

Sermon: Greatness According to Jesus (Part 2) 'Trusting God's Goodness, No Matter What'

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

(Leaders, choose appropriate questions for your Group)

1. What story do you have about following 'Siri' (GPS) or following someone's directions to reach a location?
2. When has there been a time in your life when you felt 'great'?
Was it a matter of pride where you subsequently fell 'flat on your face' or was this a 'good' thing that others complemented you for?
3. Share a time /event when you felt challenged to trust in the goodness of God, 'no matter what.'

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Read Mark 10:42.
What challenges do aspirations for leadership and significance have for a Christ-follower today?
(This is a review question from Part 1: 'Greatness comes to those who Serve God and Others')
<http://www.cschurch.ca/sermons/general-sermons-2017/greatness-according-to-jesus/>
2. Read the answer that the disciples gave to Jesus in Mark 10:38, 39.
Did the disciples really understand their answer? Did they know to what they were agreeing? Why / why not?
3. How does Jesus model the principle of trusting God 'no matter what'?
(Mark 14:35, 36)
4. Pastor Henry refers to two Old Testament stories to illustrate what it means to trust in God:
Joseph's life story: Gen 37:5-11 and 42:1-3
The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt: Exodus 13:17

What purposes did God have for the detours in both of these stories?
What was God accomplishing in these two situations?
How do these stories illustrate the words of Isaiah 55:8-11?

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

1. What experience in your life does this message bring to mind?
Have you ever taken on a life-changing detour? How did you make sense of it?
How did it work out or are you still in the midst of it?
2. How can the group pray for you?

THE WORD (NIV)

Genesis 37:5-11

⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." ⁸ His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. ⁹ Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."¹⁰ When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Genesis 42:1-3

When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" ² He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."³ Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt.

Exodus 13:17

¹⁷ When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."

Isaiah 55:8-11

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."
¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Mark 10: 38, 39, 42

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. . .

⁴² Jesus 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.

Mark 14:35,36

³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Sermon Study Summary

In Matthew 18, we read that the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Like the disciples, this is a question that we have all asked or thought about; we want our life to count, to be significant, to make a difference. This is important because what you believe defines ‘greatness’ will largely determine your values and how you live. As we learned in the first part of this series (March 25-26) Jesus teaches that *true greatness comes to those who with humility serve God and others – no matter what*. In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus gives another answer by describing ‘true greatness’ in two different ways: what it looks like in the kingdom of this world (secular culture) in contrast with what it looks like in the Kingdom of God. In the kingdom of the world, greatness is based on your status relative to others: smarter, richer, stronger, younger: we compete and keep score to verify our higher ranking. Constant pre-occupation with the self results in a proud people that watch helplessly as marriages, families and society disintegrate around them. Pride in the self fosters competition, division and conflict. In a culture that rejects God, greatness is not based on God. “Not so with you!” says Jesus. (Mark v.43) In His kingdom, the polar opposite is true: greatness comes to them who serve rather than compete – to them who serve rather than use others for their own selfish ends.

Next, Jesus teaches that *true greatness comes to those who trust God’s goodness and live in simple trust in God, no matter what*. (Read Mark v.35-39) True greatness does not come from promotion to great power; it is not handed to you. It does not come from putting self-interest ahead of the interests of others. It may not come easily or quickly and may involve many unexpected detours. In fact, it may be very costly when it comes. Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, knew that the sin of world would be placed on him, and prayed in great agony to let the bitter cup of suffering on the cross pass from him. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He chose not to exercise his power but to display the power of God the Father and the Spirit working through him: Jesus lived in total dependence on His heavenly Father. Now, the human part of Him wanted to avoid the cross and go directly to the resurrection. “. . . Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matt 26:39), and Jesus trusted God and took the detour of Good Friday and the cross. Pastor Henry compares using Siri and the GPS to get quickly from where we are to where we want to go. This efficiency pleases us, so we assume that God works the same way; that He will arrange the shortest way to get us to where He wants us. Not so, not always; and many times for reasons only He understands. In Exodus 5, Moses asks Pharaoh to “let my people go,” but Pharaoh is a proud and stubborn man and he chooses the plagues. In the end, after much misery and destruction, he gives up and lets them go. Then in Exodus 13:17 we read that God did not lead the people on the shorter and well-travelled Via Maris to the Promised Land. Instead of a quick journey of less than 2 weeks, God led them to a year-long detour in the wilderness. God, knowing their faith was not strong, used this year to help them get to know Him better.

It has been said that ‘the distance between where you are and where God is calling you is not always a straight line. Rather it is more often a series of zigs and zags and filled with unexpected turns.’ A young ministry couple sensed God’s call to full-time ministry; and others affirmed the calling and their gifts. Accepting the call to serve, they faced a decade of hardship, disappointment, resistance and discouragement and found themselves worn-out, empty, broken and disillusioned. They asked, “Did we miss something; did we misunderstand God’s calling?” This is vividly illustrated in Joseph’s life, Genesis (37-42). Joseph was 17 when God tells him of a plan for his life in a position of great power (Gen 37:7,9). But Joseph’s life was a rollercoaster for the next 13 years: mocked and sold into slavery by his brothers; bought by Potiphar, an official in Pharaoh’s court, and entrusted to manage his affairs; falsely accused of seduction and rape by Potiphar’s wife and then imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. Joseph must have asked, why? He must have had moments when he lost hope and felt like giving up. Yet he remained steadfast and said ‘no’ to temptations to quit, to find some sort of pleasure and happiness in the world. He determined to stand firm and to trust in the goodness of God, no matter what; to believe that God had his best interests at heart and was working out His purposes in his life whether he saw it or not. By not quitting, Joseph set into motion the deepening of his faith and the development of his character and skills that would make him the most effective leader in Egypt; thereby fulfilling the role God had in mind for him. As Genesis 39:2 says, ‘the Lord was with Joseph’.

Friend, whatever you are going through and whenever tempted to give up, hear this: you are not alone - GOD IS WITH YOU. Joseph’s life teaches when life doesn’t make any sense; God is with us, working behind the scenes in response to our prayers for our ultimate good and for His ultimate Glory. God is not opposed to us being happy, healthy or wealthy; but God is opposed to anything He created replacing Him as the object of our highest affection. He is a good God, meeting our needs; eager for our friendship with Him to thrive; delighting in us when we ask Him to spend our day with us; asking Him often for His help, His wisdom, His direction and power to live the life He created us to live. We know that God’s promises can be trusted; that He is with us, no matter what; that His presence and protection will never leave us.

Cancer destroyed Dave Dravecky’s pitching arm just as he was reaching his all-star peak in 1988. (<http://www.davedravecky.com/mystory>) The next year and against all odds, he returned again to the San Francisco Giants to pitch for a 4-3 win. Five days later, his arm literally split in two as he threw the ball. He lost his arm, shoulder and collarbone; he lost baseball. But after a long agonizing search, Dave found true value in his identity in Jesus Christ. And in hindsight, Dave saw God use his terrible loss to provide a platform to reach millions for HIS ministry called ‘Outreach of Hope.’