



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 34: The Measure of Kingdom Greatness

Read Mark 10:32-45

We all desire greatness and have different measures for what greatness looks like. In this passage Jesus teaches that greatness is measured in serving others.

1. Serving That Measures Kingdom Greatness Is Revealed In The Gospel

- Read Mark 10:32, 45

On his way back to Jerusalem Jesus spoke to his disciples about his death and resurrection again. The fact that it was in Jerusalem that he would face his trial, be convicted and crucified did not deter him at all. He was prepared and willing to face his death. This time he told the disciples that the reason he had to die was in order to give his life as a ransom. In their context a ransom would have been the payment required to release a slave or a prisoner. Jesus was of course not talking about freeing literal slaves or prisoners but spiritual ones. And it was through his death that the price for sin would be paid once and for all. This willingness to give up his life for humanity was the greatest act of service in history and it should cause us to respond in two ways:

- I. We should accept and embrace his gift of grace fully
- II. We should serve others

- ❖ Q: What do you think it means for us to accept God's gift of service (paying our ransom with his life) fully?
- ❖ Q: Why is it a natural response to serve others when we fully grasp Christ's gift of grace towards us?
- ❖ Q: What do you think of when you think about serving others? What does service look like for you?
- ❖ Q: What is one thing that you just hate to do, that you would so appreciate someone else doing for you? How should this view of what real service is impact the way we choose to serve others? (Is the way you serve in your home, your workplace and your church the way that people *need* to be served, or do you pick the kind of service that suits you?)

2. Serving That Measures Kingdom Greatness Is Rooted In Self-Sacrificing Love

- Read Mark 10:35-40

James and John were hoping that by getting to Jesus first, they would be able to secure prime positions when he began to rule as the Messiah. But they still did not understand the nature of his kingship or his kingdom, and neither did the other disciples. All of them wanted a position of greatness and yet none of them yet understood that greatness in the kingdom of God would come through serving others – with self-sacrificing love. In addressing their request for position, Jesus taught them that the path to greatness would not be easy, and that his own path would be filled with God's wrath as he paid the price for sin. They did not know what they were asking when they asked to follow Jesus in every way. But despite their self-centred ways at the time, Jesus knew that in the near future they would become less self-focused and self-elevating and would become willing servants of the gospel, and would end up suffering and ultimately dying for him.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think the other disciples were so indignant at the fact that James and John asked Jesus for great positions?
- ❖ Q: In what ways are we similar to James, John and the other disciples regarding position and power?
- ❖ Q: What do we need to learn about the pursuit of position and power on this earth from this passage?
- ❖ Q: Can you be honest and identify one area in your life where you seek and pursue power and position for selfish gain? What do you think God would want you to respond in response to this message regarding that specific situation?

3. Serving That Measures Kingdom Greatness Rejoices In Elevating Others

- Read Mark 10:40-45

Jesus had to teach the disciples to think in a different way about greatness. They were frustrated with James and John because they all wanted the privilege of power and authority for selfish gain. Jesus showed them how those in power often use it in ungodly ways; to oppress, dominate, subdue or to make themselves seem more important than others. Our human nature loves to promote self and most of us are quite willing to use other people to do it, even if it's just in subtle ways. Spiritually, this is an issue of worship. We value ourselves as the most important thing in this world and therefore we promote ourselves in order to get all of our wants and needs met. When we think this way, the whole concept of serving others is impossible to grasp.



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Service seems like something that those who are less important than us should do. But Jesus turned that around completely by saying that in his kingdom, things do not work as they work on earth, and that true greatness is found in serving others. As God, Jesus did not lose his worth when he stepped down into humanity to serve us. He was secure in his identity and that allowed him to serve fully and to give his life away. It is the same for us. Serving others does not mean that we become less valuable, but shows that we are secure in our identity and worth because of God's great love for us that he showed us in Christ.

- ❖ Q: Why is our attitude towards serving others an issue of worship?
- ❖ Q: Why is serving others an indication that we are secure in our identity in Christ?
- ❖ Q: In what way does serving others help people to become what God intends them to be?
- ❖ Q: Who in your world could you actively serve in order to bless and elevate them? (Think about someone that you would never normally serve because it is usually their job to serve you – Think through what they might need rather than what you would want to do).
- ❖ Q: In what way is God asking you to change as a result of this message? Discuss this as a group so that you can pray together and hold one another accountable to change.