

What do you know about the apostle Saint James, also known as James the great?

With his younger brother, the apostle and evangelist Saint John, they were the two sons of Zebedee and his wife Salome, probably the sister of our Lord's mother, and they were together known as the 'sons of thunder'. They were both engaged in the family fishing business located along the western shore of the sea of Galilee, and when Jesus called them they immediately left their nets and followed him.

But actually the New Testament does not give us much detail of James' life and ministry. We do know that he was one of Jesus inner circle, that of Peter, James and John, and among other things James was with those two on the high mountain to witness the transfiguration of our Lord. There they heard God's voice from the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him."

And that is a lesson for us all, to listen and hear the words of Jesus spoken to us individually, and then to go on and follow after him as did James and John.

Saint Luke does tell us in Acts (12v1-2), that, "King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword". That occurred in the year AD 44, so making James the first apostolic martyr. Traditionally the final resting place of James' body is in the grand Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in north west Spain, the termination of the 'way of Saint James', which pilgrims have walked for over 1000 years from many parts of Europe.

If you walk the coast path from Carbis Bay to Hayle you may well see a plaque marking the way for Cornish Christians from many centuries ago.

The way has the symbol of the 'scallop shell'.

The gospels do relate one interesting story of James and John towards the end of Jesus ministry (Matt 20v20-28). Salome, James and John's mother, came to the Lord and asked him to grant her request that her two sons would sit at Jesus right and left hand in the kingdom. Jesus answered her, "You do not know what you are asking", but he did promise that they would "drink the cup that He was about to drink", a reference to the suffering and death that shortly lay ahead for our Lord.

This request reminds us that we all need to take care over what we ask of our Lord. The prophet Jeremiah (Jer45v5) clearly says to King Jehoiakim, "Do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them." So let us as Christians and disciples take care instead to remain as humble servants and friends of Jesus.

Saint Peter in his first letter (1Pt5v6-7) reminds us that we should "Humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that God may exalt us in due time"

We are to cast all our anxiety upon God, because God cares for each one of us.

What a contrast; not to seek after greatness, but to exercise patience as we wait on what God has for us in the future, and trust that He has the best in mind for us, both now and through eternity.

Saint Paul tells us in Ephesians (Eph3v14), that like him, we as Christians, are to "bow the knee before the Father", and in Philippians (Phil 2v10) Paul says that 'It is at the name of Jesus that every knee should bow'.

Paul also offers up a prayer, a prayer with words that may have been of great help to James in his martyr's death. Paul prayed "That according to the riches of God's glory, He may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through the Holy Spirit." And that power has been seen at many a martyr's death.

So as we remember Saint James, let us pray for one another that we may be 'filled with all the fulness of God' as we continue our pilgrim path along the Christian way towards the new creation God is preparing for each one of us.

The Collect St James the Apostle:

Merciful God, whose holy apostle Saint James leaving his father and all that he had, was obedient to the calling of your Son Jesus Christ and followed him even to death; help us to forsake the false attractions of this world, and to be ready at all times to answer your call without delay; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Blessings to you all, Mike