

WHO WILL BE GREATEST?

Matthew 20:17-28

10/16/11

Next to Christ, who will be the greatest person in the kingdom of heaven?

What makes a person truly great?

How do you define true greatness?

Is it by the number of people who recognize your name or face?

Is it by the number of people who will remember you and miss you when you die?

Is it the title that you carry or the academic degrees you hold?

Is it by your accomplishments in the classroom, on the athletic field or at work?

Is it the number of people who like you?

Is it the amount of money that you make or the things that you own?

Is it determined by the size of your house or the car you drive?

Is it the number of people who envy your clothes or your looks?

Is it measured in the places you have gone on vacation or pleasures that you have been able to experience in life?

Is greatness determined by the number of people who work for you?

How do you define true greatness?

More importantly, how does God define greatness?

In Matthew 20:17-28 Jesus shows us and tells us what true greatness looks like.

1. Jesus was willingly going to Jerusalem to be mocked, scourged, crucified, and resurrected. 20:17-19

Jesus knew what is going to happen to Him in Jerusalem, yet He took the lead and resolutely marched toward the cross.

Jesus is the greatest person who ever lived

Yet He was willing to suffer and die for lowly rebellious people like you and me.

His greatness was measured by His love and sacrifice for others.

2. Yet the disciples jockey for power and prominence in the kingdom. 20:20-21, 24

The disciples were thinking more of their own glory than of Jesus' sufferings.

a. James and John came to Jesus with their mother. vv. 20-23

The apostles James and John were the sons of Zebedee.

Mark's gospel account makes it clear that they came with their mother and were involved in this attempt to gain positions of prominence.

Mark 10:35 James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You."

Their request is embarrassing in light of our Lord's announcement.

They are so selfishly ambitious that they totally ignore what Jesus has just told them.

They think that true greatness involves positions of power authority.

Despite spending three years with Jesus, watching His self-sacrificing example, they still don't get it.

22-23a Jesus tells them that they will drink of the cup that He was about to drink.

Jesus is speaking figuratively of His approaching suffering and death.

James and John do eventually suffer for their Christian faith.

Herod had James put to death with a sword. Acts 12

John suffered greatly for the cause of Christ.

- b. The rest of the disciples were indignant because they likewise wanted positions of importance. v. 24**

There is no way that they were going to give away those top spots without a fight.

This was a recurring matter among the disciples, right up to the table at the Last Supper. (cf. 18:1, 4; 23:11-12; Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46; 22:24, 26)

- 3. Jesus explains who will be greatest in the kingdom. 20:22-23, 25-27**

- a. Positions of prominence in the kingdom involve a willingness to suffer for the cause of Christ. v. 22**

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

- b. Positions of prominence in the kingdom are determined by God the Father. v. 23**

- c. Positions of prominence in the kingdom are based on our service of others for God. vv. 25-27**

God wants all of us to get out of ourselves and serve others.

1 Peter 4:10 As *each one* has received a *special gift*, employ it in *servicing one another* as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Ephesians 4:15-16 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together *by what every joint supplies*, according to the proper working of *each individual part*, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Romans 14:19 . . . **building up** of one another.

1 Corinthians 12:25 . . . **care for** one another.

Galatians 5:13 **serve** one another.

Philippians 2:3 **regard** one another as **more important than yourselves**

Colossians 3:16 **admonishing** one another

1 Thessalonians 4:18 **comfort** one another

1 Thessalonians 5:11 **encourage** one another

1 Thessalonians 5:15b . . . but always **seek after that which is good** for one another

Hebrews 10:24 . . . **stimulate** one another to love and good deeds

1 Peter 4:9 **Be hospitable** to one another

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** for one another."

We must make sure however that we serve for the right reasons.

Not:

To get recognition

To be liked

So we can get what we want out of God

So that we can have a feeling of importance

But to glorify God and build up others

4. Jesus **demonstrated** true greatness. 20:28

a. Jesus came to **serve**.

He is our example.

Colossians 1:15-17 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

2 Corinthians 8:9 . . . though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

Jesus created the galaxies, super novae, and lady bugs.

He holds the universe together by the word of His power

Yet He came as a servant.

Matthew 8:20 Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

The greatest person of all time did not come to live for Himself.

He did not come to be waited on.

He came to serve others and to give His life for us.

b. Jesus sacrificed His life as a ransom for others.

Ransom- something given "in place of"

Christ died in our place.

He suffered for our sins.

1 Peter 2:24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Jesus' ultimate act of service is seen in His giving His life to pay the penalty for your sins and mine.

Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us to **redeem** us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Truths That Matter

1. True greatness in the kingdom is based on our willingness to sacrifice and serve others for God.

The greatest person is the one who lives his/her life serving others for God.

John 13:13 "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. ¹⁴ "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Who are you serving for God?

True greatness involves sacrificially serving others for God.

By that standard Jesus is the greatest person of all time.

He gave up the most to serve the least and the worst.

2. Only Jesus can ransom you from the penalty of sin.

Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."