

Jesus Defines Greatness

Mark 9:33-37

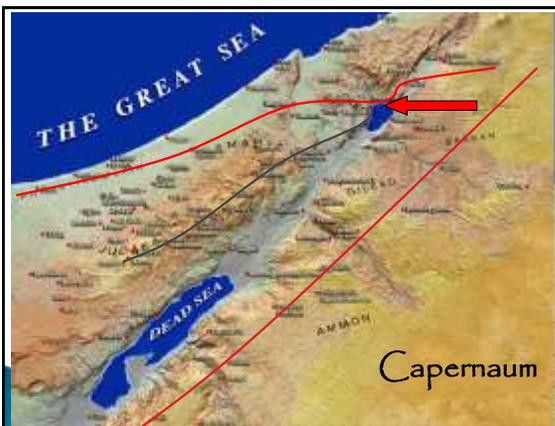
The Larger Context

- ▶ Mark 8:33-50
 - "Essential lessons for every disciple."
 - The first lesson comes in 9:33-37.

Lesson # 1

- ▶ True greatness in Christ's kingdom is defined by humility (33-37).

I. The Persistent Enemy of True Greatness (33-34)





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- ▶ Luke 9:47 – But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart...
 - Cf. John 2:25 – He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.
 - Cf. Heb. 4:13 – there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.
 - Cf. Rev. 2:23 – 'All the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts.'

Where Does This Sin Come From?

- ▶ **1)** It is a natural expression of fallen human pride.
 - 3 John 9 – Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.
- ▶ **2)** It was an accepted part of 1st century Jewish culture.
 - E.g., Matt. 23:5–7; Luke 14:7

Where Does This Sin Come From?

- ▶ **3)** It had been awakened by recent circumstances.
 - Matt. 16:18 – "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.
 - Jesus had singled out Peter, James and John for unique privilege.
 - 5:37; 9:2
 - Jesus had sent Peter out to catch a fish that would have sufficient money in its mouth to pay just Jesus' and Peter's temple tax (Matt. 17:24–27).

I. The Persistent Enemy of True Greatness (33–34)

- ▶ Matt. 18:1 – At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
- ▶ Luke 9:46 – An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest.

II. The Lord's Redefinition of True Greatness (35)

- ▶ 1) Of all, last.
- ▶ 2) Of all, servant.
 - Cf. Matt. 20:21–26; 23:11; Mark 10:35–44; Luke 22:26

III. A Living Illustration of True Greatness (36–37)

- ▶ Jesus is not saying that we ought to copy the character of a child.
- ▶ Jesus is using the child's status as an illustration.
 - A child has no accomplishments, no status or position.

Three Lessons from a Child

- ▶ 1. Christ's kingdom can only be entered in humility.
 - Matt. 18:3 – "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
 - Cf. Matt. 5:3 – "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 - Cf. Luke 18:14 – "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Three Lessons from a Child

- ▶ 2. True greatness in Christ's kingdom can only be measured by humility.
 - Matt. 18:4 – "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
 - Cf. Rom. 12:10 – Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

Three Lessons from a Child

- ▶ 3. True greatness in Christ's kingdom is demonstrated in serving Christ by serving even the lowest. (37)
 - Cf. Matt. 18:5 – "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me.
 - Cf. Matt. 10:40; Luke 10:16; John 13:20
 - Cf. Matt. 25:34–40

The Greatest Illustration of Humble Service

- ▶ 1) Our God.
 - Hendricksen: "Instead of asking, Who among us is the greatest? The followers of Jesus should learn to focus their loving attention of Christ's little ones, that is, on the lambs of the flock and on all those who in their condition of need and trustful dependence resemble these lambs. Such is the essence of true greatness, the greatness that reflects the same quality which in an infinite degree resides in God."
 - Cf. Is. 57:15 – For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell *on* a high and holy place, And *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.

The Greatest Illustration of Humble Service

- ▶ 2) And His Son...
 - Mark 10:43–45; John 13:14–16
 - Phil. 2:3ff