

J.J.

BE GREAT

Matthew 20:20-28

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."

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."

INTRODUCTION:

By God's grace, this is going to be the last of the series of Servanthood : How to Be Great. Last week we talked about, verse 27 *and whoever wants to be first must be your slave*

Story : We all know that Joseph was Potiphar's slave. The Bible describes him in Genesis 39 as "well-built and handsome". And in the same chapter, we know that Potiphar's wife really had a liking of him and even asked Joseph to "Come to be with me!" Over and over she asked him and Joseph did not oblige because he did not want to sin against God. But there was a time that there were no other slaves in the house and you know what happened for one last time, she caught him by the cloak and asked him to sleep with her. But Joseph was able to run away but Potiphar's wife accused him and so Potiphar put him into prison.

But do you know after that incident, Potiphar got another slave? (It's not recorded in the Bible) The new slave was also well-built and handsome. One day Potiphar's wife found him alone in the room. She said to this new slave, "Slave, take off my robe." So the slave took off her robe. And then said again to the slave, "Slave, take off my outer garments right now." So the slave trembling, obliged. And then Potiphar's wife said to the new slave after he took off her robe and her outer garments, "The next time I see you wearing my clothes again, I'll throw you into prison."

Let's proceed with God's Word by God's grace.

PRAY

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

So let's see how our Lord unfolded this.

BE GREAT!

Quick Review: WE NEED TO GO FAST ON THE REVIEW AND I REQUEST YOUR FULL ATTENTION BECAUSE WE'RE GOING ON A DEEP DIVE TODAY BY GOD'S GRACE.

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."

We know that in the Eastern tradition, being in the right hand is a position of power.
That's what the mother of James and John wanted.

And why would they have the audacity to ask Jesus about this?

We have studied time, that the **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.

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!
And the other disciples also wanted that position of power.

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)

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.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Jesus did not rebuke James and John and even the disciples in wanting to be great.

The problem is their idea of what it means to be great. They thought being great is about having power. It's about being above others. But that's not the Lord's idea of greatness.

So the Lord showed them

II. THE PATH

So what is the path to greatness?

Three Things : Suffering, Servanthood and Selflessness

- **Suffering**

*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.**"*

That's why He said,

"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

- **Servanthood**

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,

Again, remember the reason why they were indignant with James and John. It's because they wanted the power to themselves.

The Lord knowing that they are disputing who should be the leader, called them

*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.**"*

What is the world's idea of greatness?

lord it over them

Etymology: lord it over them, exercise dominion over them (KJV), "katakuryuo" "kata" down, "kyrios" lord.

WORLD'S IDEA OF GREATNESS 1: one who looks down from above.

WORLD'S IDEA OF GREATNESS #2: one who has power over others.

and their high officials exercise authority over them

It's interesting how KJV translated this.

*And they that are **great (megas)** exercise authority upon them.*

Etymology : exercise authority over them “kataexousiazō” kata “down” exousiazō from exousia “power”

But that's not the Lord's idea of greatness. The path to greatness is servanthood.

That's why He said...

26 Not so with you.

*Instead, **whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,***

Etymology : servant; minister, “diakonos”... where we get the word “diako”...

Icebreaker : That word diako has a Japanese word for this, “Otosan”

Diako literally means, a person who runs errands. You can describe him as the server or waiter.

- **Selflessness**

*27 and whoever wants to be **first** must be your **slave**—*

Etymology: first “protos” (where we get proto-type)... but protos here based on context means, **first in rank.**

That's why the KJV translates this as :

*27 And whosoever will be **chief** among you, let him be your servant.*

A person who wants to be great and first must be your slave.

Etmology : slave “doulos” bonds slave

Now, this must **have been shocking to the disciples at that time**, specially to James and John, they were Zealots who wanted to free themselves from their Roman “masters”.

What is a doulos?

The context during that time is a “doulos”

- Under Roman law, they were property.
- They have no personal rights.
- They have no legal family names.

And by God’s grace, we learned last week that the identity of the slave is always connected with their owner.

Their identity is connected with their owner!!!

