

Sermon Notes: July 23, 2023

Focus: James the Great

[Lectionary Readings](#)

There are different people named James in the Bible. Personally, I never really spent that much time thinking about this James as an individual, so below are the broad strokes of his life that I learned, some biblical references, and the specific details about how this James colors the experience of pilgrims on the Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

Close relationship with Jesus James, along with his brother John, had a special relationship with Jesus. They were among the few disciples present at the Transfiguration.

Fisherman James and John worked as fishermen with their father Zebedee on the Sea of Galilee. They left the family business to become disciples.

Apostles James was one of the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus to be his closest followers. He was part of the inner circle of disciples, which included Peter, James, and John.

Son of Thunder Jesus nicknamed James and his brother John "Boanerges," which means "Sons of Thunder" -- passionate and zealous.

Witness James witnessed miracles, such as the raising of Jairus' daughter and the healing of the blind Bartimaeus.

Ambitious James, along with his brother John, once asked Jesus for a position of honor in Jesus' kingdom. This request maddened the other disciples.

Martyrdom James became the first apostle to be martyred for his faith. He was executed by King Herod Agrippa I, who ordered his beheading around 44 CE.

Spain According to tradition, James preached the Gospel in Spain after Jesus' ascension. His attributed mission to Spain contributes to his veneration as the patron saint of Spain.

Scallop shell symbolism Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago often wear or carry scallop shells as a sign of their pilgrimage and devotion to James. See even more detail at the end about this symbol.

Biblical references

Calling of James and John

Mark 1:19-20; Matthew 4:21-22

James and his brother John were called by Jesus while they were mending their nets for the family business by the Sea of Galilee.

Witnessing the Transfiguration

Mark 9:2-8; Matthew 17:1-9; Luke 9:28-36

James was with Peter and John to witness the Transfiguration.

Request for Positions of Honor

Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 20:20-28

James and his brother John, through their mother, requested positions of honor in Jesus' kingdom.

Jesus predicts of James' Martyrdom

Mark 10:39 (related to the one just before this)

James and John's ask to be glorified by Jesus. He says they will see glory by sharing in his suffering and death.

Garden of Gethsemane

Mark 14:32-42; Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46

He was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest.

Post-Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:7

Paul writes that James was part of the group to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection.

Death

Acts 12:1-2

King Herod arrested and killed James.

Getting into weeds and scallops *the scallop shell is a symbol of James*

The scallop shell is a symbol for pilgrims traveling to the shrine of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Pilgrims often wear a scallop shell as a badge or attach it to their backpacks to this day.

Direction and Guidance: The grooves or ridges on the scallop shell converge towards a central point. This symbolizes the many paths that pilgrims take on their way to Santiago de Compostela.

Hospitality: In medieval times, pilgrims often relied on the kindness of strangers for shelter and sustenance. The scallop shell became a symbol of hospitality, as pilgrims would use it to scoop water or food from local sources.

Resurrection and Baptism: The scallop shell's association with water and its shape resembling a baptismal font or vessel symbolizes spiritual rebirth and resurrection. We have a scallop shell at St. Timothy's specifically for baptism!

Universalism: The scallop shell transcends language and culture. It represents the diverse backgrounds of the pilgrims who come together on the Camino de Santiago.

I thought these biblical, social, and historical details were interesting and hope you enjoyed them too.

Todd