

Sermon: Greatness – According to Jesus

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. When have you asked a thoughtless question that ended in an uncomfortable silence?
2. Who is a significant person in your life? Why?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Paraphrase the conversation that Jesus had with James and John. (Mark 10:35-45) For what were they asking? What prompted them to ask this?
2. Scan the previous chapters of Mark to be reminded of all that the disciples and Jesus had experienced together. (Mark 1:14 – 9:29) What was it they did not understand about Jesus' teaching? (9:30-32) Why did they argue amongst themselves? (v. 32 -34)
3. Why did Jesus respond by bringing a 'little child'? (Matt 18:1-4 or Mark 9:33-37)
4. Review the story of Joseph (Barnabas) Acts 4:32-37 and Acts 11:19-30. In what ways did he exemplify what Jesus had taught the disciples?
5. What challenges do aspirations for leadership and significance have for a Christ-follower today?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. What is the 'Not so with you' (10:43) for you this week? Where can you be a 'servant' this week?
2. When have you said, 'Someone should do something about this.'? Are you that 'someone'? Pray, asking God if you are and how you can be the answer.
3. What need around you might you be ignoring? Pray, asking God if you are the answer and what you need to do.
4. Challenge yourself (and your group!) by memorizing Mark 10:45 and Phil 2:5-11.

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

Mark 9:30-37

³⁰They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." ³²But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. ³³They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" ³⁴But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."

³⁶He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Mark 10:35-45

³⁵Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

³⁶"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³⁷They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

³⁸"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

³⁹"We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

⁴¹When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴²Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Sermon Study Summary

The disciples asked Jesus a most profound question: “Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?” Then, as now, it is one of the most important questions of life: we all seek for significance or greatness or success. Our worldview influences the answer that we seek; the answer determines what values we pursue and how we live our life. When Jesus drew in a child to illustrate his answer, Jesus confounded and confused them.

Like many of us, the disciples believed a ‘great’ person had a position of power or leadership, great wealth or intellect; surely not someone with child-like qualities such as humility, total dependence, or simple trust in God. Although Jesus had just talked to them about His passion, they appeared convinced that Jesus would soon become King and establish his earthly Kingdom. They wanted to confirm that they would share in the resulting respect, power, and glory with Jesus.

Instead, Jesus now explained the nature of greatness of His Kingdom compared to that of this world. We cannot seek true greatness: rather, it is something that finds us. And it finds us when we shift our focus from ourselves to God alone. Jesus defines true greatness in three ways: it comes to those who 1) serve God and others 2) trust God’s goodness, and 3) rest in God’s sovereignty - no matter what.

Today’s message is in serving God. In this world, greatness is entirely based on where we are in relation to others. If we have higher position or rank, more power or possessions, we are perceived as greater than them. We reject God and become our own god; we become obsessed with maintaining this perception. We become proud of ourselves. Pride fosters division and conflict. Our relationships become weaker and society disintegrates; for we oppose the proud because we are made in God’s image.

But Jesus says that pride or measuring ourselves by standards other than God’s is not the way of his Kingdom. “Not so with you.” In His Kingdom, we achieve greatness when we serve others in Jesus’ name. Jesus modeled this for us Mark 10:45. He humbled himself to come down to us, knelt to wash his disciples’ feet, and to the most shameful, painful death. He came to serve us, and He does so even now. When we become Christians, we do not become His helpers: He becomes our helper. He delights in being asked by us for help, and then providing it to us. When he gives us assignments, He is asking us to lean on Him for help and to be served by Him. Becoming a Christian requires deep humility: we lay aside our pride, admit we need Jesus’ help, and that we need someone to serve us. Humility fosters unity and peace in relationships, and we give grace and we are drawn to the humble. Phil 2:9 strongly reminds us that Jesus humbled Himself out of love for us and God exalted Him to the highest place.

We are called to serve in many ways, including leadership, being in authority or making money. The main issue is **how** we lead and how we make money; that our actions and attitudes are the same as that of Jesus. In Acts 4, Joseph made property and money available to meet the needs of the early church and also led and taught the church in Antioch. For his generosity and servant heart he became known as Barnabas – son of encouragement. His investment, encouragement and service helped transform lives.

Martin Luther King said “everybody can be great, because everybody can serve.” Matt Woodley used his love of basketball to invite other athletes to join him in prayer and weekly Bible study. Whatever we do, whether as professional, academic, student, plumber or housewife, we are to do it to the best of our ability and competence for the glory of God. Recognize that if we see a need, the Lord is calling us to serve. True greatness comes to those with a servant heart, those who are committed to being His hands, lips and feet; those who know that they are His representative and His servant pointing others to Him, those who put the eternal things of God ahead of the temporary things of life in this world and those who love and serve God and others – no matter what. God created us to be people of great significance – in His Kingdom. Your labour in the Lord is not in vain.