

**LEARNING
HOW
TO**



SEE

with

**Brian
McLaren**

**Season 5, Episode 2
Domination Stories**

feat. Gareth Higgins, co-host for Season 5

Brian: Everybody is born into something. Many of us were born into a place of marginalization. We experienced poverty and powerlessness from our youngest formative years. Some of us, this includes me, we're born into more of a situation of privilege. As a white heterosexual male, my challenge as I understood it was to compete with others like me for a secure place in the pyramid of power. But, I had one interesting dimension to my upbringing. I grew up in a family of very committed Christians. My parents would today be called conservative evangelicals. Even they might've been called fundamentalists. But, they were very sincere and very loving people. It was a different time back in the fifties and early sixties when I was growing up. It was not our job, as we understood it, to grab for power. It was our job as Christians to serve. I saw this in my dad who was a doctor. He wasn't the kind of arrogant, selfish doctor who was in it for the money or whatever. My dad loved serving. He loved helping people get relief from their sicknesses.

I'll never forget walking down a street with him once in Washington DC and there was a homeless fellow walking along in front of us, literally dragging a blanket along on the sidewalk. My dad grabbed my arm and pulled me close to him. I was probably, I don't know, 11 or 12 at the time. He said, "Look at the back of that man's neck. That's a huge melanoma." He said, "I've never seen anything like that outside of a hospital." My dad wanted to go up and talk to him to try to tell him to get medical help. Then the crowd changed and we were separated from him. For days, my dad talked about how bad he felt that he wasn't able to try to talk to that fellow and encourage him to get some medical help as soon as possible. He just had a heart of love and a heart of service. He did not love money. That's not what drew him into medicine. He loved healing.

My mom had the same spirit. She was very much the typical 1950s housewife and she loved her life, taking care of her husband and children and being a good neighbor and a good member of our church. I was seven years old when Dr. King gave his I Have a Dream speech. I lived just outside of Washington DC. I remember my dad had me watch that speech on the news and told me that history was being made. I needed to pay attention. Five years later when something called Resurrection City happened, it was part of the poor people's march in Washington, my dad put us in the station wagon, drove us downtown, and wanted us to witness what was happening.

He said, "This is history. You need to see this. You need to understand this." So, my coming of age as a child was about facing domination hierarchies that needed to be challenged. Domination, the idea that one race should dominate over other races. Domination, the idea that one gender or sexual orientation should dominate over others. Economic ideology. I came of age during the Vietnam War which was a war of whether capitalism or communism would dominate the earth. I grew up in the era of the space race. Would it be Americans or Russians who dominated space? I was 14 in 1970 when the very first Earth Day happened. One of the first times in my teenage awareness where there was an issue of humans dominating the earth. Was that really the right way to live? It was the first time that idea had ever been questioned for me.

Of course, humans were supposed to dominate the earth. Looking back, all of my schooling, when we studied history, whether it was American history or world history, our whole introduction to history was told in terms of domination. The mighty empires that dominated, the explorers who really were conquistadors, who were sent out by their home

countries to dominate the world. Even my religious background I came to realize was tinged with the story of domination. No, it was deeply rooted in the story of domination because we Christians believed that our religion was the one that should dominate. The story of domination is so deeply rooted in our world. It's taken me a lifetime and I'm still figuring out how my life can be entangled and disentangled from stories of domination. We're thinking, in Season Five, of learning how to see about seven stories that run the show. And, the first of those stories is domination.

Gareth: As you were sharing those thoughts, Brian, I was thinking about the word domination and its roots and what it spreads out to. And, I was thinking about dominoes. I don't mean the kind of dominoes that you play with the dots on them. I mean the kind of dominoes that you would see where people would try to break the world record for the largest number of dominoes that were stood on their side and would be then knocked over into this beautifully creative... It's like that speeded up footage of the blossoming of a flower but done sideways. It's a good analogy for domination. Because, it's about... The domination story in its pure form is about knocking everybody else out of the way. And, ironically, you being the last one standing so the true domino would be the one that flicks the first domino. But, they're not a domino themselves or so they like to think.

Of course, the problem is if you enact domination and if you model domination to the world, then the person who's going to come after you might dominate you if that's all they've learned. You know what we say, that wars only end in two ways, whether they're the conflicts that we usually call wars involving armies or conflicts that we might metaphorically call a war that could just involve two people, or even one person at war with themselves. The only two ways that they end are through defeat of the other side or negotiation of some kind.