In fact, when they are asked, “Who are you?” Usually, people answer, I am Shimon bar Yonah. Or James son of Zebedee (Iakobos bar Zebedaios)

But when a doulos is asked, “Who are you?” They answer either “I belong to... (and they say the name of their master) or they say, “I am of ...(they say the name of the Master)

Example: Person asks, “Who are you?” The doulos replies, “I belong to Maximus Aurelius” or “I am of Maximus Aurelius”

Application: Which brings us now brothers and sisters, as a Christian, if you are a follower of Christ, my identity is not Jerry Lalic. My real identity is “I belong to Jesus Christ” or “I am of Jesus Christ!” That’s what it means to be a disciple.

That’s why Paul wrote:

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

And to Be Great, in the eyes of our Lord, we are to put Him first and then others in the Body of Christ.

Mark 9: 33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” 34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

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

And our Lord said, that’s the reason why I came here on earth.

III. THE PATTERN

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.”

First, let’s look at this.

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve

Now, here's something that's interesting, the Bible is very clear that Jesus is the Son of God, He refers to God as His Father and then says that

John 10:30 I and the Father are One.

Which shows that He is the very God Himself.

Apologetics: By the way, when a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness or an Iglesia ni Cristo knocks on your door and tells you that Jesus never referred to Himself as God in the Bible, point to them to this verse. (Memorize, John 8:56-59)

John 8: 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." 57 So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Remember, the context of this that Jews were saying that Abraham is their father and then they were accusing him that Jesus has a demon in him for saying the things he was saying and asking him, "Are you greater than our father Abraham." And that's the reason why Jesus answered that way. The Jews knew explicitly, that Jesus was claiming to be God, (He was before Abraham) the Great I AM (YHWH), that's why they tried to stone Him.

I have to say this to you first, so you will not be confused.

Important Note: Jesus only referred to Himself EXPLICITLY as the Son of God SEVEN TIMES in the Gospels. But our Lord's favorite reference to Himself is THE SON OF MAN, He explicitly called Himself Son of Man around 80 times in the Gospels.

And verse 28, *28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve* was one of those times. **NOW WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

It's because when the Jews hear the term "son of man", they know what it means.

Let me give you the context.

Remember in Daniel 7,

- **God gave Him a vision of history and how everything will end and how the Anti-Christ will come about. Verse 1-9**
- **But it also shows that God called "Ancient of Days" was in total control and will just destroy all of the beasts.**
- **Then Daniel saw this vision of the One who will RULE FOREVER.**

Daniel 7: 13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days

and was presented before him.
14 And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

Significance: To the Jews like James and John and all the other disciples, they always hear Jesus refer to Himself as the son of man, which is rightly so, and in their mind, the Jews believe it's a human earthly king in the line of David, their Messiah, their King and He will rule everyone forever and ever. **THIS IS THE REASON WHY THEY FOLLOWED JESUS AT THAT TIME AND JAMES AND JOHN AND ALL THE DISCIPLES WANTED THAT POSITION OF POWER AND GREATNESS SO THAT PEOPLE WILL BE UNDER THEM AND SERVE THEM.**

BUT JESUS SAID, "*28 just as the Son of Man **did not come to be served but to serve (diakonethenai alla diakonesai)***"

VERY IMPORTANT : In short, our Lord is saying, WE THINK TO BE GREAT IS TO HAVE THE POSITION AND THE POWER OVER OTHERS...HE'S SAYING THE RULER OF THE UNIVERSE FOREVER AND EVER WHO IS ME, JESUS CHRIST,, **THE VERY GOD HIMSELF, CAME TO BECOME AN ORDER-TAKER, A WAITER, AN OTOSAN, A SLAVE.**

YOU THINK HE CAME TO BE SERVED...NO, HE CAME TO SERVE!

That is how it is TO BE GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD!!!!

Isn't that what we studied a few weeks ago, regarding the CHRISTIAN MINDSET IN Philippians.

Philippians 2: 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant, (doulos - slave)

And saying this, He did not only tell them but He showed them.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION : HE DID NOT ONLY SAY IT, HE SHOWED IT.

