

“Who Is The Greatest In The Kingdom Of Heaven?”

No. 29

Introduction.

- I. One time the disciples of Jesus were quarreling over who would be the greatest in the kingdom they expected Christ to establish on the earth. Being unable to decide among themselves who would be the greatest, they brought the problem to Jesus. They asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”
 - A. In answer to their question Jesus called a little child into their midst and said. (Matt. 18:3, 4).
 - B. Jesus emphasized that childlike humility determines greatness in the kingdom.
- II. The answer Christ gave His disciples did not eliminate the problem among them.
 - A. For later we find it appearing again.

MAT 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him.

MAT 20:21 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."

MAT 20:22 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."

MAT 20:23 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."

MAT 20:24 And hearing {this,} the ten became indignant with the two brothers.

MAT 20:25 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.

MAT 20:26 "It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

MAT 20:27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

MAT 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

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- B. Note, Jesus has emphasized that two things determine greatness in the kingdom. They are humility and service. (Matt. 27:28).
- I. **World’s Standard Of Greatness** - As we can see, Jesus’ estimation of greatness greatly differs from the world’s standard.
 - A. The world defines greatness in terms of fame, wealth, education and other such things. It does not, as a general rule, look upon a humble servant as being a great one.
 - B. There are many reasons for this wrong conception, but one of the greatest reasons is the **false emphasis of many parents**.
 1. All parents rightfully want their children to be successful. The only bad thing about this desire is many are using the wrong standard to determine success. When does the average parent consider

his children to be successful? Is it not when they have most or all of the following things - a new home, a nice automobile, a good job, money in the bank, education.

2. What would most think if a parent said his children were successful and had none of these things? They would wonder about that parent, wouldn't they? Why? Because they do not have the right estimation, the Lord's estimation, of greatness. They have been blinded by a false, materialistic sense of values.

II. A Need To Teach True Greatness

- A. As parents we need to re-study what Jesus taught about greatness and instill this in our lives and the lives of our children because many of the so-called successful people will spend eternity in hell unless they have humility and service.
- B. Parents should teach their children to aspire to be humble servants in the kingdom. For by being humble servants they will be great in God's eyes and have a home with God in heaven.

III. Greatness Manifested - Let's study God's word to see how humility and service are to be manifested in our lives.

- A. The great one in the kingdom is **humble towards his strength**.
 1. He does not boast of his great spiritual strength because he knows he can stumble. (1 Cor. 9:27; 10:12).
 2. Peter was over confident. (Matt. 26:31-35).
 3. No, the child of God does not boast of His strength. He constantly leans on the Everlasting arms of God.
- B. The great one in the kingdom is **humble toward sin**.
 1. He is willing to swallow his pride and humbly confess "I have sinned."
 2. **David** (2 Sam. 12:1-7, 13; Psa. 51:1-5, 7-12).

PSA 51:1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions.

PSA 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

PSA 51:3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

PSA 51:4 Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight, So that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, And blameless when Thou dost judge.

PSA 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

PSA 51:7 Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

PSA 51:8 Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice.

PSA 51:9 Hide Thy face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

PSA 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

PSA 51:11 Do not cast me away from Thy presence, And do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me.

PSA 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, And sustain me with a willing spirit.

3. **Tax-collector** (Lk. 18:13, 14).

4. Another example is **James Cox** who years ago was president of Abilene Christian College.
 - a. One spring, when a young man's fancy turns to love, there were some things taking place on campus which Brother Cox didn't approve. One morning in chapel he stood before the student body and quite heavily rebuked them. When brother Cox left that morning, he began to think that perhaps he had been a little too hard on the students. The next morning in the chapel services when the invitation was sung, brother Cox walked down the aisle and stood before the students and confessed his fault.
 - b. This is a real example of humility! Even though he was the president of a college, he did not feel too big to confess sin.
 - c. We should never, as members of the Lord's church, get the idea that we have grown so big and important that we can't humble ourselves under God's mighty hand.
5. **George Adam Smith** of England tells of the time that he visited the Alps in Switzerland. It took him and his guide many hours to reach the summit of one of the famous peaks. When they reached the top he said he stood up and shouted he had conquered the Alps. His guide immediately pulled him back down to his knees, saying, "On your knees, Sir. You are not safe except on your knees."
 - a. Brethren, I submit to you that none of us are safe except on our knees.
 - b. If we are too proud to get on our knees and confess sin, we are lost. (Matt. 5:3; Jas. 4:6).

C. The great one in God's kingdom is **humble in relationship to his abilities.**

1. God has blessed us with different abilities. Some have a few talents and others have many talents. The great one does not boast if he happens to have more talent than someone else. He does not boast because he realizes his talents have come from God and he realizes he has more responsibility.
2. It is the little man who boasts of his feats and say, "Look at me! Look how great I am!"

D. The great one in God's kingdom is **humble toward service.**

1. He is willing to do both "big" and "little" tasks. He is willing to serve in positions of authority and prestige and he is willing to do small, non-glorious tasks.
2. One time a **minister who was preaching a sermon** on Christ washing the disciples' feet said, "Do you know, friends, we are all fighting for the top in the church but there are so few fighting for the towel?" This was a crude way of saying that there are only a very few willing to be last in the body of Christ.

Conclusion.

- I. Brethren, we need to re-evaluate our scale of values and place our emphasis on humility and service. This is what makes us great in God's sight.

II. As we go through life let us keep mind these words written by Ellen Underwood.

The bread that giveth strength I want to give;
The water pure that bids the thirsty live;
I want to help the fainting day by day;
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give the oil of joy for tears,
The faith to conquer cruel doubts and fears,
Beauty for ashes may I give away:
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give good measure running o'er,
And into angry hearts I want to pour
The answer soft that turneth wrath away:
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give to others hope and faith;
I want to do all that the Master saith;
I want to live aright from day to day;
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

III. Let all of us, as God's children, realize that we spend a short time passing through this world. Let's spend our short time on this earth serving God and man.

IV. As we close this lesson, we would urge all those outside of Christ to become children of God.

- A. Jesus is calling you to the most exalted position in the world. Nothing greater could ever be said about you than you are a child of God. Nothing worse could be said about you than you rejected God's Son.
- B. Will you come confessing your faith in Jesus and be baptized for the remission of sins?
- C. Come as we stand and sing.

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