You can have this thing that used to be called detente where they kind of agreed that nobody was going to win. That itself is actually a form of negotiation. It's an agreement to not disagree so disagreeably right now. At some point in the future, the war might start again. But, the seeds of the poison of the domination story and the seeds of the failure of the domination story are within the enactment of domination. Because, we've seen this throughout history, authoritarian leaders often get assassinated by the next guy.

It often doesn't last or, frankly, they have to work so hard to maintain their domination that they couldn't possibly be enjoying their life. Presumably their psyches have become so distorted, they may think they're enjoying their lives. But, the thing they were looking for in the first place is not actually what's happening. It is not peace and it is not security. But, that speaks to the legitimate need that gives rise to the domination story. We want to be really clear with people that all these stories, the domination story, revolution story and so on, are responses to legitimate needs.

And, my sense of the domination story is that it is a response to the need for society to organize itself and for there to be leadership of some kind. The opposite of the domination story is not no leadership. The opposite of the domination story is not to tell someone who's a really highly trained architect that they should go and perform brain surgery because everybody's the same. I would rather brain surgery be performed by brain surgeons and I would rather contemplated spirituality retreats be led by people who have been versed in contemplated spirituality. The answer to domination is not no leadership, it's servant

leadership.

Brian: Yeah. This issue of domination has been really intriguing for me on so many levels. Theologically, my understanding of God was that God was the ultimate dominating force in the universe. I remember from my youngest age hearing a Bible verse quoted from the New Testament, “Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.” What I pictured is this powerful omnipotent God with his sword drawn. For some reason, swords were literal in my mental metaphorical universe. And, God is demanding bow your knee. It was this dominating vision of God.

In that way, domination was the way the universe was supposed to run. That was just so deeply embedded in me and in every sphere of life. Even... will remember... many of us will remember at least, children’s books where we learned that the king of the animals is the lion and the king of the birds is the eagle. The idea that there was a dominating force in every domain of life, that that’s the only way to have peace is through domination. It’s so deeply embedded. I’m sure it’s roots are still unacknowledged in many parts of my own psyche because it was so pervasive. I think for many people it’s probably tough that we’re starting with this one because it’s almost impossible for many of us to imagine a world that isn’t run by domination.

Gareth: It’s also okay because I imagine there may be some folks listening whose response is, “Well, how else are you going to do it? How else was evolution ever going to happen?” I think that’s an interesting point, to which I would respond, just because something happened in the past or even needed to happen in the past doesn’t mean it needs to happen that way today. If you look at the history of the development of medicine, for instance, people with diabetes and there’s a fair amount of diabetes in my family, no longer have to suffer the way people with diabetes suffered a hundred years ago because we have developed a better way. We figured out how do you manufacture insulin and save people’s lives in that way.

Perhaps a more germane analogy is prehistoric humans. You know more about this than I do and the right terminology. But, I’m thinking about the apes in the movie 2001 Space Odyssey who discover violence and discover that, “Oh wow, if I pick up a bone, I can beat things with this bone. And, if I see other people coming toward me and I have the bone first, I can dominate them.” I was having a conversation the other day with someone about this in which I referred to the apes actions as selfish.

She said to me, “They’re not selfish. Their brains aren’t evolved enough to be capable of selfishness. It’s instinctual domination.” That’s also helpful. We don’t have to blame our ancestors for their mistakes in order to agree that they were wrong about some things. Just the same as, my goodness, I hope in the future people will not blame us for everything we got wrong if they understand what we did and did not know at the time. So, yeah, you could well make the case that domination was a necessary part of the evolution of humanity. But, just because it once was doesn’t make it so anymore.

Brian: I’m so glad you bring that up because even that example from evolution, I realize I learned evolution from people who believe that domination was the way the world should work. I learned a phrase that came... It’s a phrase with a fascinating history,

‘survival of the fittest’. All of the teachers who taught me evolution, when they said fittest, they meant the fastest, the most aggressive, the most competitive. The dominating were the ones who would survive.

Interestingly, that wasn’t what Charles Darwin meant by the phrase. I talk about this in a book I wrote called *The Galapagos Islands: A Spiritual Journey*. But, Charles Darwin didn’t even use that phrase ‘survival of the fittest’ in his original writings. He used the term ‘evolution by natural selection’. And, a younger colleague, some pit them as rivals, but named Wallace said, “When you say natural selection, it sounds like nature is selecting. It makes nature seem too personified. Why don’t you use the term survival of the fittest.” But, the term meant survival of those that fit best in their environment. Very opposite of those who dominate their environment and each other, those who fit best in their environment. So, fitness meant how well did you fit? To me, that’s just such a different way of understanding the term.

