus, but Jesus never abandoned them – then there is hope for us – because Jesus will never give up on us either.

Even when we don't understand all the parts of humility and what it demands of us.

Even when we don't always loose ourselves in the pursuit of the Gospel and still occasionally ask – what's in this for me?

Jesus will never abandon us even if we don't always find his teaching easy to accept or understand.

Even if we don't always acknowledge and encourage gifts in ourselves or those around us.
Even when we want to give up our pursuit of the kingdom because we do discover it's not always going to be a rose garden. . .
Jesus never gave up on the disciples – because he saw their potential.
May we see and appreciate our own potential –and always strive to see the potential in those around us
-- because that's what Jesus would do!