



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Children's Story

Year B, Proper 24

ME! First!

Title: Me First!
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Text: Mark 10: 35 - 45

Wondering questions:

- I wonder why so many people think it is important to be first.
- I wonder how Jesus felt when John and James asked him for a special favour.
- I wonder how we can learn that it is better to help others than to be first.

Gathering Activity:

Today, as you invite the children for the children's story, offer a prize to the two children who come and sit beside you first, but be sure to remind them to walk forward respectfully. Give each of them a little poster, sticky star, or sticker that says "First prize!" Once the whole group has settled, give each of them the same kind of sticker, but don't explain your action. Ask the group about lining up for special activities in their day care, nursery, or classroom. Are there ever fights about being first in line? Why is it so special?

Or, have they ever asked a friend to save them a seat? Maybe on the school bus? Maybe at the lunchroom? Maybe even in the car going somewhere? Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't want to sit beside HIM, I want to sit beside my friend!" These are things people have been doing for a very, very long time! It even happened among the first followers of Jesus. I read about it here, in the Gospel of Mark. (Show them the spot in your Bible, and the subtitle "The request of James and John.") These two disciples said "Me first!" and "Save me a seat, Jesus!" Listen while I tell you this story.

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Story:

Jesus had a group of 12 special friends. They did all kinds of things together. Sometimes they went fishing, sometimes they walked around the countryside together, sometimes they helped Jesus with his teaching and the other things he did. But sometimes they thought more about themselves than they did about others.

Here's what happened with a couple of Jesus' friends: Two of them, named John and James, took Jesus aside and asked him to do something special for them. "When you go to heaven, Jesus, we want you to save seats for us beside you."

Maybe this doesn't seem like such a big deal, but in those days, when you went to someone's house for a meal, that person's best friends, or the most important people, got to sit beside the owner of the house. That was a special privilege, a real honour. It could even mean that the people sitting beside a king or another ruler were the second in command! So it was like John and James were asking to be second in command when they got to heaven. Wow! It was a time when being first really seemed to matter. It would be pretty great....for them! But, can you imagine how the other friends felt when they heard that John and James had asked Jesus to save them seats in heaven so they would get to be powerful leaders? They were upset! They were angry!

So Jesus gathered the group together. "Who sits beside whom; where you sit isn't important in my group," said Jesus. "In my group, everyone treats each other with kindness, and respect, and fairness. The leaders can sit beside anyone and anyone can sit with anyone else. You are all to be leaders in helping each other. That's what real, God pleasing leaders do! So act like it! If you want to be a leader, do something kind for someone who needs it. That's doing things God's way."

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, that you can help us get over the problems of trying to be first.

Thank-you, that in your group, anyone can sit with anyone else. Please help our church be like that. Amen.