Gareth: A sane appreciation of that today would not say to someone who doesn’t fit well that necessarily they’re the ones that have to change. If you think about the way... One of the marks of evolution, compassion and orientation toward the common good, is the people who we don’t, whoever we is, who the center does not exclude anymore. Or, at least, in theory or in principle does not exclude. I remember growing up in this society, if you were someone who used a wheelchair, most public events were not accessible to you. One of the things that has changed in the last two to three decades is now pretty much every public building is legally required to make sure that people who are wheelchair users can access the building. In fact, in the UK and Ireland, there’s been a cultural sea change around folk who require a carer or an assistant to be with them to be given free or discounted tickets to events that might have a registration fee to attend.

That is the opposite of survival of the fittest as it was previously understood. That is actually the people with access to the levers of power changing the environment in order to make the environment more inclusive and more accessible. Of course, I’m not saying that it works in every case. I’m not saying that people with physical disabilities or who are differently abled, depending on which phrase you prefer to use, are living in some kind of paradise right now. I am saying one of the things that consciousness allows us to do is not to say, “You better just get with the program,” but actually change the program.

Brian: Yes, exactly right. We are having this conversation in the weeks after July, 2023, which was the hottest month for about 125,000 years at least. We wonder when this will really take hold, but more and more people are starting to realize that our relationship with the earth as a relationship of domination, it’s proving self-destructive and self-defeating. To try to dominate something the way we’ve dominated it ends up being destructive and suicidal. We see that, the downsides of domination. As you said, it’s understandable why people want to dominate. They want safety. They want security. They want convenience. But, you find out that there are kinds of domination that end up in the long run giving you the opposite of what you wanted.

You think of the father who wants to have a happy family. So, whenever a member

of the family is out of line, he rages and yells and screams and threatens and maybe even is violent. His good desire for a happy family leads him to dominate in a way that makes his family miserable and makes him feel that what he's created isn't what he wanted at all originally, maybe. As often happens though, in the act of domination, you actually can begin to change yourself. In order to keep your own self in control, you begin very easily to find pleasure in things that would not have been pleasurable for you before. The very act of humiliating someone becomes a pleasurable thing for you. It's hard to talk about this without thinking of characters who show up in the news every day. But, we just realize that there is a way that domination disfigures and dehumanizes the person or group that's doing the domination, even as it dehumanizes and disfigures those who are being dominated.

Gareth: And, it can't be healed by adding more poison to the well.

Brian: Yes.

Gareth: John Paul Lederach, who as you know is a Mennonite peace theorist and really one of the world's most distinguished thinkers and practitioners in the realm of addressing civil conflict, that's violent conflict within a state. He was sharing with me once that we teach children, or sane parenting cultures, teach children several universal stories. Let's see if I can remember them. One is don't hit him. Another is don't steal her food. Another takes that one further. You've got two pieces of candy and he has none. Share your food. Another would be what you've got to understand is she's having a hard time at home. There are highfalutin terms for these like compassion, interdependency.

What John Paul Lederach was saying to me was how strange it is that sane parenting cultures teach this to children. But, adults don't believe it. If something happens... Or, that it's not fashionable to say it. It sounds like weakness. Mr. Rogers, Fred Rogers, had sort of a resurgence in his popularity recently with a beautiful documentary and then a feature film about him. I saw some news footage from the time when Fred Rogers was... Perhaps his celebrity was waning toward the end of his career. There were people on a 24/7 news channel talking about how he was evil actually. I think they called him evil because he had basically told people that they mattered. The pundits on the show were interpreting this as you're telling people that they don't have to work. You're telling people that they don't have to earn. They don't have to earn their value. You're telling people that life is easy.

Actually, no. Fred Rogers was not telling people life was easy at all. He was telling them what they could do to respond to the difficulties of life. There's a reason why some of the people we hold up as great figures in nonviolent activism, people like Archbishop Desmond Tutu or the Dalai Lama, they're known for their infectious joy. But, the Dalai Lama is not, and Archbishop Tutu was not, ignorant of his people's suffering. They were not living in denial. Archbishop Tutu once said, "The reason I smile, the reason I laugh, the reason I bring this joy, is because the people need a vision. They need a vision of what's possible. They don't need a reminder of the suffering. They're already living in it." Part of the challenge with the domination story is, within its very DNA, the domination story tends to dominate.

