

J.J.

BE GREAT
Matthew 20:20-28

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21 "What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Announcements:

Summer Camping

Brant Conservation Area July 10-12 (1 hour and 30 min)

- To those who are staying overnight, bring your own gear, cooking equipment and food to share
- To those who are coming by day on Saturday, Worship service at 1 p.m.
- Please be at the campsite by 10 a.m. and bring lunch to share
- No Sunday service

Lord's Table/Breaking of the Bread after the service

Merger Details : Arlene is now gathering details from CRA and our banking institutions. We will have to dissolve DCF and merge with LINC and then change to a new name.

Project Timeline : Today is the appointment of the deacons

Today, we'll start a series for the month of July and it's all about Servanthood and we start with the series on "How to Be Great" in the eyes of the Lord.

PRAY

Follower Illustration: There was a story of a young woman who wanted to go to university, but her heart sank when she read the question on the application that asked, “Are you a leader?” Being both honest and conscientious, she wrote, “No,” and returned the application, expecting the worst. To her surprise, she received this letter from the university: “Dear Applicant: A study of the application forms reveals that this year our university will have 1,452 new leaders. We are accepting you because we feel it is imperative that they have at least one follower.”

Source: The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring, Les and Leslie Parrott

INTRODUCTION: One of the things that the first church did that fascinated me is how they were described by the world around them. In Acts 17, Paul was preaching about our Lord Jesus Christ and by God’s grace, a lot of Greeks believed but the Jews became envious and took some mob and went to the house of Jason. Jason was the one hosting Paul and Silas. When the mob did not find them there,

Acts 17: 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. KJV

The NIV says, “*These men who have caused trouble all over the world...*”

The question that came into my mind is why would the first Christians cause such a stir?

First, they preached the Gospel, they preached about Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose again from the dead and He is the only way to our Father in heaven...not our own goodness or our works.

Secondly, the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ followed the radically different approach to life which is totally the opposite of the world.

In the eyes of men, when we hear the word “great”, we see images of athletes who are “great” in their sports and we applaud them. Truly, they are great and it’s something to be celebrated

Or we see images of politicians or heroes and truly they are “great”. Or when it comes to riches and wealth, we see private jets, yachts and mansions. Or we see powerful conquerors like Napoleon Bonaparte or even Alexander the Great.

Truly, these are great men, women and great things because they accomplished “great things.

Even the Greek word for “great” means “megas” where we get the word “mega” which connotes building or accomplishing something massively huge things in this life.

But the world's idea of greatness is different from our Lord's idea of greatness.
In fact he said,

Mark 8:36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Now, let me be clear again, that there's nothing inherently wrong to be great. In fact, our Lord wants us to be great but our Lord's idea of greatness is radically different than the world's idea of megas.

So how can we 'BE GREAT' in the Kingdom of God.

So let's see how our Lord unfolded this.

BE GREAT!

We'll talk about the POSITION of greatness they were asking for.

The PATH to greatness according to our Lord Jesus Christ

The PATTERN of greatness we should follow.

I. THE POSITION

Matthew 20: 20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

21 "What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

Two questions :

- **First question, who are Zebedee's sons?** We all know it's James and John.

Because in a similar story in Mark, here's how he wrote it.

Mark 10: 35 Then 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.

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

Ice-breaker: Isn't it cool if your name is Zebedee "my gift"

NOTE: We have to remember at this point, the disciples still think that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is still going to be an earthly one where as the Messiah, He will overthrow the Roman occupation and establish himself as King.

So what they were asking for is a position of recognition, power and influence. That's why they asked:

"Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

In the Eastern traditions, the right hand was the highest seat of power, favor and delegated authority. That's why we have the term, he is my "right hand man".

Exodus 15:6: "Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy."

Our Lord Himself right now is seated at the “right hand” of the Father, knowing that all authority and power has been given to Him. (Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Matthew 28:18)

The left hand is next most prominent position after the right hand.

James and John wants that power and they know they have that power when they are with Jesus. They know our Lord can give them that power and authority.

Biblical proof: It’s because in the story of Luke, they went to a Samaritan village and the people there did not welcome them because they were Jews and here’s what happened.

Luke 9: 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them.

- **Second question, why would they have the audacity to ask Jesus about this?**

The clue lies with the first verse

Matthew 20: 20 Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

Who is the mother of James and John? Let’s look at the Bible.

