

## The Path To Greatness

No. 241

### Introduction.

I. Matthew records this story in the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of his gospel. (Matt. 18:1-4).

**At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, 3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.**

II. In this story Jesus gives us, "The Path To Greatness."

- A. He tells us how to be great especially in the eyes of God.
- B. The standard He gives greatly differs from the standard of the world.

### III. The world measures greatness in a number of ways.

- A. We are great in the eyes of the world if we have the right **profession**. The bigger the title, the more prominent we are.
- B. We are great in the eyes of the world if we have a lot of **wealth**. The more money we possess causes others to place an estimate on our greatness.
- C. We are great in the eyes of the world if we have **power**. The more power we have the greater many believe are. Surely the president of some corporation or one who controls a lot of people must be great.
- D. We are great in the eyes of the world if we are **famous**. Those who are renounced because of their ability in sports or music are thought to be great.

IV. Today I would like to present some thoughts on what makes us great in they eyes of God.

- I. **Must Realize Our Own Righteousness Is Filthy Rags** - To be great in the eyes of God we must realize our own righteousness is filthy rags
  - A. The Bible affirms. (Rom. 3:23).

**ROM 3:9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and**

**Greeks are all under sin; 10 as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; 11 There is none who**

**understands, There is none who seeks for God; 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless;**

**There is none who does good, There is not even one. " 13 "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they**

keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness";  
15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood, 16 Destruction and misery are in their paths, 17 And the path of peace  
have they not known. " 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the  
glory of God,

- B. The Bible affirms that all accountable people, knowing right from wrong, have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
  - 1. **Our money, our education, our power and our morality cannot save us.** Until we realize this we will never be great in the eyes of God. We must realize that all human efforts without God's mercy all futile.
  - 2. The Hebrew writer wrote. (Heb. 9:22; 10:4; Eph. 1:7).

II. **Submissive To God's Will** - To be great in the eyes of God we must be submissive to God's will

A. Just as a child is submissive to his parents, we must be submissive to God.

- 1. We must pray. (Matt. 6:10).
- 2. We must say as Jesus did. (Jn. 4:34).

B. Listen as I read from Philippians the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. (Phil. 2:5-11).

**5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

- 1. Paul tells us that Jesus **manifested great humility and great obedience.** Jesus held the highest position in heaven. He was CEO of heaven. He left the glories of heaven. He came to earth not to be served, but to serve. He spent His whole life obeying God and humbly serving others. Finally, He showed His great humiliation and obedience by going to the cross. Though He was sinless, He was willing to die the death of a criminal. Because of His obedience and humility He hung on a cross naked and mocked that we might live. Because He humbled Himself, God has now exalted Him and given Him "the name which is above every name."
- 2. **This example of Christ should inspire us to be obedient servants of God.** It should motivate us to always seek to do God's will. We can never be great in the eyes of God by doing our own will, but will only be great if we do the will of God. **He is the Almighty One. He is the Holy One. He is the Creator. He is the One who made us. It is to Him that we must be obedient. It is to Him that we are to say, "Thou art the Potter, I am only the clay."**

### III. **Humble And Lowly Servants** - To be great in the eyes of God we must be humble and lowly servants

A. Matthew records. (Matt. 20:20-28).

**20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. 21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left." 22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able." 23 He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." 24 And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. 25 But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 "It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. "**

#### B. **Jesus here plainly tells us how to be great in the eyes of God.**

1. Just as Christ came into the world to humbly serve others, we must become humble servants.
2. We must become humble like Jesus.
3. We must have a humble contrite heart that is ready to serve. We must be willing to take orders. We must be willing to serve in any capacity great or small.
4. **I remember hearing of a Christian organization** that always asks newly hired people to clean the toilets for two weeks. It did not matter what their qualifications were or what they are hired for. That's the first job they got. If they will not, they do not get a position.
5. **During the American Revolution** an officer in civilian clothes rode past a group of new recruits busy repairing a break in a rampart. The work was really too heavy for the size of group working on it. Their commander was shouting instructions, but was making no attempt to help them. Asked why, he replied with great dignity, "Sir, I am a Corporal!" The stranger apologized, dismounted, and proceeded to help the exhausted soldiers himself. 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." The officer in plain clothes was General Washington.
6. **Dave Thomas**, founder of the Wendy's Restaurant chain, wrote about the value of humility in his book **WELL DONE: THE COMMON GUY'S GUIDE TO EVERYDAY SUCCESS**.

**He writes, "I got my MBA long before my G.E.D." (Dave, of course, never graduated from high school.)**

**He continues, "I even have a photograph of me in my MBA graduation outfit -- a snazzy knee-length work**

apron. I guarantee you that I'm the only founder among America's big companies whose picture in the corporate annual report shows him wielding a mop and a plastic bucket. That wasn't a gag" he continues. "It was a case of leading by example. At Wendy's, MBA does not mean Master of Business Administration. It means Mop Bucket Attitude. It's how we define satisfying the customer through cleanliness, quality food, friendly service, and atmosphere."

7. **O, that we could find more of that MBA attitude in the church!** We need people with the mop bucket attitude. We need people who are willing to do any job. We need those who will literally mop or take out the trash. We need those who will assist the sick, visit the lonely, help the poor, and do whatever else needs to be done.

IV. **The Least Desirable Seat** - To be great in the eyes of God we must take the least desirable seat

A. Luke says. (Lk. 14:1-11).

**1 And it came about when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching Him closely. 2 And there, in front of Him was a certain man suffering from dropsy. 3 And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" 4 But they kept silent. And He took hold of him, and healed him, and sent him away. 5 And He said to them, "Which one of you shall have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" 6 And they could make no reply to this. 7 ¶ And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table; saying to them, 8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. 10 "But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. 11 "For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."**

1. Jesus here again clearly teaches the path to greatness.

2. It is by taking the least desirable seat.

B. **Once a young man from Africa came to the U.S. to go to school.** The road he chose for himself was a tough one, but he never let it stop him from making progress. When he arrived at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, the school's president asked him what room he wanted. The young man simply said, "If there is a room nobody wants, give it to me." Later the president commented, "I turned away with my eyes

full of tears. I was asking myself whether I was willing to take what nobody else wanted.”

- C. **This is a good question for us.** Are we willing to take what nobody else wants? Are we willing to serve? Are we willing to do whatever we are asked to do to advance the kingdom and to please God. If so, Jesus teaches we will be exalted. We will be asked to move up. We will be honored perhaps by men, but for certain by God. (Lk. 14:11)

## Conclusion

- I. **John Brodie**, former quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, was once asked why a million-dollar player like him should have to hold the ball for field goals and extra points after the touchdown. "Well," said Brodie, "if I didn't, it would fall over." Brodie wouldn't take the bait. He wouldn't exalt himself. Maybe that has something to do with his greatness.
- II. **Let us all humble ourselves before God and man. Let us all be humble enough to admit that we cannot save ourselves.** All of our righteousness and deeds are but filthy rags. They cannot save us. Only Jesus can do that. Jesus will save those who will humbly come to Him, turn from their sins, confess His name and be baptized. He will save all who will humbly trust in His blood for salvation.

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- III Jesus says. (Matt. 11:28-30). Come to Jesus today as we stand and sing.