It tends to be told most loudly. It tends to be shouted from the rooftops. The antidote to the domination story tends to be said a little more quietly, a little more subtly, a little more gradually. It doesn't get reported that, over the past 25 years, the society that I grew up in has

been moving toward greater degrees of structural cooperation at a political level rather than structural domination, one community over the other. Now, it's two steps forward and one step back, sometimes one and a half steps back. Sometimes it feels like it's two steps forward and three steps back. But, the overall trajectory is toward replacing domination with service toward the common good, which is a much more compelling and a, frankly, much more enjoyable way to live. The parts of me that want to dominate are not happy parts. They're not content. They're not well. They're not whole. They don't satisfy. They don't satisfy.

Brian: You mentioned Fred Rogers and, Gareth, one of your special gifts and loves and fascinations in life is film. Because, film takes us into a dark room and lets us have a dream together where we imagine things that aren't easy to imagine out in the light of day and in the rush of traffic and so on. I'd love to hear some movies that you feel tell us something important about the domination story.

Gareth: I have five that are in my mind right now. The first is the Godfather Part Two. The reason I named that, it's nearly 50 years old, is because that's a story about a family and the person who becomes the head of that family, Michael Corleone played by Al Pacino. His original motivation is an attempt on his own father's life, which is a really serious thing, and it is comprehensible. It is not justifiable, but it is comprehensible why somebody, why people act violently or join the domination story when a violent attempt has been made on a loved one. That's why it happens.

But, the profound thing about the Godfather Part Two is that, at the end of that film, and this is a spoiler for anybody who hasn't seen it, at the end of that film, Michael Corleone has all the, I guess you could call it, temporal power in the world. He is absolutely on top. He's eradicated his enemies, he rules his family, he's in charge, and he's completely alone. The third film in the trilogy is about him trying to find a way back from his isolation. Because it's a Shakespearean tragedy, there is no way back for him now. Even I believe that with grace and amends and a healing community, there are actually ways back to mercy, there may not be ways back to reinvent the structure that you were from. In fact, if you achieved your temporal power in the world through the destruction of other people's lives, you really probably should give that power back.

But, the Godfather Part Two, I think I've already mentioned 2001 because it charts the evolution of the domination story through this primitive instinctual domination through to the climax of that film where a human being is willing to give their life to save the life of another human being. In the philosophical schema of that amazing film co-written by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke and directed by Stanley Kubrick in the philosophical schema, they're the entities who may be aliens or maybe divine beings who are observing what human beings are doing.

They decide to entrust this man with the next stage of human evolution precisely because they have observed him being willing to die to save the life of another, which is... That's one definition of love, is the willingness to die to save the life of one more vulnerable. A companion piece to 2001 is Terence Malick's film *The Tree of Life*, which has an echo of an idea attributed to the anthropologist Margaret Mead, although I don't know that it actually was Margaret Mead who said this, who said that the first sign of civilization we've been able to see in prehistory is a fossilized, healed, previously broken femur.

Because, for an animal to break a bone and for that bone to then heal meant that other animals cared for that. They did not just abandon the animal or kill it. I mean, who knows, they may have eaten it after it died happily of old age surrounded by all its relatives watching episodes of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood. But, a sign of evolution is when those previously who would've been abandoned or rejected have been included and cared for. The Tree of Life actually has an analogy for that very same thing where a dinosaur has the opportunity to kill another dinosaur and chooses not to.

Anytime when somebody chooses not to kill, when the domination story would've said, "Yeah, go ahead and kill," that's a step forward. We've already mentioned the documentary about Mr. Rogers: Won't You Be My neighbor, which has astonishing footage in it in which Fred Rogers does something that transcends some of the racist power dynamics in the culture at the time. But, he doesn't draw attention to it, which is another way that the story is better spread, like being just sort of scattered and left to do its work. Sometimes you do need to shout the story loudly. A lot of time you just need to let it permeate.

Finally, one of my favorite films, a Japanese movie called Afterlife, which is a film about people being given the chance to take one memory from their lives into eternity with them in which they will live forever. So, you get to choose. After you die, you get a week to consider what one memory do you want to live in forever. The reason I bring it up in the context of the domination story, it would belong with any of the other six stories too. But, it's about how what matters really when it comes down to it and what people regret about their lives. Nobody who dies sane regrets that they didn't dominate people more. Nobody who dies sane regrets that they didn't kill more people, that they didn't hurt more people.