*Luke 22:7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "**Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.**"*

And you know what happened here, they went into the Upper Room, where they had the Last Supper and the Breaking of the Bread

And here's what happened.

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

Remember, this is in the Last Supper...it's the same Last Supper in John 13.

Our Lord had to remind them again, this time by showing it to them in John 13

*John 13: 1 It was just before **the Passover Festival**. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

*2 **The evening meal was in progress,** and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 **Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;** 4 **so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.** 5 **After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet,** drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

Again, we already know this. THIS IS THE JOB OF A SLAVE!

Let me remind ourselves again, Jesus did not show this in order for us to repeat this every Maundy Thursday during Lenten week. HE DID TO GIVE US AN EXAMPLE! A PATTERN ON HOW WE ARE TO TREAT AND SERVE ONE ANOTHER...TO BE A SLAVE TO ONE ANOTHER.

*12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 **"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.** 14 **Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.** 15 **I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.***

LISTEN CAREFULLY, OUR LORD IS SAYING... I AM YOUR LORD AND YOUR TEACHER...and I SERVED YOU LIKE A SLAVE...IF YOU TRULY SEE ME AS LORD AND TEACHER... YOU SHOULD ALSO DO THE SAME.

That's why Billy Graham said this:

"The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service".

Application : We think singing is the time we only worship. When the singers are there, and they're doing it for the Lord and for us...., that's worship. When we are greeting people as ushers, and we are doing it for the Lord and making sure that others feel welcome... that's worship. When we are helping clean the church or planning activities for the church, we are serving and that's worship!

That's why worship, whether we're leading singing, greeting people, thinking about activities...doesn't depend on how we feel. We do it in spite of what we feel because we know we're doing it for the Lord and for others...AND THAT IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF WORSHIP...BECAUSE IT'S NOT ABOUT US. IT'S ABOUT HIM AND OTHERS.

AND WHY IS IT WORSHIP? IT'S BECAUSE WE ARE DOING IT FOR THE LORD!!!!!!
Listen carefully! Whenever we are serving others in whatever capacity the Lord called us and we're doing it for Him and not for ourselves....THAT'S THE HIGHEST FORM OF WORSHIP!

It's because OUR TRUE WORSHIP SERVICE IS WHEN WE FORGET OURSELVES AND SERVE OTHERS IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!

Isn't that what Paul said in Romans 12

*Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, **to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.***

Sacrifice means – something is killed as an offer.

To be a living sacrifice, means, you are offering your bodies to the Lord as a form of worship.

How do we offer our bodies? Do we just say to Him, "Lord, here's my body."...IT'S MORE THAN THAT... WE SAY TO THE LORD, "Lord, here is my body, my mind, my arms, my mouth, my feet,..USE IT TO SERVE YOU AND OTHERS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

And this is what our Lord Jesus Christ did...that's why He said.

*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.***

Why did He give His life as a ransom?

Etymology : ransom "lootron" from the word "loo-o" which means to unfasten, to unbind.

In short, OUR LORD GAVE HIS LIFE in order to free us, to unfasten us from SIN, from the hold of Satan..

Our Lord freed us from the penalty of sin and from the power of Satan in our lives.

Illustration: Remember, again how a slave introduces himself when asked, “Who are you?” and the slave says, “I belong to...”

And this is the reason we can say to other people, “I belong to Jesus Christ.” Why? It’s because He bought us, He purchased us with His own blood. We now belong to Him.

1 Peter 1:18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (NLT)

CONCLUSION :

Listen carefully: **THIS IS WHAT GREATNESS IS ALL ABOUT.**

QUOTE: To BE GREAT is when we are willing to sacrifice our life to serve and to save others for our Lord Jesus Christ.

That’s why church is not about our own comfort nor our own entertainment. It’s about the willingness to suffer, serve and forget ourselves for the sake of saving others. That is what you call OFFERING OUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE. IT’S NOT ABOUT US...IT’S ABOUT THE LORD AND ABOUT OTHERS.

This is what our Lord Jesus Christ did and God exalted Him...

*Philippians 2: 8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

*9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

THAT IS GREATNESS!

BE GREAT!

S.G.D.