During the crucifixion, these are the women at the foot of the cross in the Synoptic Gospels

Mark 15:40 Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.

John 19: 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Matthew 27: 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

So looking at this, there were 3 women in Mark and Matthew and 4 women in John and one of them is the mother of Zebedee’s sons. To make the long story short, by God’s grace, here’s the chart for us to see regarding the women at the foot of the cross.

Mark	Matthew	John
		Mary, the mother of Jesus
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene

Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph	Mary, the mother of James and Joseph	Mary, the wife of Clopas
Salome	the mother of Zebedee's son	Jesus's mother's sister

So the mother of Zebedee's sons, James and John was Salome who is the aunt of Jesus and James and John are practically, the first cousins of Jesus Christ when he became man.

This is the reason why THEY HAD THE AUDACITY to ask this request because in their eyes, they were relatives.

Now, the reason why James and John asked this position of power from Jesus is because they think they deserve it because of affinity.

Illustration: John G. Wendel and his five sisters were notorious for being some of the most excessively miserly people in American history. Their parents built a massive real estate fortune in New York City, and to keep it concentrated, John influenced five of his sisters to never marry. They lived like paupers—in the same New York City house for over 50 years, using a single dress for decades, and refusing to have a telephone or automobile. When their fortune was passed down and the last sister died in 1931, her estate was valued at over \$100 million. When the will was read, **the surviving relatives were furious**. It's because they only received \$1M each and the rest went to charity.

Now, as you can see our Lord did not rebuke them for asking this from Him.

22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

It's because there's nothing inherently wrong with wanting a position.

There's nothing wrong wanting to go up the ladder at work – you want to become a supervisor, a manager, a director or a VP

It's the same also in God's kingdom.

Paul even said to Timothy

*1 Timothy 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever **aspires** to be an overseer desires a noble task.*

But what Jesus saw was the motivation in wanting that position. They wanted the position for recognition and power – which to them is equivalent to greatness!

How do we know that? Look at the reaction of the other disciples.

24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. (same words also used in Mark 10:41)

Etymology: indignant “aganakteho” agan “much” and achthos “displeased”
We have another Greek word for that, “kapal ng mukha”....LOL

Why? It’s because they want that position of greatness too!!!

How do we know that?

- First, if you’re not really interested in the same position, why would you even get bothered by it if someone else wants it.

My wife has a term for it, “Kanila na lang yan.” (I’ll just give it to them)

Second, look at the other passage in Luke on the same story:

Luke 22:24 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

This is the reason in John 13, no one wanted to wash the other’s feet. And we’ll talk about that next time, when we talk about the Path and Pattern to Greatness in God’s eyes.

But what do we glean from this?

- Greatness is not about recognition or power

Illustration: Hitler is one of the most powerful and most recognized person that ever lived but is he great?

- To be used in the kingdom of God is not because you deserve it or because you’re qualified for it.

Look at what Paul said:

1 Corinthians 1: 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.

That’s why our Lord said to James and John

23 Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

And remember last time, how God prepares those who is going to use in His kingdom?
– He will crush Him and will pulverize Him.

Let me finish with this story

Old time missionaries and preachers understand this.

Illustration: Hudson Taylor was scheduled to speak at a large church in Melbourne, Australia. The moderator of the service introduced the missionary in eloquent and glowing terms. He told the large congregation all that Taylor had accomplished in China, and then presented him as “our illustrious guest.” Taylor stood quietly for a moment, and then opened his message by saying, “Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious Master.”

To be great in the kingdom of God is to know what a privilege to be used by Him and to give Him ALL the glory because we know we do not deserve it.

As John the Baptist said

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

Now, we will install the deacons

Before I install the deacons, let me share to you in the same passage we’re studying,
26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Etymology: servant, minister, “diakonos” deacons, waiter, one who serves food and drink, servant of the king; **root word is “diako”** one who runs errands.

I remember, my Nanay would ask me to go to the sari-sari store in the Philippines and tells me to “buy suka”... that’s what diako means; one who executes the commands of another.

As you can see, the word “deacon” is not a position of leadership, it’s a position of servanthood, one who serves the King and one who serves others...

Installation of Deacons

Breaking of the Bread (call on the elders)

S.G.D.