People regret that they didn't share more. People regret that they prioritized money and power over community and service. And, Afterlife is just a beautiful meditative invitation to asking yourself right now, wherever you are in your life, what kind of memory would I like to make now that would be worth living in forever? Brian, I'd love to hear from you about where you see the domination story in scripture.

Brian: It's so interesting because the book of Genesis is often blamed for the domination story because, in the Garden of Eden story, actually the first creation account, human beings are given dominion over the rest of creation. People assume dominion means domination. I think that's certainly the way Christians especially have interpreted it, especially because we were projecting our own domination back into that story. I don't think you have to read that story that way. The nature of God in the first creation story is not a God dominating and forcing the world into a certain mold. It is let there be light. It's a permission giving power.

It's such a fascinating grammatical phrase, let there be light, let there be land, let there be sea, let there be crawling creatures, let there be fish, let there be humans. It's a permission giving rather than a domination. Then when human beings are made in the image of God, and God says, "You can have dominion," we would expect it should be the same kind of gentle presence rather than a dominating, controlling, exploiting presence.

It's not let there be exploitation, let the human beings exploit the earth and get every last drop of its goodness so that it will soon be destroyed. It's very, very different. Then in the next creation story, in Genesis Two, the human beings are given freedom in this garden.

Their lives are not controlled. They're given a huge amount of freedom. No regimentation from above. But, there's one prohibition. You shall not eat of that one tree. I think that's as if to say, "Look, if you want absolute domination, things are not going to go well for you. So, you need to know there are limits." The existence of limits, in a sense, is a way to keep us away from domination. But, of course, human beings don't want limits and we then move toward domination. And, domination follows in the book of Genesis.

I'm recalling what you said, Gareth, that when someone has the chance to kill and he doesn't, that's a step in the right direction, a step away from domination. That's really what happens in the book of Genesis. We start with this beautiful world of freedom and interdependence. It is marred and interrupted by domination. But, the story ends with a brother who's been exploited, sold into slavery, who then has a position of privilege. He uses his privilege not to inflict revenge, but to save the lives of the very people who had mistreated him and harmed him. We certainly see that pattern repeated.

I'd like to give one other example from the New Testament, and that's from the book of Acts Chapter 16. If people are interested in reading a Bible story with domination story in mind, Paul and his associates, Silas and others, come to the city of Philippi, which is identified as a Roman colony. When we read this with story literacy, with lenses of story sensitivity on, we say, "Oh, to go to a Roman colony means to go to a city of domination." What happens in that city? Paul and Silas encounter a slave girl.

So, she's a slave. She's at the bottom of the pyramid of domination. And, she's a girl. She's also at the gender subservient position in that patriarchal context. The whole story hinges on Paul and Silas seeing this slave girl as a human being with rights and needs and dignity. What happens then is the forces of domination have to reassert their control. They don't want to see a young slave woman be liberated and treated with respect. They have to reassert domination, and violence and imprisonment follow. Paul and Silas are given the chance to escape and they intentionally decide not to escape to preserve the wellbeing of the jailer who's keeping them. And, when they're given the chance to flee the city, they intentionally don't flee so that they can stay and confront the magistrates with their improper use of domination. It's just a fascinating story that just crackles with the electricity of domination being challenged by a very different worldview.

Gareth: Both that story and the story of Joseph that you were alluding to a few minutes ago, it's important to say, or at least for me to say, because of things that have happened in Northern Irish society, the opposite of domination is not giving a free pass to the oppressor. It is not pretending that there was no harm done. And, it is not at saying we're not going to ask for any amends. Now, you may not get amends, but it is absolutely legitimate to ask for amends. That's different to what you might call the metaphysical operations of grace and the offer of forgiveness. I don't require you to make amends in order for me to offer you mercy. I may need you to make amends in order for us to have a friendship-

Brian: Yes.

