

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

By this stage in Mark's gospel, the disciples had begun to understand that Jesus was in fact the Christ. Instead of being humbled and grateful to be in his presence, they started arguing about which one of them was the greatest. Human nature always focuses on its own glory.

1. Jesus Doesn't Destroy Ambition, He Redirects It

- Read Mark 9:30-35

We all want to be great and for our lives to be counted as significant. Unfortunately the world's version of ambition and success is very different to God's and so most of us need a course correction. In this passage Jesus redirected the disciples' worldly ambition and instructed them on what Godly ambition looked like.

- ❖ Q: What is "worldly" ambition?
- ❖ Q: What one aspect of worldly ambition do you strive after and why?

2. Godly Greatness Serves While Worldly Greatness Seeks To Be Served

- Read Mark 9:35

Serving people was not on anyone's agenda in those days; instead everyone wanted to be in a higher position. So, when Jesus explained that greatness was measured by service, the disciples must have been confused and somewhat disappointed. Jesus' call to service was not a call to relinquish his authority, but it was about choosing a posture towards others that put their needs before his own. If we want to be great in the kingdom of God we should seek to serve others.

- ❖ Q: Why is service so opposite to worldly ambition?
- ❖ Q: Do you find any joy in serving other people? Explain.
- ❖ Q: If you had to serve others with absolutely no recognition from them whatsoever, would you joyfully continue to serve them?
- ❖ Q: What do you think true Godly service looks like?

3. Godly Greatness Seeks To Serve The Vulnerable While Worldly Greatness Seeks Out Only The Powerful

- Read Mark 9:36-37

When Jesus picked up and hugged the child, people would have gasped. Children were not viewed with much esteem, and suggesting that being great in the kingdom would mean loving and serving them would have made the point clearly. Godly servant-hood was and still is counter-cultural, as it focuses on the vulnerable and those who need help without getting any recognition for it.

- ❖ Q: Think about the people you currently serve. What's in it for you? Consider your motives for service:
 - Do you get the approval of someone in authority over you?
 - Could you get a raise at work or be put in the spotlight in some area that would make you feel proud of yourself?
- ❖ Q: Think through the people who are currently in your world (at work, home, church, gym, groups etc.).
 - Who are the people that no one notices or values?
 - Who are the people who do the menial work you would not want to put your hands to?
 - Who are the people that others look down on?
 - Discuss some of the reasons why you would be uncomfortable in serving them.
 - Now list some ways in which you could serve them for God's glory?

4. Godly Greatness Wants God's Glory Over Our Own While Worldly Greatness Wants Our Own Glory Over Anyone Else's

- Read Mark 9:38-40

On hearing Jesus teach about servant-hood, John realised that he had recently failed at this. He had not wanted others to have the same authority Jesus had given them in order to cast out demons. He now understood that his ambitious attitude was worldly rather than Godly, as his motive had not been one of service. Jesus dealt with John gently by teaching him that it didn't really matter who actually did the work as long as God was given the glory for it.



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Understanding that we are to be servants releases us from trying to get the approval of everyone all the time and it stops us from having to get the credit for everything we do. It allows us to serve in obscurity without being full of pride when others acknowledge us or full of despair when no-one does.

- ❖ Q: Why does understanding kingdom greatness help us in overcoming the need to take credit for everything we do or the need for the approval from others?
- ❖ Q: How should this shape the way we serve the church?

5. Godly Greatness Starts With A Commitment To Do The Little We Can With The Little We Have While Worldly Greatness Waits For Great Wealth And Great Power

- Read Mark 9:41

We don't need to wait until our life circumstances change in order to serve others. We can use the time and resources that we have right now to serve others in our community.

- ❖ Q: In what ways could you serve someone in your world this week with the time and/or money you have?
- ❖ Q: Are there people in need that we could serve as a Gospel Community some time? Let's brainstorm some ideas and use what we have to serve the vulnerable.

6. Godly Greatness Is Modelled By Jesus And Rewarded In Eternity

- Read Mark 9:30-31 & Philippians 2:3-11

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:3-11 ESV)

Jesus was poor, homeless, rejected, single and misunderstood. He is the one we follow.

- ❖ Q: What is the one big take-away for you from this message this week?
- ❖ Q: How can we make sure that we put into action what God has convicted us of?

