

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."

INTRODUCTION:

Praise the Lord for the Garage Sale yesterday. We were able to raise around \$700 and will be using this to send 7 mission boxes to the Philippines.

I praise God to those who organized and helped in making this happen. Praise the Lord for the Dominguez family who opened up their home.

The Lord is your rewarder.

Speaking of missions, on August 30, I've invited Rey Awatin who is a missionary from the Philippines. He's a missionary we support as a church by God's grace. His organization is called Tribes in Asia. He's a missionary that goes to the 10/40 window where it's the last bastion where the name of Jesus Christ hasn't been preached yet.

Today by God's grace, we'll continue with our series on Servanthood based on Matthew 20:20-28

1 month to live Story : I believe you heard the story of couple where the husband felt very, very ill with some terminal sickness. The wife asked the doctor privately, "How is my husband?" The doctor said, "It's not good. I only give him 1 month to live." The wife cried but the doctor said, "But he can get well." The wife said, "How?" The doctor replied. "Since his

sickness requires him to take full rest and not move, you will need to cook him breakfast and serve it in bed, do the laundry by yourself, clean the house by yourself, and research shows that laughter and happiness prolongs life, you need to read to him stories, make him laugh. You will really need to act like a full-time servant. If you do that, your husband has a chance of getting well again.” The wife understood and she went back to her husband. The husband asked her, “What did the doctor say?” The wife cried and said, “you will not make it.”

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:

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?"

What does this cup mean? REMEMBER, CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT.

Do we want to be great? Then expect suffering as a Christian.

Note : We do not want it. We do not look for it. But expect that suffering for His name is part of our heritage here on earth.

Look at our Lord Jesus Christ when He became man.

Hebrews 5: 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

IMPORTANT : It is through suffering where we learn to truly trust Him, obey Him and even praise Him in the midst of the pain and the trials.

- **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.

In fact, in the same scenario, here’s how Luke wrote it.

Luke 22: 24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

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.**

To continue: The Third Path to Greatness

- **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.*

Interpretation: Obviously here, **that when the disciples were arguing who should be the greatest, they’re also thinking who should be the leader beside Jesus... who should be the chief.** James and John thought they should be the leader or chief because they are relatives of Jesus. The other disciples definitely doesn’t agree as shown earlier.

Now again, Jesus did not rebuke them in wanting to be the leader and he mentions that it is not based on your affinity with me or because you deserve it. But...

These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

It is by God’s grace.

The Bible is very clear on that one.

When he called Jeremiah,

Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

You will see God’s sovereignty when it comes to Him doing the choosing.

Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

2 Timothy 1:9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit

Now, a lot of people don’t like this because people either like being in control and they don’t like to be not in control. THAT’S WHY PEOPLE HUNG ON TIGHTLY TO WHAT’S FAMILIAR, TO WHAT’S COMFORTABLE... why change things?

But what is faith for?

Biblical Illustration: A man in the Bible called Abram was from Ur. He was already established there. He was already rich and comfortable and yet God called him out of his country to a land called Canaan. (Genesis 12). **Again, if you are truly a follower of Christ, be ready to go on an adventure with Him.**

Balance: I'm not saying, we do not plan or it's sinful to want to be chief or to be great. The Bible never says that. We plan. We aim. We do our best. But in the end, look at what the Bible says.

Proverbs 16:9 In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

But still, it's up to our Almighty God.

*Psalm 75: 6 No one from the east or the west
or from the desert can exalt themselves.*

7 It is God who judges:

He brings one down, he exalts another.

In the end, it is all by God's grace. OUR MAIN PURPOSE IS TO SERVE HIM BECAUSE WE LOVE HIM.

Now, Jesus is saying, a true leader must have a servant's heart.

Illustration: During the American Revolution a man in civilian clothes rode past a group of soldiers repairing a small defensive barrier. Their leader was shouting instructions, but making no attempt to help them. When the rider asked the corporal why he did not help his men, he retorted with great dignity, "Sir, I am a corporal!" The stranger apologized, dismounted, and proceeded to help the exhausted soldiers. When the job was finished he turned to the corporal and said, "Mr. Corporal, next time you have a job like this and not enough men to do it, go to your commander-in-chief, and I will come and help you again." It was that time he realized the man in civilian clothes was George Washington, who was the president at that time and his commander-in-chief.

A chief must have a slave's heart.

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

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

Etmology : slave "doulos" bondslave

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.

Remember earlier how James and John are known.

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons

Their identity is connected with their father. In fact, when Peter confessed the Jesus is the Messiah, what did Jesus call him before calling him Peter.

Matthew 16: ¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. ¹⁸And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (petros), and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Simon Barjona (Shimon bar yonah) which means, Simon son of Jonah.

This means, **before your identity is you're the son of Jonah**, but from now on you will be identified as “Petros”, the rock and based on this “petra”, the truth that you mentioned, what did He mention? , *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

We'll study this next time.

But back to our study, now remember, slaves have no legal family names.

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”

Ice breaker: “Who are you?” “I belong to Jerricus Lapuzes” or “I belong to “Noelus Gallorius”

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.

Look at how Paul introduces himself in his letters

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant (doulos) of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle...

Even James who is Jesus half-brother introduces himself

James 1:1 James, a doulos of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...

Etymology : Lord, Kyrios, which means Master

That’s the essence of Baptism.

When we are being immersed (baptized, baptizo). It means the old self has been buried and out of the water is the new self...the new identify which belongs to Jesus Christ and now a child of our Father in heaven.

By the way, if you are a Christian, a follower of Christ, you need to be baptized because **that’s a command of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Baptism Class : September 6, right after church service

Now back to the text:

Part of good interpretation of a text is not only context, but also paying attention to words.

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

Etymology : your slave “hymon doulos” hoomone doulos

What does this mean? Remember being a doulos means your identify now belongs to your master... this means now our identity now belongs to church...**WHY? IT’S BECAUSE THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST!!!!**

It’s part of our identity. IF WE belong to Jesus Christ... We belong to HIS BODY!

Listen carefully VERY IMPORTANT APPLICATION: When you are a Christian, you now belong to Christ and the church is His body **which means we now belong to each other and we are here to serve one another!**

Say to the person beside : In Christ, I belong to you and I am here to serve you.

Why serve? Because serving is the physical proof of our love for God and for one another. It's easy to say to a person we love them but the proof is not in the pudding but in the serving.

1 John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Illustration: One of the early Christian fathers named Tertullian (155-200 AD) wrote that when outsiders looked at believers in Christ, they were astonished saying, "Look how they love one another."

Now Jesus is saying, "You want to be the first, you want to be great, you want to be the leader, then be the one who serves."

That's why in the Gospel of Mark, this is what Jesus said to them.

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."

Illustration: One of my favorite secular authors Simon Sinek wrote a book called "Leaders Eat Last"

He tells the story where he asked a Marine general on why their troops exhibit such deep trust and loyalty. The general replied simply, "**Officers eat last.**"

In mess halls with the Marines worldwide, junior Marines go through the first line while the highest-ranking leaders wait at the very back.

Why? To be a leader, TO BE GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD it is not a position of power or rank. It is a position of service and responsibility.

Again, in the body of Christ,...it's not about me first. But Jesus first, others first and you last.

J-O-Y – Selflessness is the secret.

Next week, we'll finish our series by God's grace on how to "Be Great" We talked about The Position, We saw what is the Path to being great, "Suffering, Servanthood and Selflessness", We'll share with you "The Pattern" to being great.

S.G.D.