Gareth: ... on an ongoing basis. Or, for me to feel safe with you. But, something I love about the Joseph story is he makes pretty sure that his brothers are aware of what it is that they did to him. But, he's also... It's almost a satirical thing. The reason I bring that up is people have

often spoken in this society, of Northern Irish society, this word forgiveness gets thrown around like it's easy or simple or that everybody knows what it means. And, it gets too quickly defined as something like having no judgment of the person who harmed you. Not true. Not true. In fact, forgiveness requires you to have judgment of the person who harmed you. Otherwise, what are you forgiving? If there's nothing to judge, then there's nothing to forgive. There is a difference between vengeance and accountability. There's a difference between amends and torturing somebody because of the pain they cause.

And, there's a difference between embracing somebody as your long-lost best friend as if nothing's ever gone wrong between you and saying, "I bear you no ill will." Again, this could be operative in all of the stories that we'll discuss in this series. But, in the domination story particularly, as we maybe move on to talk about contemporary issues or news stories, I come from a society where one of the very strong stories here is that somebody dominated somebody else for many centuries. And then, some people responded to that domination with violence. What do you do when there's been so much suffering for so many generations? What do you do when nobody can decide who's to blame? Because, it really just depends what date do you begin the problem from.

Brian: Yes. Yes.

Gareth: That's when you can say who's to blame. Who threw the first punch today may be the person who's to blame today, but somebody threw another punch yesterday. It's more than punching that is happening. It's a lot more than punching. I'd like to share, if I may, about one story of one family that became iconic. And, I think in some respects, notorious because of the way it has been misrepresented. If we could hear the truth at the heart of it, it would be cherishable. The reality of it is cherishable. The story we tell is not the one that should be cherished. If that's okay, may I share?

In 1987, one of the paramilitary organizations in the North of Ireland committed an atrocity. They blew up a religious service on what is called Remembrance Sunday in the UK in Northern Ireland. It's the same as Memorial Day in the US. It's the day when people remember those who've died in wars. There was a bombing that took place at the hands of one of the paramilitary organizations, and it took the lives of 12 people at this service in 1987. One of the people who was killed, and I share this story with deep respect for the people involved having never met them, but they became public figures through this.

I'm trying to share this story with as much respect as I can. Mary Wilson, who was 23 years old, she was a nurse. She died in the rubble holding her father's hand. Her father, Gordon Wilson, who I believe was a Methodist lay preacher, a local businessman. And, Gordon Wilson became incredibly famous very rapidly after this horrendous atrocity because he went on television within days of holding his daughter's hand as she was dying. He has been consistently misquoted for 36 years since this interview.

He's been consistently misquoted as having said, "I forgive them." That's not actually what he said. What he said was, of the people who had killed his daughter or these other people, what he said was, "I bear them no ill will." For years, unfortunately, because of soundbite culture and because of I think just the massive shock of the situation, this word forgiveness has been denuded of its meaning. People have been given legitimacy who've wanted to say,

“What do you want me to do to these dominators? Just pretend that it didn’t matter?”

Brian: Mm.

Gareth: Within days, that I just pretend that there’s no suffering here? And, that’s not what he said at all. There’s nothing that he said that implied he was not living in the midst of a hurricane of suffering.

Brian: Yes. Yes.

Gareth: Actually what he said was the start of the forgiveness process, which is, “You harmed me and I will not repay like for like. I will not dominate you in return.” Now, paradoxically, you could actually say that the moral gravity of what he was doing in that moment, actually it does have greater weight than the domination of the bomb. It just takes a lot longer for its effects to be seen in the society. I would believe that while some people criticize Gordon Wilson because they misunderstood what he had said, and I understand the pain that leads to people doing that, actually I bear them no ill will has become one of the watchwords for how our society now operates, which is we are trying to transform a domination story into a cooperation story.

Brian: To close this episode, I’d like to read a short passage from the Gospel of Luke Chapter 22. It goes like this. A dispute also arose among the disciples as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But, Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. And, those in authority over them are called benefactors. But, not so with you. Rather, the greatest among you must become like the youngest and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at table. But, I am among you as one who serves.” I’d like to invite us to just sit for a few moments in this amazing, shocking moment of Jesus who’s seen as a teacher and a leader. Some people are calling him the Messiah, the liberating king.

He says, “I’m not into this game that the world runs by, the game of the kings of the Gentiles lording it over, abusing people, and yet pretending to do them a favor.” He’s not playing that game at all. He’s living by a different standard, a standard, a life of non-domination. So, I’ll invite you to just take a few moments in silence to hold that word non-domination, to imagine a way of living and being that doesn’t involve lording it over others, but being present among others in this world as one who wants to give in an interdependent and loving relationship. Nondomination.

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