

- The Minor Festivals of the Church Year -

St. James The Elder - July 25th

Today we remember the disciple James, one of the sons of Zebedee. This James is to be distinguished from the other Lord's disciple James son of Alphaeus, often called James "The Less." This James is also to be distinguished from James of Jerusalem, the half-brother of Jesus who led the Jerusalem Church and also wrote the Bible book of James. This James was given the nickname "The Elder," probably because he was either older or because he was more prominent in stature than the other disciple James, "The Less."

James was born and raised in Galilee, and was, like his brother John, a fisherman. James and John were the 3rd and 4th disciples called to follow Jesus, after Peter and Andrew being the 1st and 2nd. *"Going on from there Jesus saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. Jesus called them and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him" (Matthew 4:21,22).* James would eventually become one of Jesus' inner circle disciples. He would witness the cure of Peter's mother-in-law (*Mark 1:29*), the raising of Jairus' daughter (*Mark 5:37*), was with Jesus at the Transfiguration (*Mark 9:2*), and was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his arrest (*Matthew 26:36-37*).

James and his brother John were named by Jesus - Boanerges - meaning *"the sons of thunder"* (*Mark 3:17*), presumably called this because of their rash and impulsive nature. A rash and impulsive nature that was clearly seen in the Gospel of Mark, where James and John asked to receive special places of honor in heaven. Jesus would then rebuke them for seeking personal glory, and instead would teach them about loving service, saying *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (*Mark 10:35-45*).

From that time on James would follow Jesus and become an active leader in the early church, although there is no reliable record of where he preached or what he did. But what is interesting, is James is the first of the disciples to be martyred for his faith, and his death is the only disciple death recorded in the Bible. The book of Acts records that James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I, probably between 42 AD and 44 AD. *"It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword"* (*Acts 12:1,2*).

In Christian artwork, the traditional symbol for James "The Elder" is the scallop shell. The scallop shell was once a practical tool that every traveler carried with him, and would use it to drink from water supplies. It is reminder of the travels and ministry of James, who after Jesus' ascension, would carry the gospel of Christ to the world, even as it would lead him to his death.

We celebrate the *Minor Festival: St. James "The Elder"* on July 25th, as a time to thank the Lord for his faithful pastors, teachers, missionaries, and people who still continue to go out into the world and proclaim Christ to the nations. Thanking the Lord for his faithful servants, who fear not persecution nor death, but only seeking to serve Christ by being his witnesses in the world.

Read **Mark 10:35-45; Acts 11:27-12:5**.... as today's Scripture Lessons.

Blessings to you and your families,
Pastor Matthew Guse